



July 24, 2020

TO: David Chiu, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development

Re: Housing By Right on Land Owned by a Religious Institution or Nonprofit College

We represent a diverse group of stakeholders working together to address California’s housing supply and affordability crisis and write to express our strong support for SB 899.

SB 899 provides that housing shall be a use by right on land owned by a religious institution or nonprofit college under specified conditions. Those conditions include locational specifications and restrictions on units for moderate or low-income households. In addition, the bill requires compliance with local development standards not in conflict with the bill and specifies density limits and ancillary uses. Under the bill, a religious institution or nonprofit college must partner with a qualified development entity on a project.

The housing shortage and affordability crisis in California has been amply documented. While the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) estimates that 180,000 units need to be built annually to maintain housing costs, actual housing production has been less than 80,000 units per year for the last decade. The 2016 McKinsey study calculated that California has a shortage of more than 2 million units, and that it would take building 500,000 units over a seven-year period to normalize housing prices.

As a result, the cost of housing in California is twice the national average, and only 28% of households can afford median-priced homes. Over 80% of low-income renters pay more than 30% of their income for housing.

Recent reports by Mercy Housing and the Low Income Investment Fund as well as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation have described instances in California and other states where mission-driven entities have partnered or are partnering with developers to produce housing projects on the land of the entities. However, such projects can be very difficult to undertake due to planning and financial obstacles. SB 899 will reduce the time, expense, and uncertainty of such projects, thereby making them more feasible to pursue. As a result, the opportunity to expand the supply of badly-needed affordable housing will be enhanced.

For the foregoing reasons, we are pleased to support SB 899. If you have any questions, please contact Roger Dickinson at dickinson31@comcast.net or (916) 599-2456.

Sincerely,

Anya Lawler, Legislative Advocate
Western Center on Law & Poverty

Michelle Pariset, Policy Advocate
Public Advocates

Melissa Romero, Legislative Affairs Manager
California League of Conservation Voters

Meea Kang, Director
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Howard Penn, Executive Director
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