



April 22, 2019

The Honorable Richard Bloom
California State Assembly
Sacramento, California

Re: AB 36 – Support

Dear Assemblymember Bloom:

On behalf of the Planning and Conservation League (PCL), we write to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 36. Skyrocketing rents in California have reached a crisis level, and AB 36 restores the ability of local governments to protect struggling families with rent stabilization policy.

We are in a housing affordability crisis *and* a climate crisis, and a primary focus of PCL's advocacy is towards development of policy that supports equitable infill investment in existing communities that will successfully address California's climate and housing goals. In both the "2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update" and the "2018 Progress Report" on Sustainable Communities Strategies, the California Air Resources Board has found that to meet our 2030 and 2050 climate goals we need to significantly reduce Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and associated greenhouse gas emissions through more efficient land use and increased transportation options.

Yet, PCL recognizes that targeted investment towards the infill that is needed to meet our climate goals inevitably adds to gentrification and displacement pressures on low-income residents in these existing communities. Thus, this needed infill investment *must* be coupled with anti-displacement protections to guard against the perpetuation of historical patterns of segregation, to ensure the vulnerable residents of these communities equitably reap the benefits of these investments, as well as to ensure that our ability to meet our climate goals is not undermined by forcing low-wage workers into long commutes. Locally established rent-stabilization ordinances, which AB 36 would expand allowance for, are one of the primary mechanisms needed to guard against this kind of indirect-displacement pressure.

Assembly Bill 36 would make limited, reasonable reforms to the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act. The major provisions of the Costa-Hawkins Act affected by AB 36 -- pre-emption of local authority to regulate rent increases in newer housing units, condos and single-family homes -- have tied the hands of communities seeking to enact controls on rent increases and ensure residents are not unfairly displaced. Under the Costa-Hawkins Act, communities are prohibited from applying their rent protections to single-family homes and buildings built after 1995, with some communities prohibited from applying these protections to buildings built after 1978. These arbitrary restrictions have prevented communities from enacting measures to protect renters while allowing landlords to successfully operate their businesses, and must be updated.

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AB 36 is distinct from the recent ballot proposition related to the Costa-Hawkins Act, Proposition 10, and Californians have never wavered in their support for reasonable controls on rent increases. A poll conducted in September, 2017 indicated 6 in 10 California voters supported local rent control laws. More recently, polls conducted in 2018 indicated Californians consider high rents the most important problem facing our state, and voters agree that a lack of local rent control is the top reason for these high rents. Unlike Proposition 10, which sought a wholesale repeal of the Costa-Hawkins Act, AB 36 simply seeks to return decision-making on two key considerations regarding rent control to the local level: the age of buildings for which rent control can apply, and whether to apply local rent control to condos and single-family homes owned by large landlords.

These questions are most appropriately determined by local communities based on local considerations, and AB 36 removes arbitrary restrictions to ensure local renter protections can remain up to date and effective in bringing needed stability to families and neighborhoods across California. Thank you for authoring this critically important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew Baker".

Matthew Baker, Policy Director
Planning and Conservation League