



April 12, 2017

The Honorable Sebastian Ridley-Thomas
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2176
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT AB 239 (Ridley-Thomas)

Dear Assemblyman Ridley-Thomas:

The California Housing Consortium (CHC) is pleased to support your bill, AB 239, which would assist in the development of affordable housing by making a minor change to the CEQA Infill and Affordable Housing exemptions.

CHC is a non-partisan advocate for the production and preservation of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income Californians. We represent the development, building, financial, and public sectors united in their goal that every Californian has a safe, affordable place to call home.

California families are facing a harder time finding a place to live than at any point in our history. California's broken and backward housing policies have contributed to the worsening crisis:

- A decade of disinvestment has starved local communities of the seed dollars they need to bring affordable homes to struggling neighborhoods. A new report from the state's own Department of Housing and Community Development finds "unstable funding for affordable-home development is impeding our ability to meet California's housing needs, particularly for lower-income households."
- California spends \$300 million in tax dollars every year to subsidize purchases of second homes for some Californians when millions more struggle to have a roof over their head at all.
- Existing laws that require local governments to plan to accommodate jobs and growth haven't resulted in the promised affordable development.

Existing law provides for several CEQA exemptions, including exemptions for certain kinds of residential housing projects in order to create a streamlined procedure for affordable and urban infill housing projects that do not have an adverse effect on the environment. In the LAO's March 2015 report on "California's High Housing Costs: Causes and Consequences," the report noted

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that CEQA is one of the most significant factors hindering housing development. AB 239 improves the Infill and Affordable Housing CEQA exemptions by amending the definition of “urban area” [PRC §21094.5(e)] or “urbanized area” (PRC §21071) to specify minimum population density thresholds for unincorporated areas instead of requiring a specified population or the population density of the surrounding cities.

AB 239 comes at a crucial time for California, when state housing investment has plummeted by 69% in the last decade, worsening the unprecedented housing affordability crisis in our state. Today, more than 1.7 million Californians are paying more than half their income in rent – leaving too few dollars for nutrition, medicine, transportation, and other fundamentals.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue and your ongoing commitment to ensuring the availability of housing affordable to all Californians. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact our Policy Director, Marina Wiant, at (916) 272-2325 or mwiant@calhsng.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Pearl". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ray Pearl
Executive Director

CC: Assembly Committee on Natural Resources