



August 17, 2023

The Honorable Chris Holden
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 423 (Wiener) Land use: Streamlined Housing Approvals: Multifamily Housing Developments. Notice of Opposition

Dear Assembly Member Holden:

If passed, SB 423 would be one of the most consequential laws to impact our precious California coast since Proposition 20 passed in 1972. A voter Initiative, Proposition 20 declared that "it is the policy of the State to preserve, protect, and where possible, restore the resources of the coastal zone for the enjoyment of the current and succeeding generations." It led to the creation of The Coastal Act and the California Coastal Commission who were bestowed with broad authority to regulate coastal development. SB 423 would remove many of the vital protections in the Coastal Zone by the Coastal Act at a time when they are needed more than ever. In the face of climate change and sea level rise, coastal development needs to be carefully reviewed, not streamlined without community and local government oversight.

Each of us who have signed this letter are elected Mayors or a Council Member representing cities in the Coastal Zone. We understand there is an affordable housing crisis and agree that each of our Cities should be part of the solution. Each of us have Certified Housing Elements*, have zoned for our respective Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) numbers, have put in place policies to encourage development, including Inclusionary Housing policies, and have reviewed and approved development including projects with affordable housing units.

We also know, and urge you to understand, that there are realities about Coastal Zone properties that are different from other parts of California. While we agree we need more affordable housing on the Coast, SB 423 will incentivize the exact opposite. Most Coastal Cities in Southern California and elsewhere in the state are, with the exception of environmentally protected and vitally important open space areas, largely built out with little to no vacant land available on which to build. As a result, every new development is a *re-development* of existing housing or local businesses. Given the high property values in these Coastal Cities, SB 423 will encourage destruction of the naturally affordable housing units we do have, replacing them with high-priced luxury units with very few affordable units included.

* The City of Oceanside has rezoned for RHNA housing unit allocations and its Housing Element is compliant with state law and pending certification.

In North San Diego County coastal cities, rents for newly-constructed one bedroom apartments now start at \$5750 per month, and new for-sale multi-family homes of 1800 square feet are selling for \$2,995,000. Rather than retaining existing naturally affordable housing for workers in retail and restaurant jobs, seniors, students, teachers and other lower-income earners, SB 423 will cause the displacement of these residents and replacement of their homes with high-priced housing which they cannot afford. We are seeing it already, and as a result, our coastal cities are becoming wealthier and less diverse.

Additionally, “mom and pop” businesses which give the coast a unique visitor and resident experience, would be eliminated by development of new mixed-use projects which will charge higher rents for businesses and housing alike. The fabric of our coastal communities will be forever changed. And for what? SB 423 will encourage higher density and perpetuate gentrification with little to no affordability.

As stated above, SB 423 would also prevent proper evaluation of projects. Many of California’s coastal cities have fragile bluffs, wetlands, lagoons, and inlets. New development near these areas must be evaluated prior to building any project. Additionally, without oversight, new private developments will impact access to the beach, the very reason Proposition 20 was passed. The Coastal Act mandates the protection of coastal access, scenic and visual qualities and that permitted development “shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas...[and]to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas.” Without oversight, these protections, many of which are subjective in nature, will be ignored. Along with our minimal vacant land, higher land values, and natural and scenic resources that must be protected, it was right to exempt the Coastal Zone from SB 35, and wrong to include it in SB 423.

The beauty and diversity of our coastline is an economic advantage not just to the individual cities, but to the entire state. As stewards of the coast, our collective charge is to protect and preserve the unique attributes of coastal California, not hand them over to for-profit developers.

SB 423 will allow unchecked, unlimited development, including the “Builders Remedy” in our precious coastal zones with little to no societal benefits. It undermines local democracy and the voice of Californians who have consistently supported protecting our coasts for the enjoyment of everyone, not just our cities’ residents.

Therefore we, the Mayors and a Council Member representing several Southern California coastal cities who have signed this letter, respectfully urge you to protect our California coast and vote No on SB 423.

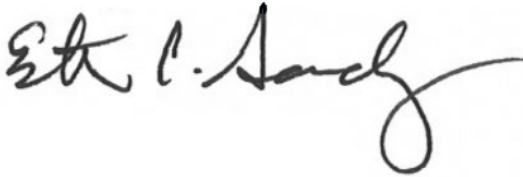
Sincerely,



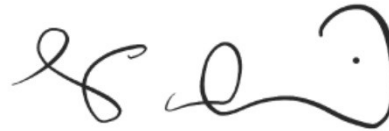
Lesa Heebner
Mayor, City of Solana Beach



Joe LaCava
City Council Member, District 1
City of San Diego



Esther Sanchez
Mayor, City of Oceanside



Paloma Aguirre
Mayor, City of Imperial Beach



Tony Kranz
Mayor, City of Encinitas



Tracy Martinez
Mayor, City of Del Mar



Keith Blackburn
Mayor, City of Carlsbad

cc: Senator Scott Wiener, 11th District (Author)
Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins, 39th District
Senator Brian Jones, 40th District
Senator Catherine Blakespear, 38th District
Senator Kelly Seyarto, 32nd District
Senator Steve Padilla, 18th District
Assembly Member Laurie, Davies, 74th District
Assembly Member Marie Waldron, 75th District
Assembly Member Brian Maienschein, 76th District
Assembly Member Tasha Boerner, 77th District
Assembly Member Chris Ward, 78th District
Assembly Member Akilah Weber, 79th District
Assembly Member David Alvarez, 80th District