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March 18, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the undersigned groups we would like to thank you for your leadership and diligent attention to the issues affecting California during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As the pandemic continues, the economic ramifications are becoming clear. Our organizations are concerned that interruptions to certain essential government services could have severe negative economic ramifications for citizens at a time when they are already under stress. As you know, the real estate industry is central to the overall health of the economy.

In particular, we request that the recording and other work of the County Recorders be declared an essential service which should remain open, with steps taken in order minimize any risk to workers. Steps to ensure safety could include permitting recording of documents only submitted online or through electronic platforms and by mail or in-person delivery by appointment only with appropriate safeguards, for the duration of the crisis.

The reasons for this are self-evident. In the absence of a functioning county recorder, real estate transactions, many of which are already in progress, might not be able to be closed. This would result in additional and significant hardships to the persons involved especially those who are buying or selling a home. Also, with record low interest rates, there is also likely going to be an opportunity for many California homeowners to refinance at the lower rates, which would provide immediate economic relief to homeowners dealing with the challenges of these times. Without a functioning recorder's office that opportunity could be lost.

We respectfully request that your office ensure that any emergency orders that are pending at the state or county level declare that the work of the County Registrar and Recorders are an essential service and that they shall remain open and continue to conduct business, of course with safeguards for their employees during the ongoing crisis.

In these difficult times, we know the economic ramifications of this pandemic will be substantial, but believe this step will help to support the individuals and entities involved in real estate and lending transactions and the economy as a whole.

Sincerely,

California Association of Realtors®
California Land Title Association
California Escrow Association
California Bankers Association
California Mortgage Bankers Association

cc:

Legislative Affairs, Office of the Governor
Honorable Toni Atkins, Senate Pro Tem
Honorable Anthony Rendon, Assembly Speaker