LETTERHEAD

DATE

The Honorable Gavin Newsom

California Governor

1021 O Street, Room 9000

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SENATE BILL 499 (STERN) — REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE**

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of ORGANIZATION NAME, I am writing to respectfully request your signature on Senate Bill (SB) 499. This bill is a critical measure that clarifies that local agencies are able to collect certain fees before issuance of the certificate of occupancy if the fees are for parkland or recreational facilities that serve an emergency purpose.

As California faces increasingly severe wildfires and other climate-driven disasters, it is vital that we empower communities with every available tool for mitigation and emergency response. Parks and recreational areas are more than community amenities—they are integral components of our public safety and emergency infrastructure. These spaces serve as fuel breaks, emergency gathering sites, evacuation staging areas, heating or cooling centers during climate emergencies, and much more. Recent events such as the Palisades and Eaton Fires have underscored the need for comprehensive, cross-sector planning. SB 499 acknowledges and codifies the essential role that parks and recreational facilities play in emergency preparedness and wildfire resiliency and mitigation.

Over the last several years, the Legislature has enacted a substantial number of housing-related bills, each aimed at addressing different aspects of California’s housing crisis. These measures have covered a wide spectrum of issues, from streamlining approvals and reducing regulatory barriers to incentivizing affordable housing and increasing overall supply. While those legislative efforts have been broad in scope and far-reaching in impact, this particular bill focuses on a singular and narrowly tailored situation. In this specific case, we believe that a clarification of the exemptions currently written into existing law is both warranted and necessary in order to ensure that certain critical, life-saving projects are not inadvertently delayed or deprioritized. The purpose of this clarification is to make certain that projects directly tied to emergency preparedness and public safety receive the priority they deserve. These types of projects—including improvements designed to address wildfire risks, flood management needs, or other hazards—are essential to protecting communities and residents in times of crisis. For that reason, it is vitally important that they be allowed to move forward as quickly as possible. By ensuring that such projects can begin promptly once a new development is underway, the bill guarantees that they will be available to serve residents immediately as they transition into their new homes. This approach not only safeguards lives and property but also helps build public confidence that new housing will be accompanied by the essential safety infrastructure that communities depend upon.

The only substantive adjustment that this measure introduces is narrowly tailored and directed toward timing. Specifically, it clarifies the timeline for collection of certain categories of fees so that the revenues become available in advance of critical needs, rather than only after an emergency or natural disaster has already taken place. This means that the funds can be deployed in conjunction with the development for the necessary upgrades, repairs, or improvements to facilities and lands that serve the public. These improvements are intended to address urgent vulnerabilities and prepare for foreseeable crises, including but not limited to wildfire mitigation, enhanced flood management, responses to active shooter incidents, measures for extreme heat events, and other emergency conditions that may pose threats to public safety and wellbeing. It is critical to make the park improvements at the same time as the new development is being built, not after families have moved in and are at risk.

By clarifying that certain fees are eligible for deferral exemptions under existing development statutes, SB 499 will remove ambiguity and support more effective local planning and resource allocation. We are committed to supporting practical, forward-thinking solutions that build community resilience and protect Californians from the growing threats from natural disasters and other emergencies.

For these reasons, we respectfully request your signature on SB 499. Thank you for reviewing our letter. Should you have any questions, please contact us.

Sincerely,

SIGNATURE

SIGNER

ORGANIZATION NAME

CC: Myles White, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom