CITIES ASSOCIATION
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

P.O. Box 3144
Los Altos, CA 94024
www.citiesassociation.org

May 16, 2024

The Honorable Irwin
California State Capitol
1021 O Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1779 (Irwin) Theft: Jurisdiction
Notice of Support

Dear Assembly member Irwin,

We write today on behalf of the Cities Association of Santa Clara County (CASCC), a Joint Powers Authority, an association of fourteen cities of the county and the elected representatives of more than 1.8 million Bay-Area residents. Since 1990, the city representatives have been gathering to discuss and find consensus and solutions for regional issues. The cities of our association are diverse and include cities of a few thousand people and a city of a million people.

On Thursday, May 9, the CASCC Board of Directors, at the recommendation of the Legislative Action Committee (LAC), voted to support Assembly Bill 1779. As you know, retail theft continues to be a problem in nearly all California communities. For example, commercial burglary is at the highest rate since 2008. In fact, according to the PPIC, commercial burglary increased statewide since 2020, especially in larger counties with an increase of 13% among 14 of the 15 largest counties. Across Santa Clara County, cities are experiencing a significant increase in commercial burglaries. For example, in 2023 the city of Cupertino saw an increase of 244% in retail theft as compared to the previous year. To address rising theft, city officials need additional tools to reduce crime and improve the safety of their neighborhoods.

It has become common for offenders to try to avoid higher charges, such as grand theft, by stealing small amounts of items they know are under $950 across several retail businesses. Current law provides that multiple thefts can be aggregated to one charge if these incidents can be proven to be "one intention, one general impulse, and one plan." Unfortunately, this law is limited in scope and CASCC strongly believes it needs strengthening.

Improved aggregation laws for multiple incidents of theft will not be helpful without active prosecution of cases across several jurisdictions. Expanding coordination and abilities of District Attorneys to work together to prosecute theft offenses that occur in several counties will ensure offenders are held accountable.

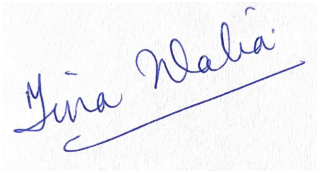
This bill proposes several methods of ensuring and clarifying the process of multi-jurisdictional prosecution as well as aggregation of multiple theft incidents with several victims.

While each individual bill is important in order to continue to make progress on retail theft, it is only a part of a comprehensive solution that needs to include prevention, enforcement, and supervision. Addressing aggregation of multiple theft offenses and cross-county prosecution of offenses are some of the methods that can help solve this growing problem, however additional changes are needed in order to make our communities safer.

For these reasons, the CASCC is pleased to support AB 1779.

Sincerely,

Neysa Fligor
President, Cities Association of Santa Clara
Councilmember, City of Los Altos



Tina Walia
Chair, CASCC Legislative Action Committee
Councilmember, City of Saratoga