

April 15, 2025

The Honorable Mark Gonzalez
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 6150
Sacramento, CA 95584

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 476: Enhanced Enforcement Against Copper Wire Theft

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez,

The City of Eureka is pleased to support AB 476, which enhances enforcement measures against copper wire theft. This legislation is a crucial step toward protecting California's public infrastructure and ensuring the safety and functionality of essential services that communities rely on daily.

Copper wire theft has become a widespread and costly issue, severely impacting critical infrastructure components such as streetlights, fire hydrants, fire department connections, manhole covers, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, and backflow prevention devices. Thieves often target these public assets due to the high value of the copper, leaving behind significant damage that endangers public safety and imposes burdensome repair costs on local governments and businesses.

The consequences of copper wire theft are far-reaching:

- **Streetlight Tampering:** Stolen copper wiring from streetlights creates hazardous conditions by leaving streets and neighborhoods in darkness, increasing risks for pedestrians, motorists, and law enforcement.
- **Fire Protection System Impairment:** The theft of copper components from fire hydrants or fire department connections weakens emergency response capabilities, endangering lives and property in the event of a fire.
- **Manhole Cover Theft:** The removal of manhole covers poses severe hazards to drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians, leading to potential accidents and injuries.
- **Backflow Device Damage:** Backflow prevention devices protect drinking water supplies from contamination, and theft-related damage compromises water quality and public health.

Public safety remains a top priority for the City of Eureka, and AB 476 provides the necessary enforcement tools to help us deter these crimes. By requiring strict recordkeeping, proof of ownership for nonferrous metals, and prohibiting purchases from unlicensed sellers, this bill ensures greater accountability within the recycling industry. Additionally, empowering law enforcement with the ability to conduct compliance inspections will help curb the illegal

transactions that fuel the copper wire theft industry. AB 476 licensing requirements for scrap metal sellers further establishes a regulated framework that prevents stolen material from entering the market altogether. These provisions will collectively reduce the financial strain on municipalities, enhance public safety, and protect critical infrastructure from criminal exploitation.

The financial burden of repairing and replacing stolen infrastructure components falls on taxpayers, utility providers, and municipalities, draining resources that could otherwise be used for community development and essential services. AB 476 provides much-needed enforcement tools to deter copper wire theft and hold perpetrators accountable for the harm they cause to public safety and infrastructure reliability.

For these reasons, the City of Eureka strongly supports AB 476. Thank you for considering our endorsement of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Kim Bergel
Mayor
City of Eureka