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January 14, 2020

The Honorable Scott Wiener
State Senator, 11th District
State Capitol, Rm. 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

RE: CCCA opposes and requests additional amendments to improve SB 50.

Dear Senator Wiener:

The California Contract Cities Association (CCCA) writes to express opposition to SB 50, which would require local governments to rezone existing general plans to accommodate for increased density in areas identified as transit-rich or job-rich. The current language of the bill, specifically regarding the local flexibility program, does not provide flexibility, funding, or adequate time for local governments to thoughtfully plan and implement alternatives to SB 50. Moreover, a key fundamental issue SB 50 fails to address is needed reforms to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Local governments and housing developers have been subjected to frivolous lawsuits, delays, and high costs due to the misuse of CEQA requirements. Amendments are needed in SB 50 in order to protect the ability of local governments to exercise local land-use authority to create plans that balances the need for denser housing and community input.

Local governments have historically created thoughtful community-oriented plans through existing housing processes, such as the Housing Element or area-specific plans. These plans have identified areas where developers can proactively build denser projects. Instead, market forces, along with challenges from CEQA, have prevented the construction of new development. SB 50 would force cities to expedite the construction of new housing projects with little to no guarantees that developers would build denser housing or drastically create projects that would severely hamper city services and the planning process. SB 50 gives too much discretion for developers to build market-rate housing with little mechanisms to truly address affordability in the housing crisis.

Many of our member cities have expressed their opposition to SB 50 as a one-size-fits-all approach, focused on market-driven housing solutions with minimal attention to affordable housing. Instead, CCCA strongly urges the following changes to SB 50 to address the root challenges, including:

1. Reform CEQA with protections and tools for local governments to prevent frivolous lawsuits against new developments that are unrelated to environmental impacts and that would delay the construction of new housing developments.

2. Extend the proposed implementation deadline of 2021, possibly an additional two years, for local governments to properly develop individualized local flexibility programs and provide additional extensions for local governments that have demonstrated good-faith efforts to develop a comprehensive plan that balances the needs for denser housing and community input.
3. Provide funding or incentive programs for cities to encourage developers to build affordable housing units in transit-rich and/or job-rich areas; and/or
4. Develop a regional funding program that provides additional funding incentives for local governments that want to plan for density that exceeds SB 50's requirement, such as a cap-and-trade-style program.

CCCA is dedicated to finding collaborative solutions and is committed to working with Senator Wiener to address the ongoing housing crisis. However, as the bill stands, CCCA opposes SB 50 and respectfully requests that the bill be further amended.

Respectfully,



Sandra Armenta, City of Rosemead
President,
California Contract Cities Association



Gustavo Camacho, City of Pico Rivera
Legislative Chair,
California Contract Cities Association

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CC:

Member Cities

Sen. Anthony Portantino, Chair of Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Appropriations Committee