

**Subject line:** Recognizing California’s Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders

Good morning / Good afternoon [REPRESENTATIVE / SENATOR / ASSEMBLYMEMBER / COUNCIL MEMBER / EDITOR’S NAME],

My name is X and I am a California open-water ocean lifeguard with [X AGENCY, X DISTRICT]. I have served as a lifeguard for X seasons, protecting the public on BEACH/AREA OF COASTLINE YOU GUARD.

I am reaching out as part of a statewide effort to address a growing public safety gap within California’s open-water lifeguard workforce. Open-water lifeguards respond to aquatic rescues, medical emergencies, traffic collisions, and trauma incidents yet we are not recognized as first responders in California statute. Because we are not classified as first responders, we are denied the statutory protections and differentials afforded to every other classification performing equivalent emergency response duties.

This is greater than recognition alone: reclassifying lifeguards as first responders allows policy to align with operational reality. It impacts how lifeguards are integrated into broader emergency response systems, and how the profession is sustained over time. In April 2026, Hawai‘i adopted Senate Resolution 54, formally recognizing Open-Water Lifeguards as first responders. U.S. H. Res. 1188 recognizing the work of Open-Water and Ocean Lifeguards as First responders and Emergency Response Providers. We are now asking California to follow suit.

Over the past twenty-six years, California’s Open-Water Lifeguards performed more than 60 million preventive actions and over 1.1 million rescues. In 2025 alone, 1 person drowned on a guarded California beach, while 61 drowned on unguarded beaches. Lifeguards are the decisive variable.

Lifeguards have been called the “forgotten first responder.” Our goal is to change that, and we humbly ask for your help, whether through a letter of support for a California resolution, a conversation with our team, or by helping raise awareness in X CITY?DISTRICT. I have attached a brief information package summarizing the effort, and I would welcome the opportunity to speak further.

Thank you for your consideration, and for the work that you do.

Thank you,

[NAME]

[TITLE / AGENCY / DISTRICT ETC WHATEVER YOUR COMFORTABLE WITH]