



March 20, 2026

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Assembly Bill 1915 – Neighborhood Restaurant Relief – Support

Dear Assemblymember Gabriel,

On behalf of the Council of Infill Builders, we write in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 1915, which would support California’s neighborhood restaurants and encourage a thriving restaurant industry.

The Council of Infill Builders champions sustainable growth, vibrant communities, and a resilient future for all Californians.

California’s restaurants are a cornerstone of the state’s economy, yet the sector has been under severe pressure in recent years. More than [72,000 restaurants](#) closed across the United States in 2024 alone, and restaurant bankruptcies reached their highest levels since the pandemic representing 28% of all large corporate bankruptcies in the first half of 2024.

According to the National Restaurant Association's State of the Restaurant Industry report, [42%](#) of restaurant operators said their establishments were not profitable in 2025. These conditions create barriers to entry for both new brick-and-mortar small businesses and existing small-businesses, particularly restaurants, seeking to open, expand, or update their operation. When a small business operates on thin margins, even minor delays or unexpected costs are detrimental.

Outdated and inconsistently applied building codes add to the problem. Often forcing small operators with limited capital to abandon their plans entirely. The permitting process for equipment replacement in restaurants is equally burdensome: even a straightforward like-for-like equipment swap can trigger weeks-long delays and mandatory inspections that cash-strapped operators cannot afford to wait for.

Many rules have had the unintended effect of preventing the renovation of older buildings or, when renovations proceed, imposing requirements that work against business survival, social progress, and sustainability objectives.

AB 1915 would create a streamlined permitting pathway to allow qualified contractors to self-certify routine equipment installations, modernize California’s food facility codes to reflect realities of how small businesses operate, and cut red tape for small restaurants by amending outdated facility requirements around restrooms, ventilation, and equipment, making it less expensive to open and operate a restaurant.

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By modernizing these rules, streamlining the permitting process, updating definitions, and giving enforcement agencies appropriate flexibility, this legislation helps level the playing field for small businesses competing in an increasingly difficult environment.

For these reasons, the Council of Infill Builders supports this bill.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mott Smith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mott Smith, Director
Council of Infill Builders

