



City Council

Teresa Geringer, Mayor
Carl Anduri, Vice Mayor
Susan Candell, Council Member
Gina Dawson, Council Member
Wei-Tai Kwok, Council Member

May 10, 2022

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 7630
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 884 (McGuire) Expedited utility distribution infrastructure undergrounding
City of Lafayette – Notice of Support**

Dear Senator Portantino:

On behalf of the City of Lafayette, I write in support of SB 884 (McGuire), which would require the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to establish an expedited utility distribution infrastructure undergrounding program.

Specifically, SB 884 requires CPUC to establish an expedited utility distribution infrastructure undergrounding program. A large electrical corporation, defined in existing law to mean an electrical corporation with 250,000 or more accounts in the state, may participate in the program by submitting to CPUC a plan that identifies the undergrounding projects that will be constructed as part of the program, including timelines for the completion of those undergrounding projects, by July 1, 2023. Additionally, the bill grants certain streamlining benefits to undergrounding projects identified in an approved plan. To protect rate payers, the bill would require each undergrounding project to fully exhaust all available federal, state, and other non-ratepayer moneys before any costs are recovered from ratepayers.

In recent years, California has become increasingly susceptible to the effects of climate change, which includes catastrophic wildfires, sea level rise, drought, and other extreme weather events. Many of these extreme weather events contribute to fires catalyzed by electric utility lines, which can topple and spark dry brush during periods of high winds. The lack of stewardship from America's largest utility – PG&E – has resulted in countless wildfires, rolling power outages, and a draw on city resources and public safety responses. SB 884 will provide a path to expedite undergrounding of 10,000 miles of PG&E utility lines in the highest fire risk zones, save ratepayers money, and hold PG&E accountable to their timelines. Currently, PG&E undergrounds less than 100 miles of their electrical lines annually.

By creating an expedited path toward undergrounding utility powerlines, communities throughout the state will see massive public safety benefits by reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. For these reasons, the City of Lafayette supports SB 884.

Sincerely,

Teresa Geringer
Mayor
City of Lafayette

cc: Senator Steve Glazer
Assembly Member Rebecca Bauer-Kahan