



January 27, 2021

Governor Gavin Newsom
c/o Jason Elliott
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

We oppose the creation of a Housing Accountability Unit (HAU) within the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in your 2021-22 Proposed Budget as it was described at your press conference on January 8th, 2021.

We hope we have a misunderstanding about the role of the proposed unit, but your description of the function of this unit seemed fairly direct and explicit.

It would be unprecedented and unacceptable for the state to send teams into meetings of city councils, county boards of supervisors, and local planning commissions, to “monitor” whether they are behaving properly “before the articles” come out reporting their decisions, as you stated at the press conference.

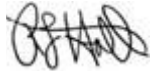
We hope you merely mean to provide assistance to local government, but that is not what we heard. We heard a description of encroachment by the executive branch of government in the operations of local jurisdictions and their constituents. Executive branch representatives monitoring locally elected or appointed officials in order to decide if they are doing the right thing will clearly chill free discussions among the people and their local governments.

Local jurisdictions are being blamed and punished for statewide failures that cities and counties have no resources to address — the severe shortfall in low-income housing that clearly requires state subsidies, while the glut of market-rate housing continues to grow, helped by state law focused on production instead of poverty.

With the state's focus on producing as much market rate housing as possible, it is highly unlikely that the proposed HAU will improve things. The worsening relations between cities and the state will grow.

Livable California is a nonprofit that advocates for empowerment of local governments to foster equitable, livable communities and truly affordable housing. We emphasize the preservation of local democracy and support sustainable, forward-thinking legislation on issues including housing, transportation, and the environment.

Very truly yours,



Livable California

www.livablecalifornia.org

cc: Hon. Senator Toni Atkins
cc: Hon. Assemblymember Anthony Rendon
cc: Hon. Assemblymember Phil Ting
cc: Hon Senator Nancy Skinner
cc: Hon Senator Anthony Portantino
cc: Hon Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez
cc; League of California Cities Carolyn Coleman