

JUNE 8, 2016

JOINT LETTER CONCERNING THE 'BY RIGHT' DEVELOPMENT BUDGET TRAILER 707 (UPDATED)

Dear Senate President Pro Tem de Leon, Assembly Speaker Rendon, and Members of the Senate and Assembly:

We are more than 50 organizations with members and roots in racially diverse urban communities across California. We write to urge you to reject the present Budget trailer bill proposal that gives developers the power to force approval of projects “by right” without public or environmental review. This proposal represents a huge give-away to the real estate industry and at the particular expense of low-income residents and communities of color.

Let us be clear: we are not NIMBYs. We are staunch supporters of building more affordable housing in our own communities and elsewhere. But in our view a law that promotes building housing that is 90% or 95% **un**affordable to the majority of people in our communities is **not** an inclusive “affordable housing” policy.

But our concerns go beyond a disagreement over affordability levels. We believe it is profoundly unjust and undemocratic for the state to take away from our communities the ability to review and engage in the decisions about development proposals. We cannot rely merely on zoning standards and the “ministerial” authority of city planning staff to prevent the displacement of existing tenants, small businesses, community institutions, and jobs. This puts disadvantaged neighborhoods at the mercy of real estate developers who already wield too much power at all levels of government.

Urban minority communities in particular have for too long been treated by developers and planners as a blank canvas for urban renewal, highways, shopping malls, office towers, and gentrifying development. All of these approaches share something in common with the current “by right” proposal: they override the input of low income people of color in the service of some supposed “greater good” defined by those in power. Even in the absence of bias, existing zoning may be badly out of date or simply wrong relative to the needs of neighborhoods. And rushed city planning staff can and do make mistakes in reviewing project proposals. Meaningful public review is our only means to correct the gaps, errors, and biases of the project approval process.

We agree that the approval process in many cities can be a barrier to the development of affordable housing. We would support new policies to assure that all communities in California do their fair share to facilitate building housing that is affordable. But the “by right” proposal leaves privileged communities completely insulated from the new policy because they can merely maintain or redesign zoning restrictions to keep out affordable housing. Low-income communities of color whose power is in participating in a public process on a neighborhood level will be completely cut out.

Denying our communities a voice in the development process within our neighborhoods is fundamentally unfair and raises significant equity and potential fair housing concerns. We should be looking for solutions to stem the tide of displacement in California’s urban communities and to build affordable housing everywhere. We urge you to vote no on the “by right” development bill.

If there are questions regarding this letter please contact: in Southern California, Laura Raymond of ACT-LA at lraymond@allianceforcommunitytransit.org or 646-344-0381, and in Northern California, Sam Tepperman-Gelfant of Public Advocates at stepperman-gelfant@publicadvocates.org or 415-625-8464.

STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS

ALLIANCE OF CALIFORNIANS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (ACCE)

Anthony Thigpenn, President
CALIFORNIA CALLS

Eddie Kurtz, Executive Director
COURAGE CAMPAIGN

John Shaban, President
GAMALIEL OF CALIFORNIA

Corey Timpson, Executive Director
PICO CALIFORNIA

Sam Tepperman-Gelfant, Senior Staff Attorney
PUBLIC ADVOCATES INC.

Dawn Phillips, Executive Director
RIGHT TO THE CITY ALLIANCE

Aimee Inglis, Acting Director
TENANTS TOGETHER

REGIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Laura Raymond, Campaign Director
ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY TRANSIT (ACT-LA)
Los Angeles

Erin McElroy and Carla Wojczuk
ANTI-EVICTION MAPPING PROJECT
San Francisco

Miya Yoshitani, Executive Director
ASIAN PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK
Oakland and Richmond

Julia Cato

BERKELEY TENANTS UNION
Berkeley

Maria Poblet, Executive Director
CAUSA JUSTA :: JUST CAUSE
Oakland-San Francisco

Tim Frank
CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOODS
Berkeley

Rev. Norman Fong, Executive Director
CHINATOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER
San Francisco

Alex Tom, Executive Director
CHINESE PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION
San Francisco

Larry Gross, Executive Director
COALITION FOR ECONOMIC SURVIVAL
Los Angeles

Daniel Saver, Attorney
COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES IN EAST PALO ALTO
East Palo Alto

Fernando Martí and Peter Cohen, Co-directors
COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS
San Francisco

Joshua Simon, Executive Director
EAST BAY ASIAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Oakland

Isela Gracian, President
EAST LA COMMUNITY CORPORATION
Los Angeles

Nancy Halpern Ibrahim
ESPERANZA COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION
Los Angeles

Jennifer Martinez, Executive Director
FAITH IN ACTION-BAY AREA
San Francisco and San Mateo Counties

Andy Levine

FAITH IN COMMUNITY
Fresno

Sarah Sherburn-Zimmer
HOUSING RIGHTS COMMITTEE OF SAN FRANCISCO
San Francisco

Elsa P. Chagolla, Executive Director
INQUILINOS UNIDOS (UNITED TENANTS)
Los Angeles

Alexandra Suh, Executive Director
KOREATOWN IMMIGRANT WORKERS ALLIANCE
Los Angeles

Gordon Mar, Executive Director
JOBS WITH JUSTICE SAN FRANCISCO
San Francisco

Rev. Zachary Hoover, Executive Director
LA VOICE
Los Angeles

Remy De La Peza, Director of Planning & Policy Counsel
LITTLE TOKYO SERVICES CENTER
Los Angeles

Jorge Rivera
LONG BEACH RESIDENTS EMPOWERED (LIBRE)
Long Beach

Tamika Butler, Executive Director
LOS ANGELES COUNTY BICYCLE COALITION
Los Angeles

Luis Granados, Executive Director
MISSION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
San Francisco

Marty Bennett, Chair
NORTH BAY JOBS WITH JUSTICE
Santa Rosa

Omar Medina, President
THE NORTH BAY ORGANIZING PROJECT
Santa Rosa

Gregory Smith, Board Member

PACT: PEOPLE ACTING IN COMMUNITY TOGETHER
San Jose

Antonio Díaz, Organizational Director
PEOPLE ORGANIZING TO DEMAND ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC RIGHTS (PODER)
San Francisco

Martha Dina Argüello, Executive Director
PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - LA
Los Angeles

Edwin Morgado, Executive Director
PLACER PEOPLE OF FAITH TOGETHER
Placer County

Shashi Hanuman, Directing Attorney
PUBLIC COUNSEL
Los Angeles

Matthew Reed, Senior Organizer
SACRED HEART HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE
San Jose

Patricia Hoffman and Denny Zane, Co-Chairs
SANTA MONICANS FOR RENTERS' RIGHTS
Santa Monica

Deepa Varma, Director
SAN FRANCISCO TENANTS UNION
San Francisco

SEIU 1021
Oakland - San Francisco - Sacramento

Anthony King
SILICON VALLEY DE-BUG
San Jose

Sissy Trinh
SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
Los Angeles

Cynthia Strathmann, Executive Director
STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR A JUST ECONOMY (SAJE)
Los Angeles

Sandra McNeill, Executive Director
TENEMOS QUE RECLAMAR Y UNIDOS SALVAR LA TIERRA-SOUTH LA (T.R.U.S.T. SOUTH LA)

Los Angeles

Chancee Martorell, Executive Director
THAI COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Los Angeles

Mike Henneberry, Political Director
UFCW Local 5
Hayward - San Jose

Milton Hum, Secretary-Treasurer
UFCW Local 648
San Francisco

Ken Tray, Political Director
UNITED EDUCATORS OF SAN FRANCISCO
San Francisco

UNITE HERE Local 2
San Francisco

Tony Roshan Samara, Program Director of Land Use and Housing
URBAN HABITAT
Oakland

Francesca de la Rosa, Director of Policy and Strategic Alliances
WOMEN ORGANIZING RESOURCES, KNOWLEDGE AND SERVICES (WORKS)
Los Angeles

(PARTIAL LIST AS OF 6/8/2016 10:26 AM)