



State Senator Benjamin Allen
Chair Senate Environmental Quality Committee
Capitol Room 2205
Sacramento, CA 95814

May 20, 2020

RE: SB 950 (Jackson) SUPPORT

Dear Senator Allen,

The Planning and Conservation League, and the undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support of SB 950. This legislation is a well-reasoned and pragmatic compilation of amendments to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), making the valuable public process that CEQA provides both more efficient and protective of our environment and communities.

For 50 years, CEQA has protected our environment, improved the livability of our communities, and kept Californians healthy and safe. CEQA still remains the State's primary mechanism to keep citizens informed and involved in the planning processes that affect their lives, and to minimize the environmental impacts of new development through that process. While we do not agree with arguments that CEQA is a primary inhibitor of needed development in California, we do find that the CEQA process has become unnecessarily more costly, time consuming, and misused in ways not intended or foreseen 50 years ago.

SB 950 is the product of a year-long "CEQA 2.0" process that brought together expert CEQA practitioners representing developers, environmental and environmental justice advocates, and state and local agencies. The goal of these convenings was to develop consensus-based amendments that allow for a more efficient, effective and predictable CEQA process for the 21st century, while also enhancing the community and environmental protection benefits of that process.

The amendments to the statute that SB 950 presents will: provide case management, tolling agreement, and settlement protocols that offer opportunities for significantly streamlining preparation of the record and for the resolution or settlement of conflicts without prolonged litigation; provide opportunities for increased CEQA expertise in the court system as well as improved access to that expertise; provide opportunities to better address final public comments on environmental review; discourage settlements enacted primarily for the purposes of monetary gain; discourage bad-faith challenges to affordable housing; correct a loophole in election code that allows for the by-passing of CEQA; clarify basic translation requirements for CEQA notices for improved access to the process for non-English speakers; streamline emergency and supportive infill housing projects for our most vulnerable residents: remove

obsolete sections and language from the statute; and explicitly include environmental justice as a necessary impact for analysis.

With increasingly complex statewide problems, including critical affordable housing shortages, increasing social inequities, climate change, wildfire and drought, it is more important than ever that CEQA function effectively and efficiently.

Sincerely,

Howard Penn
Executive Director
Planning and Conservation League

Curt Johansen
President
Council of Infill Builders