
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Retirement of
Santa Barbara County Employees' Retirement System
Santa Barbara, California

Report on the Audit of the Basic Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying Pension Benefit Trust and Other Postemployment Benefit (OPEB) Trust's Statement of Fiduciary Net Position of Santa Barbara County Employees' Retirement System (SBCERS), a component unit of the County of Santa Barbara, California, as of June 30, 2024, the Pension Benefit Trust and OPEB Trust Statement of Changes in Fiduciary Net Position for the fiscal year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise SBCERS' basic financial statements as listed in the table of contents.

In our opinion, the basic financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the fiduciary net position of the Pension Benefit Trust and OPEB Trust of SBCERS as of June 30, 2024, and the respective changes in fiduciary net position for the fiscal year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS) and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Basic Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of SBCERS and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Basic Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the basic financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of basic financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the basic financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about SBCERS' ability to continue as a going concern for twelve months beyond the financial statement date, including any currently known information that may raise substantial doubt shortly thereafter.

Management is also responsible for maintaining a current plan instrument, including all SBCERS plan amendments; administering SBCERS; and determining that SBCERS' transactions that are presented and disclosed in the basic financial statements are in conformity with the SBCERS' plan provisions, including maintaining sufficient records with respect to each of the participants, to determine the benefits due or which may become due to such participants.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Basic Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the basic financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS and *Government Auditing Standards* will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the basic financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS and *Government Auditing Standards*, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the basic financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the basic financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of SBCERS' internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the basic financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about SBCERS' ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Other Matters

Required Supplementary Information

Accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America require that the management's discussion and analysis (MD&A) and the required supplementary information (RSI), as listed in the table of contents, be presented to supplement the basic financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and, although not a part of the basic financial statements, is required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), who considers it to be an essential part of financial reporting for placing the basic financial statements in an appropriate operational, economic, or historical context. We have applied certain limited procedures to the MD&A and RSI in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, which consisted of inquiries of management about the methods of preparing the information and comparing the information for consistency with management's responses to our inquiries, the basic financial statements, and other knowledge we obtained during our audit of the basic financial statements. We do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on the information because the limited procedures do not provide us with sufficient evidence to express an opinion or provide any assurance.

Other Supplementary Information

Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the basic financial statements that collectively comprise SBCERS' basic financial statements. The other supplementary information, as listed in the table of contents, are presented for purposes of additional analysis and are not a required part of the basic financial statements.

Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements or to the basic financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the other supplementary information is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the basic financial statements as a whole.

Other Information

Management is responsible for the other information included in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The other information comprises the introduction, investment, actuarial, statistical, and glossary sections but does not include the basic financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinions on the basic financial statements do not cover the other information, and we do not express an opinion or any form of assurance thereon.

In connection with our audit of the basic financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and consider whether a material inconsistency exists between the other information and the basic financial statements, or the other information otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work performed, we conclude that an uncorrected material misstatement of the other information exists, we are required to describe it in our report.

Report on Summarized Comparative Information

We have previously audited SBCERS' June 30, 2023 basic financial statements, and our report dated December 1, 2023, expressed an unmodified opinion on those audited basic financial statements. In our opinion, the summarized comparative information presented herein as of and for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023, is consistent in all material respects, with the audited basic financial statements from which it has been derived.

Other Reporting Required by *Government Auditing Standards*

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated December 3, 2024, on our consideration of SBCERS' internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and other matters. The purpose of that report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of SBCERS' internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering SBCERS' internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

BROWN ARMSTRONG
ACCOUNTANCY CORPORATION

Brown Armstrong
Accountancy Corporation

Bakersfield, California
December 3, 2024