March 18, 2019

The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Chair, Assembly Local Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 5144
Sacramento, CA. 95814

RE: ACA 1-AGUIAR-CURRY (Local government financing)
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblywoman Aguiar-Curry,

The California Library Association, representing city, county, and special district libraries throughout the state, is pleased to “support” your ACA 1, which would reduce the local vote threshold for the approval of public infrastructure local bond and special tax measures from the current two-thirds vote to a 55% majority.

California’s libraries are flourishing, with students using the library after school for “homework help” assistance, seniors are participating in book clubs, toddlers are attending storytime programs, and adults are using the library computers to search for jobs or learn a new skill via online courses.

CLA is grateful for the 55% provisions for special taxes in the bill, but we are particularly encouraged by the provisions relating to construction bonds. The last general obligation bond measure passed by the state to fund new library construction or renovation was in 2000, and it authorized a mere $350 million in bonds for this purpose. In 2015, CLA conducted a Needs Assessment and determined there is a current backlog of more than $4 billion in library construction. Many of the state’s treasured Carnegie libraries are suffering from serious ADA challenges that render wheelchairs inaccessible to the front door or to restrooms. Some library buildings are not keeping pace with the growth of their expanding communities, while others feature aged infrastructure that make it such that the building can’t be wired to accept high-speed broadband.

One of the challenges for the public library community has been the impediment of the two-thirds vote in securing passage of local construction bonds. The State Library conducted a report several years ago entitled, “Thirty Years of California Library Ballot Measures – 1980-2009.” That study noted that “those library-related measures in California which only required a simply majority were approved 77% of the time, which is very close to the overall national average of 80%. However, library measures which
required a supermajority were approved only 45% of the time.” ACA 1 would put libraries and other critical infrastructure projects on the same footing as the K-12 community, which is allowed to pass bonds with a 55% vote.

CLA is appreciative of your leadership on this important, transformational effort for communities, and we are pleased to support ACA 1.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Dillon, CLA Lobbyist
KP Public Affairs

Christina Dillon DiCaro, CLA Lobbyist
KP Public Affairs

cc: Assembly Local Government Committee members
Committee Consultants