

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1693 (Zbur)

As Amended August 21, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires a local building department to allow a qualified professional certifier to certify compliance with applicable building, health, and safety codes for a tenant improvement relating to a retailer.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Remove a requirement that, if a local building department does not approve or deny an application within 20 business days of receiving a complete application, a certified plan shall be deemed approved for permitting purposes, as specified.
- 2) Provide that a city or county may adopt requirements that do either of the following, provided that the requirements do not prohibit or effectively prohibit the use of a qualified professional certifier pursuant to this bill:
 - a) Limit the size of an eligible structure to no less than 10,000 square feet.
 - b) Specify the types of businesses or occupancies that are eligible.
- 3) Provide that nothing in this bill shall be construed to authorize the displacement of public employees. The use of a qualified professional certifier shall be strictly temporary in nature. Local agencies shall not reduce, eliminate, or fail to fill budgeted civil service positions within the building department as a result of the use of a qualified professional certifier pursuant to this bill.
- 4) Provide that, if there is an excessive delay in checking plans and specifications, as defined in existing law, the use of a qualified professional certifier by a local agency shall be temporary and not exceed the time required to complete the review of a tenant improvement application.
- 5) Make additional technical and clarifying changes.

COMMENTS

The California Building Standards Code contains building standards and regulations adopted by the CBSC to protect the health and safety of people and property. The code regulates the design, construction, quality of materials, use and occupancy, location, and maintenance of all buildings and structures in the state, and includes standards for building safety, fire safety standards, energy efficiency standards, and standards for green buildings. Local government building and planning departments enforce the code.

Existing law requires a local building department or permitting agency to contract with or employ a private entity or persons on a temporary basis to perform plan-checking functions, such as compliance with building, health, and safety codes, upon the request of an applicant when there is an "excessive delay" in checking the applicant's plans and specifications. For a nonresidential permit for the remodeling or tenant improvements of a building, excessive delay

generally means the local building department has taken more than 50 days after receiving a complete application to complete the structural building safety plan check.

AB 671 (Wicks and Gabriel), Chapter 470, Statutes of 2025, authorized qualified professional certifiers to self-certify that tenant improvement plans for restaurants comply with all applicable building, health, and safety codes, and required local building departments to approve or reject those plans within 20 days. Plans that are not acted upon within that period are approved by default.

According to the Author

"Brick-and-mortar retailers are essential to vibrant neighborhoods and local economic recovery, but too often businesses—especially small and family-owned ones—face months-long permitting delays just to make interior improvements to existing buildings. Those delays hurt workers, communities, and commercial corridors still recovering from the pandemic, recent fires, and prolonged vacancies. AB 1693 offers a commonsense solution. For interior improvement projects, it allows licensed architects or engineers to certify that plans meet all building and safety codes, while requiring local governments to act on complete applications within clear, predictable timelines—with full oversight intact. At a time when retailers are competing with online shopping and navigating real economic challenges, we owe them a permitting process that is fair, efficient, and predictable."

Arguments in Support

The California Retailers Association, sponsor of this measure, writes, "CRA members have conveyed to us that permit turnaround times for tenant improvements routinely stretch into multiple months across California counties, with average processing times around 12 weeks and maximums reaching as high as 31 weeks in some jurisdictions. Retailers continue to experience recurring challenges, including extended review periods, multiple rounds of comments, use of third-party reviewers, portal outages, and unanticipated intake requirements. These lengthy review periods significantly delay basic interior buildouts, store openings, and remodels, forcing retailers to carry rent and financing costs for many additional months before they can generate revenue or hire workers.

"Throughout the state, the retail industry faces unpredictable local permitting processes for tenant improvements that create significant hardship, such as increased project costs, delayed business operations, and stagnant economic activity. Current law (AB 671, Chapter 470, California Statutes 2025) creates a streamlined approval process for restaurants seeking these types of projects, establishing a similar model for retail projects will be essential for small businesses to thrive in California.

"AB 1693 helps address this by requiring local building departments to allow a licensed architect or engineer serving as a qualified professional certifier to review tenant improvements and certify those improvements for applicable building, health, and safety code. The bill would require the local building department to approve or deny the tenant improvement permit application within 20 business days of receiving a complete application and would deem the plan approved for permitting purposes if the local building department does not approve or deny the application within that timeframe.

"This legislation is critical as reducing these permitting delays will promote economic activity within California's small business community while maintaining appropriate safety and compliance standards."

Arguments in Opposition

The California Building Officials, in opposition, state, "By way of background, California Building Officials (CALBO) is the organization of local building departments. CALBO members are primarily responsible for enforcing building code requirements in an estimated 95% of the buildings constructed in California. Accordingly, we have a solid understanding of building and life safety codes, their applicability, and overall enforcement of such standards. We see ourselves as an integral part of local government and seek to promote the best for California communities.

"As you know, AB 1693 has been composed in a similar 'spirit' to last year's AB 671, which we were also unable to support. While we understand that AB 1693 is limited in scope to retail tenant- improvements, in the name of public safety, the person designing the plans should not be the one offering final approval.

"We appreciate the perimeters and limitations you have outlined with your measure, but self-certification is an unsavory practice that leads to large-scale concerns in the short- and long-term life of a commercial structure. Local jurisdictions, at a minimum, need to offer approvals and assurances that state and local building, fire, and life safety codes have been met. Allowing someone who has been hired to draw plans with an economic incentive for their expedited approval is not a responsible practice – regardless of the scale of the development project.

"For the aforementioned reasons, we are unable to support AB 1693. We appreciate having the opportunity to share our professional perspective relative to the measure."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

VOTES:

ASM LOCAL GOVERNMENT: 10-0-0

YES: Carrillo, Ta, Johnson, Pacheco, Ramos, Ransom, Blanca Rubio, Stefani, Ward, Wilson

ASM BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS: 18-0-1

YES: Berman, Johnson, Addis, Ahrens, Alanis, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Chen, Elhawary, Hadwick, Haney, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Lowenthal, Macedo, Nguyen, Pellerin

ABS, ABST OR NV: Caloza

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0-3

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle

Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria,
Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Alvarez, Arambula, Celeste Rodriguez

UPDATED

VERSION: June 25, 2026

CONSULTANT: Angela Mapp / L. GOV. / (916) 319-3958

FN: 0004143