



April 6, 2023

The Honorable Buffy Wicks  
California State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 4240  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Assembly Bill 68 (Ward) - Housing and Climate Solutions Act - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wicks,

Climate Action Campaign (CAC) is a non-profit organization based in Southern California with a simple mission: create a zero carbon future through effective and equitable policy action.

On behalf of CAC, I write in support of AB 68, which will help alleviate California's housing crisis and reduce climate change risk by streamlining approvals and increasing the number of homes near jobs, schools, parks, transit, and other resources, while reducing sprawl into natural and working lands.

We cannot solve the climate crisis without simultaneously solving the housing crisis. Inequitable, dangerous, unsustainable, and expensive sprawling areas should not be the only places families can afford to live. Low-income communities of color, specifically, should not be forced to make daily long commutes from their homes to get to work, go to the grocery store, or take their children to school causing them to spend a substantial amount of their monthly income on housing and transportation alone.

For decades, planners and climate experts have known that restrictions on zoning for multi-family, infill housing in our cities push new housing growth further into natural and working lands. This increasingly puts people in the path of wildfires, floods, and other climate disasters, increases the pollution that causes climate change, and takes away critical natural lands

that make us more resilient to the impacts from our changing climate. The outward expansion of cities is now one of the leading causes of rising carbon emissions in the state.

Local governments must take a holistic approach to land use planning by prioritizing the development of affordable and dense housing in walkable, bikeable neighborhoods. This is a key strategy to slashing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the transportation sector, which is the largest source of emissions in our region.

At minimum, everyone deserves quality housing that is affordable, sustainable, safe and in close proximity to life's essential goods and services such as public transit, good schools, family sustaining jobs, and green open spaces. This is what CAC has been advocating for since 2015.

California needs to build at least 2.5 million new housing units by 2030 to meet our needs—a target impossible to achieve at our current rate of around 100,000 new units per year. The shortage of available housing has caused rental prices to skyrocket throughout the state, put homeownership out of reach for the majority of Californians, and contributed to rising homelessness. [More than half](#) of California renters are rent-burdened, meaning they spend at least 30% of their income on rent.

Our housing shortage is fueled by local policies that stop smaller, more naturally affordable homes from being built in many communities near jobs, schools, parks, transit, and other critical resources. As a result of policies that push new housing growth into remote areas. Now, more than a quarter of Californians live in areas at [high risk of wildfire](#).

The Housing and Climate Solutions Act (AB 68) will make it faster and easier to build more homes near jobs, schools, transit, and other resources, addressing the housing shortage and bringing down costs while helping to keep Californians out of areas at high risk of fires and floods.

AB 68 will put more homes and more people in the areas they want to live. The bill builds on the planning local governments have already done to identify priority locations for new infill housing through their Sustainable Communities Strategies. It also provides streamlined, fast-tracked approval for multi-family housing – which is often more affordable and accessible for lower- and middle-income Californians and communities of color – in walkable neighborhoods. Critical tenant protections are included to ensure that new development does not remove low-income or rent-controlled housing.

AB 68 ensures that local governments plan more sustainably by focusing development in climate-safe existing communities and away from areas more susceptible to wildfires, floods, and other climate-driven disasters. Legalizing more homes in climate-safe areas will not only

keep more Californians out of harm's way, it will reduce climate pollution from long car commutes, protect valuable natural and working lands, and create more equitable, sustainable, and affordable housing for everyone.

It is for these reasons that CAC is proud to support AB 68 (Ward).

Sincerely,

*Madison Coleman*

Madison Coleman  
Policy Advocate  
Climate Action Campaign