September 15, 2020

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for S.4431, the Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the City of Beverly Hills, I am pleased to share the City’s SUPPORT for S.4431, the Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020. With wildland fires raging throughout California and other western states, your bipartisan initiative to help protect communities, businesses and forests from catastrophic wildfires is urgently needed now.

According to the Interagency Fire Center, 4.5 million acres have already burned in Western states this year alone with multiple wildfires threatening to consume even more land and property. The outbreak of wildfires throughout the State of California is stretching limited state and local resources to the breaking point. California has had its most devastating year for wildfires this year. California has experienced over 7,700 fires in 2020, with more than 3.1 million acres burned to date. The fires have destroyed over 1,500 homes and caused at least ten deaths as the state is just now starting to enter its peak fire season months.

The federal government must step up its assistance to impacted states and localities as we confront historic wildfires fueled by high temperatures, severe and long-lasting droughts and powerful Santa Ana winds. The federal government, in partnership with Western states and localities, should become more innovative and proactive in tackling the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change and mismanaged forests.

We commend the bill’s holistic approach in fighting wildfires by providing federal agencies with the necessary tools to reduce hazardous fuels, support forestry jobs, protect people, and property; expanding the Energy Department’s weatherization program; and enhancing the resiliency of critical infrastructure such as hospitals and public safety facilities. We also support your provision requiring the establishment of a fire center in the Western United States with the mission of training new firefighters and forestry professionals.

Thank you for sponsoring S.4431 and for your leadership in Congress.

Sincerely,

Lester J. Friedman
Mayor, City of Beverly Hills