



April 11, 2023

The Honorable Scott Wiener
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 423 (WIENER) LAND USE: STREAMLINED HOUSING APPROVALS:
MULTIFAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS – SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Wiener,

On behalf of Urban Environmentalists, Active San Gabriel Valley, PLACE Initiative, Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action (PICA), Livable Communities Initiative, Council of Infill Builders, Greenbelt Alliance, and Abundant Housing LA, we write in support of Senate Bill 423, which removes the January 1, 2026 sunset provisions of SB 35 (Wiener, 2017). SB 423 would continue to authorize streamlined, ministerial approval process for infill developments in local jurisdictions that have failed to meet their Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) goals or adopt a compliant housing element. Importantly, the development must include at least a minimum threshold

of subsidized affordable housing, be urban infill rather than sprawl, and be located on a site zoned for residential or mixed-use development.

Infill housing allows more people to find homes near employment opportunities, essential items such as groceries, and other amenities. This supports inherently lower-carbon lifestyles because residents need not drive far – if at all – to reach common destinations. Creating more walkable and bikeable communities with abundant housing also results in a lower pollution burden, due to having less automobile infrastructure. This is a particularly important environmental justice benefit, as people of color have systemically been excluded from walkable communities with low pollution burden. The compact nature of infill housing also prevents urban sprawl, helps preserve natural environments, and results in lower per capita water and power usage. Moreover, already-developed areas are likely to be more climate-resilient and require less energy-intensive heating and cooling than California's fast-growing greenfield sprawl regions.

Our state continues to grapple with the climate crisis, environmental injustice, loss of natural and working lands, and a housing crisis. In these dire circumstances, it would be unconscionable to allow a statutory tool proven to increase affordable infill housing production to lapse.

About our organizations

Urban Environmentalists empowers our network of 7,500 grassroots activists and coalition partners to transform cities and towns into more sustainable, human-centered, and just communities through land use policy reform. We are an initiative of YIMBY Action, a network of nearly 50,000 pro-housing activists fighting for more inclusive housing policies.



Building upon years of collaboration, ideation, and action from a diverse cross section of place-focused professionals, PLACE Initiative is focused on the role that place plays in climate change and equity: Electric cars and renewable energy alone will not be sufficient to meet our 2050 climate goals, and urbanism is the missing link. However, our climate goals cannot be achieved when much of our society is held down by racial and social injustice; with the climate and social crises accelerating, the impact that urban growth and development policy plays on our planet's and society's future must be addressed. PLACE Initiative hopes to motivate a new generation that deeply believes climate and social solutions can wait no longer; it represents the importance of community, and, standing for the intersection of climate change and equity (Proactive Leadership Advocating for Climate and Equity), PLACE hopes to establish partnerships and grow leadership around policy change and advocacy to achieve people-centric solutions to the climate-driven challenges of our future.

Abundant Housing LA is a pro-housing, nonprofit advocacy organization working to help solve Southern California's housing crisis. We support reforms to legalize more homes, make homes easier to build, increase funding for affordable housing, and protect tenants, which are all needed to make housing more affordable, improve access to jobs and transit, promote greater environmental sustainability, and advance racial and economic equity.

The Council of Infill Builders is a statewide organization of real estate professionals committed to improving California through infill development. The organization is dedicated to championing policies that make high-quality infill development easier, cheaper and faster to build.

More information about all of our organizations can be found on our respective websites.

We and our partners fight for better housing policies because we want to reduce poverty, end homelessness, eliminate racial segregation, and create jobs. And because as environmentalists, we know that better housing policies are essential to protect natural habitats and biodiversity, support environmental and transportation justice, and stop climate change.

Our support for SB 423

Since its passage in 2017, SB 35 has become an engine of subsidized affordable housing production, leading to the streamlined approval of over 18,000 new homes, most of which are subsidized homes affordable to low-income households. Although SB 35 has been used successfully across the state since its passage, it is set to expire on January 1, 2026. Without an extension, one of the driving forces of affordable, environmentally-sustainable housing production will cease.

Additionally, the consensus among researchers is that housing scarcity pushes up housing costs. In other words, many cities have high rates of homelessness because they have high housing costs; and they have high housing costs because they haven't built enough housing to meet the demand. California YIMBY recently published a report titled "Housing Abundance as a Condition for Ending Homelessness", which looked at why Houston has better results than California when it comes to reducing homelessness. The report found that Houston has more liberal land use policies that have allowed the city to add large quantities of new housing stock as its population has grown.

Unfortunately, the red tape and obstacles in the way of development in California can make infill housing financially infeasible and discourage projects that would benefit our low-income and unhoused neighbors, as well as our planet. Jurisdictions that have failed to meet their RHNA goals or adopt a compliant housing element are particularly in need of streamlining.

SB 423 is a straightforward solution that will remove the sunset date indefinitely to permit streamlining for both 100% subsidized affordable housing and mixed-income housing that sets aside units for lower-income residents. And it will support this new construction occurring in low-pollution, less car-dependent, and inherently lower-carbon infill locations.

Additionally, SB 423 will remove the current coastal zone exemption in SB 35, which will ensure the housing that is desperately needed in these jurisdictions is built and that Californians are not priced out of living in our more temperate coastal communities – an essential action for climate adaptation and environmental justice.

For these reasons, we support SB 423 (Wiener).

Sincerely,



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Debbie Mytels

Chair

Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action (PICA)



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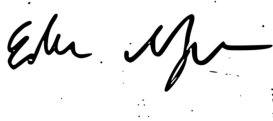
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