



March 12, 2019

The Honorable Hannah Beth Jackson  
California State Senate  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 46 (Jackson) Emergency services: telecommunications – SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Jackson,

I am writing to you on behalf of the California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) to support SB 46. CARA is California's largest grassroots senior advocacy organization, representing over 1,000,000 seniors and their families through our 270+ affiliated organizations. Our members are seniors, and many of them are also disabled. Seniors and people with disabilities are often those most impacted by natural disasters.

SB 46 expands last year's SB 821 (Jackson, Ch. 615, Stats. 2018) by allowing cities and universities to automatically enroll residents, students, and employees in locally operated emergency alert systems while preserving their ability to opt-out. SB 46 also clarifies that alerting authorities may use wireless telephone subscriber data for the sole purpose of emergency notification, and allows local governments to identify residents with access and functional needs for the purpose of sending them specialized emergency alerts.

The complex planning surrounding the preparation and response to disasters requires a coordinated effort between federal, tribal, territorial, state, local and non-governmental agencies. Disaster management succeeds when all levels of public and private life come together to address the diverse needs of all. However, without dedicated training and resources for agencies and a place at the table for disability and aging leaders, individuals with disabilities and older adults often are forgotten. As disasters increase in intensity and frequency, their threat to communities continues to grow. Moreover, when these disasters strike, people with disabilities and older adults are 2-4 times more likely to be injured or die. Many more are institutionalized. Coordinated planning and responses are necessary to address the needs of people with disabilities, older adults and others with access and functional needs.

Emergency warning systems in California come in a variety of forms and each form has specific capabilities and drawbacks. Systems range from relatively low-tech options like making door-to-door announcements on foot, to outdoor warning sirens, to auto-dialing telephones that can relay detailed emergency information to houses at a block-by-block level. Many jurisdictions in California rely on their own locally operated telephonic emergency notification systems in order to communicate with residents during an emergency. These systems can send pre-recorded messages to landline telephones located within a defined target area, as well as text and voice alerts to mobile telephones. Given the unique ability to target alerts using physical addresses, locally operated telephonic notification systems are among the most precise emergency notification systems in use today, but because registration of mobile phones was not until recently an automatic process, many jurisdictions struggled to get residents to sign

up to receive alerts. For example, when the Thomas Fire – then the largest fire in California history – broke out in December 2017, less than 30 percent of residents in the affected area had signed up to receive county-generated cell phone and email alerts.

SB 46 allows cities and universities to automatically enroll residents, students, and employees in locally operated emergency alert systems while preserving their ability to opt-out. It also clarifies that alerting authorities may use wireless telephone subscriber data for the sole purpose of emergency notification, and allows local governments to identify residents with access and functional needs for the purpose of sending them specialized emergency alerts.

For these reasons, CARA strongly supports SB 46.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hene Kelly".

Hene Kelly  
Legislative Director  
415-533-5244