

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1732 (Alvarez and Wicks)

As Amended August 3, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Adds public university and college housing projects (for students, faculty, and staff) to an existing California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption for affordable housing projects and extends the exemption's sunset from 2033 to 2037.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Add a "shuttle or bus stop operated by a public university or public college" to the criteria for "proximal" for purposes of qualifying for the exemption.
- 2) Add an exemption for "higher education land use plan amendments" required specifically and exclusively to allow the construction of an affordable housing project or a public university or public college housing project.

COMMENTS

Since 1978, CEQA has included statutory exemptions for housing projects. There are now at least 15 distinct CEQA exemptions for housing projects. Three are specific to projects with an affordable housing fraction, the rest are available to affordable and market-rate projects alike. Each exemption includes a range of conditions, including requirements for prior planning-level review, as well as limitations on the location and characteristics of the site. These conditions are intended to guard against the approval of projects with significant environmental impacts that go undisclosed and unmitigated – endangering workers, residents and the greater environment. The majority of residential projects are approved via exemption or negative declaration under CEQA, or through ministerial permits where CEQA does not apply.

The CEQA Guidelines have included categorical exemptions for housing projects for decades, allowing projects with no significant environmental impacts to proceed to approval without environmental review. These exemptions are well-known and widely used for small housing projects of one to six units, as well larger housing projects in incorporated areas, on infill sites up to five acres, with no limit on the number of units.

These existing exemptions can include university-sponsored projects, as well as private projects to house university students, faculty and staff. Public universities also periodically adopt planning-level EIRs, which can serve as the basis for streamlined review of subsequent housing projects.

According to the Author

California's public colleges and universities are among the finest higher education institutions in the world. They are also at the frontlines of the student housing crisis, yet they are uniquely disadvantaged by a legal technicality that prevents them from accessing the same CEQA streamlining available to private higher education institutions and other housing developers. AB 1732 closes this gap...At a time when housing insecurity affects students and employees across California's public higher education system, it is difficult to justify maintaining procedural barriers that private developers and private colleges are not required to overcome.

Arguments in Support

According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, this bill aims to streamline the construction of affordable housing for students, faculty, and staff at public higher education institutions by extending CEQA infill-style exemptions...Developing housing projects near colleges remains a challenging endeavor due to restrictive local zoning and existing CEQA pathways. Furthermore, housing costs represent the largest financial barrier to higher education in California, especially for low-income and underserved populations.

Arguments in Opposition

None received.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 1) Unknown costs, possibly in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars per project (General Fund or other fund), for public postsecondary institutions to meet the requirements of this bill. Project costs could include needing to meet prevailing wage requirements and, for projects of fifty or more residential units, apprenticeship and healthcare expenditure standards; completing a phase I environmental assessment and, if a recognized environmental condition is found, a preliminary endangerment assessment; and verifying that the project site meets specified location and adjacency criteria. To the extent that the labor standards exceed the institution's existing public works obligations, per-project construction costs could be higher, potentially in amounts that exceed the administrative costs of the exemption. These costs would be incurred only where an institution elects to use the exemption and would likely be offset by cost savings due to being exempt from CEQA.
- 2) Minor costs for lead agencies to confirm that qualifying projects satisfy the specified site and environmental criteria and to file notices of exemption with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation and the county clerk.

VOTES:**ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 13-0-1**

YES: Bryan, Ellis, Alanis, Connolly, Garcia, Haney, Hoover, Kalra, Macedo, Muratsuchi, Schultz, Hart, Zbur

ABS, ABST OR NV: Pellerin

ASM HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: 12-0-0

YES: Haney, Patterson, Ávila Farías, Caloza, Garcia, Kalra, Lee, Quirk-Silva, Ta, Tangipa, Wicks, Wilson

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Bauer-Kahan, Calderon, Caloza, Ellis, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Pellerin

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0-2

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, 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, 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: Pellerin, Celeste Rodriguez

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Reyes

UPDATED

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