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September 15, 2025

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request for Veto, AB 648 (Zbur) Community colleges: housing: local zoning regulations: exemption (As Amended May 5, 2025)

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the City of Cupertino, I write to respectfully request you veto Assembly Bill (AB) 648 by Assemblymember Zbur.

This bill would exempt the construction of faculty, staff, and student housing projects from local zoning regulations if the project is proposed on property owned or leased by a community college district.

Housing for students, faculty, and staff continues to be a challenge that postsecondary institutions struggle with across California. We acknowledge that this is an important issue across the state that needs to be addressed. However, a one-size-fits-all approach to local zoning will not achieve our shared goals. Under the existing law, all congregate housing, such as college dorms and similar housing does not count for local government's progress in achieving their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process, even though local governments diligently work with state and local community colleges and universities to site for and plan to develop affordable student housing.


Existing law allows land owned or leased by the University of California (UC) or California State Universities (CSU) to bypass local zoning. These entities are owned by the state. However, community colleges are not. It is also important to note that Government Code Section 65913.6 provides specific conditions that student housing must comply with, and AB 648 does not have the same conditions for community college districts. The author should consider harmonizing what is required for UCs and CSUs in this bill.

Additionally, while the University of California and California State Universities are governed by board's controlled by the state, community college boards are made up of locally elected individuals which are primarily responsible to the constituents of the district they represent. The state's decision in 2023 (AB 358, Addis) to remove community colleges from having to comply with the Field Act's requirement to have their facilities construction plans reviewed by the state Department of General Services indicates a state desire to relinquish direct oversight of these types of projects. However, we believe it is prudent for cities and counties to retain their oversight role of the land use process to take over the role the state recently abdicated itself from. Retaining local land use authority that County's Board of Supervisors and City Councils have under existing law would provide an effective partner that could work with their local Community College Board that is pursuing a housing development to ensure the community benefits from the proposed housing.

This measure would extend the exemptions to community college districts' land owned or leased by the local jurisdiction without specifying the development must comply with general plan requirements. The general plan is the blueprint for local jurisdictions and is important for local governments to plan for smart economic growth and residential development. By exempting any lands owned or leased from local zoning regulations, local governments cannot account for their multiple-year process to plan for and develop the community. In addition, local community college districts do not have planners on staff with experience that can balance the needs of local communities and the campus. Further, state housing laws require local governments to affirmatively further fair housing by working to prevent the concentration of housing for specific groups in a single area. The broad exemptions in this bill favor housing development for one group, community college students, over others, which is the antithesis of affirmatively further fair housing.

For these reasons, the City opposes AB 648 and urges your veto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liang Chao". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Liang Chao

Mayor

City of Cupertino

cc. The Honorable Josh Becker
 The Honorable Patrick Ahrens