
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 239 (Harabedian) - State-led County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force

Version: May 23, 2025

Urgency: Yes

Hearing Date: August 18, 2025

Policy Vote: HOUSING 11 - 0, G.O. 15 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Mark McKenzie

Bill Summary: AB 239, an urgency measure, would require the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to jointly convene a specified state-led County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force to coordinate and streamline state, federal, and local efforts to rebuild housing in communities impacted by 2025 wildfires.

Fiscal Impact:

- HCD estimates ongoing costs of approximately \$582,000 for 2.0 PY of staff for workload to coordinate with local officials, gather data on housing production in affected communities, and to develop and submit quarterly reports to the Legislature. These costs assume that the housing coordinator position specified in the bill would be within HCD. Staff notes that HCD's costs would be in the range of \$235,000 if the housing coordinator position is not staffed at the department. See Staff Comments. (General Fund)
- OES estimates ongoing costs of approximately \$1.22 million and 5.0 PY of staff to support the administrative workload of the task force and the quarterly reporting requirements. These costs assume that the housing coordinator position specified in the bill would be within OES, and also include a full-time attorney position to advise the task force and oversee compliance. Staff notes that OES costs would be in the high hundreds of thousands annually if the housing coordinator position is not staffed within OES. See Staff Comments. (General Fund)
- Unknown local costs for representatives of both the City and County of Los Angeles to participate on the disaster housing task force. While Legislative Counsel did not key the bill as a state-mandated local program, there could be additional state General Fund costs, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates, if either or both of these local agencies submitted a successful claim for reimbursement of staffing and administrative costs associated with participation on the task force.

Background: Existing law, the California Emergency Services Act, establishes the framework for disaster response, emergency management, and governmental powers during an emergency. OES is responsible for the state's emergency and disaster response services for natural, technological, or man-made disasters and emergencies, including activities necessary to prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of emergencies and disasters to people and property. Among its tasks, Cal OES prepares and maintains the State Emergency Plan (SEP), which describes how

response to “natural” or “human-caused” emergencies occurs in California, and the Disaster Recovery Framework. OES also serves as the state’s agent to secure federal government resources through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Recent federal guidance from FEMA recommends that states establish a state-led disaster housing task force to develop a disaster housing plan, based on lessons learned from recent disasters, either as part of the SEP or as a standalone document, and to update this plan at least once every two years. FEMA suggests that these task forces lead and coordinate state, local, private, and community-based actions to assess housing impacts, identify appropriate post-disaster housing options, and establish processes for expediting post-disaster housing delivery.

On January 7, 2025, two wildfires, the Palisades Fire and Eaton Fire, ignited in Los Angeles County, and together these fires destroyed over 16,000 structures, including over 13,000 housing units, and damaged over 2,000 other structures. In response, Governor Newsom declared a state of emergency and issued four Executive Orders (EOs) in January and February 2025 intended to help the Los Angeles region rebuild permanent housing quickly. Many of the actions authorized in the EOs expedite the housing approval process (both temporary housing and permanent rebuilding) and remove permitting barriers at the state and local levels in areas impacted by the fires, as specified. In addition, the City of Los Angeles and the County have established expedited procedures for approving temporary housing in the form of manufactured homes, mobilehomes, and RVs on lots that contained dwelling units destroyed or severely damaged by the wildfires. These local agencies have also expedited “like-for-like” rebuilds of permanent housing that is no more than 110% of the original dwelling size and in substantially the same location on the property. One of the Governor’s EOs also allows homes that were originally designed and constructed to meet the 2019 building code to be rebuilt to those same standards, at local agency discretion.

Proposed Law: AB 239, an urgency measure, would require HCD and OES to jointly convene a state-led disaster housing task force to coordinate and streamline state, federal, and local efforts to rebuild housing in communities impacted by wildfires that began on January 7, 2025 in Los Angeles County. Specifically, the bill would:

- Specify the membership of the task force, which must include representatives of HCD, FEMA, OES, the City of Los Angeles, and the County of Los Angeles.
- Require the task force to appoint a state disaster housing coordinator to accelerate the delivery of resources, including funding and technical assistance, to communities impacted by the wildfire.
- Require the task force to submit quarterly reports to the Legislature, beginning on April 1, 2026, on the status of rebuilding communities impacted by the wildfire.
- Specify that the reporting requirements would be inoperative on April 1, 2030.

Staff Comments: This bill requires HCD and OES to jointly convene the disaster housing task force, but leaves it to the task force to appoint the disaster housing coordinator. The fiscal impacts noted above provide different fiscal scenarios for HCD and OES depending on which state entity would ultimately house the coordinator position. In addition, both HCD and OES have indicated that their staffing costs would be ongoing. The bill does not include a sunset date for the task force itself, but the quarterly reporting requirement would be inoperative on April 1, 2030. While there may be continued coordination with FEMA and the City and County of Los Angeles to streamline any remaining rebuilding efforts, staff assumes that any HCD and OES

staffing workload and associated costs would ultimately phase out after 2030, once rebuilding efforts are fully underway and ongoing coordination related to the 2025 fires is no longer needed.

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