



April 21, 2021

Hon. Mike McGuire, Chair  
Senate Governance and Finance Committee  
State Capitol, Room 408  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: OPPOSE AB 55 (Stern) as amended 4/5/2021**

Dear Chairman McGuire,

Livable California is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization that represents over 10,000 Californians committed to critical aspects of state housing policies. We support truly affordable, sustainable housing legislation and land use and development decisions made by local governments.

**We oppose SB 55** (Stern), as amended, for two primary reasons. First and foremost, the bill would continue to allow extensive residential development in very high fire severity zones (VHFSZ). We realize that this likely is not the bill's intent, but it will be the outcome. SB 55 does move to limit that development but undercuts itself with an "unless" exception. Given our state's experiences over the last decade we simply can no longer risk "unless."

Compounding the problem, these new provisions are vague: SB 55 would allow development in currently prohibited areas if there is "substantial evidence that the local agency has adopted a comprehensive, necessary, and appropriate wildfire prevention and community hardening strategy to mitigate significant risks of loss, injury, or death." Every word - including "the" - in that sentence is subject to a range of interpretations and applications, adding confusion and uncertainty even as local and regional authorities try to prepare for the worst.

Second, SB 55 would increase the state density bonus law by allowing developers an additional 10 feet or 20 percent above local height restrictions, whichever is greater. This is another unfair giveaway to developers of California's already oversaturated market rate housing supply. It will do nothing to address much less ease our state's housing affordability, homelessness, and outmigration crises.

We oppose this bill and urge you to do the same. We stand ready and willing to work with you and your committee to craft better solutions to the state's housing affordability crisis.

Sincerely, The Board of Directors of Livable California

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Hall", written over a horizontal line.

Rick Hall, President  
T Keith Gurnee, Member  
Carey White, Member  
Isaiah Madison, Member