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CONSENT

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Bill No: AB 457  
Author: Soria (D), et al.  
Introduced: 2/6/25  
Vote: 21

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SENATE HOUSING COMMITTEE: 9-0, 6/17/25  
AYES: Wahab, Seyarto, Arreguín, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cortese, Durazo,  
Grayson, Ochoa Bogh  
NO VOTE RECORDED: Gonzalez, Padilla

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/16/25  
AYES: Durazo, Choi, Arreguín, Cabaldon, Laird, Seyarto, Wiener

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 76-0, 5/1/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

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**SUBJECT:** Farmworker housing: streamlined, ministerial approval: Counties of  
Fresno, Madera, and Merced

**SOURCE:** Author

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**DIGEST:** This bill expands an existing streamlined, ministerial approval process for farmworker housing established by AB 1783 (R. Rivas, Chapter 866, Statutes of 2019).

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Defines “agricultural employee housing” to mean housing occupied by five or more employees of an agricultural employer or by a farm labor contractor.

- 2) Creates a streamlined, ministerial approval process for agricultural employee housing, established by AB 1783 (R. Rivas), if all of the following criteria are met:
  - a) The land is zoned for agricultural uses;
  - b) The land is not located in environmentally unsafe or sensitive areas, including a coastal zone, wetlands, a high or very high fire hazard severity zone, a hazardous waste site, an earthquake fault zone, a flood plain or floodway, lands identified for conservation in an adopted natural community conservation plan, lands under conservation easement, and lands with specified groundwater levels; and
  - c) The development does not contain dormitory-style housing;
  - d) The development consists of no more than 36 units or spaces designed for use by a single family or household; and
  - e) For the counties of Santa Cruz and Santa Clara, the housing development is 150 units or less and within 15 miles of an area designated as farmland or grazing by the Department of Conservation.
- 3) Allows a local government to subject an eligible agricultural employee housing development to specified written, objective development standards, including, but not limited to, adequate water and wastewater facilities and dry utilities to serve the project; connection to municipal sewer system, as specified; proximity to duly designated collector road, as specified; and off-street parking, as specified.
- 4) Requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to establish an application and review process for certifying that an applicant is an affordable housing organization qualified to operate agricultural employee housing. HCD shall review an application and certify that the applicant is a qualified affordable housing organization if the following is satisfied:
  - a) The applicant has demonstrated relevant prior experience in California and current capacity to operate the housing and related facilities for its remaining useful life, either by itself or through a management agent; and

- b) The applicant is one of the following: a not-for-profit, as specified; a local public housing agency; or a multicounty, state, or multistate agency, as specified.
- 5) Requires HCD to establish and maintain a roster of all affordable housing organizations certified under 4) above.
- 6) Requires any landowner who fails to select an alternative certified person to operate and maintain the agricultural employee housing to be subject to an administrative penalty issued by HCD.
- 7) Requires that, if a certified person's permit expires or the certified person is otherwise unable or unwilling to continue to operate and maintain an agricultural employee housing development approved ministerially, the landowner who obtained that approval within 90 days shall select an alternative certified person to operate and maintain the agricultural employee housing.

This bill adds the Counties of Fresno, Madera, and Merced, to the streamlined, ministerial approval process for farmworker housing established by AB 1783 (R. Rivas) that allows agricultural housing developments that are 150 units or less within 15 miles of an area designated as farmland or grazing land by the Department of Conservation.

## **Background**

*AB 1783.* AB 1783 is modelled after the process to expedite and increase the certainty of housing approval created in SB 35 (Wiener, Chapter 366, Statutes of 2017), but for farmworker housing instead of infill housing. To qualify, projects must be on land zoned for agricultural uses and cannot be located in environmentally unsafe or sensitive areas. The agricultural employee housing cannot be dormitory style housing, and must be maintained and operated by a qualified affordable housing organization, as certified by HCD. Such organizations include non-profits and public agencies with prior experience and current capacity to capably maintain and operate the housing.

Additionally, the housing must be affordable and for agricultural employees for at least 55 years, and the housing must be eligible for state funding. Cities and counties must determine whether requirements are met within a specified time, depending on the size of the project, and if so, the project is approved ministerially, within the specified time of submission, depending on project size. A city or county could impose design review, but only under specified circumstances.

Like the Employee Housing Act, AB 1783 only applied to developments of 35 units or less. AB 1783 also required that developers use state funding in conjunction with the by-right streamlining allowed under the bill. State funding programs, like the Joe Serna Farmworker Housing Program, tend to fund larger projects, with more units. As a result, it has been difficult for developers to marry these two criteria.

## Comments

- 1) *Author's statement.* “While California’s housing crisis is often thought of as a problem for dense urban cities, the effects on more rural areas have been equally devastating and present unique challenges. Farmworkers in particular bear the brunt of this crisis, with farmworkers disproportionately living in overcrowded households, often in aging, substandard housing with significant habitability issues. An important step to address this issue was AB 1783 (Rivas 2019), the Farm Worker Housing Act of 2019, which created a streamlined, ministerial approval process for up to 36 units of affordable farmworker housing in agricultural zones, which was significantly expanded in Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties by AB 3035 (Pellerin, Chapter 524, Statutes of 2024). AB 457 builds on the work of AB 3035 to allow the streamlined approval of up to 150 units of affordable farmworker housing within 15 miles of farm or grazing land in the Counties of Fresno, Madera, and Merced. Providing more flexibility in locating these developments allows easier connections to necessary infrastructure and easy access to important amenities, while streamlining larger developments helps to meet the urgent need for farmworker housing. AB 457 is a targeted solution to provide the dignified, affordable housing that farmworkers need in the Central Valley’s agricultural heartland.”
- 2) *Implementation issues.* Several issues arose with the implementation of AB 1783. First, providing the necessary infrastructure and connections to water, sewer, and other utilities is more expensive and difficult on agriculturally-zoned land. Second, the amenities residents need are frequently far from agricultural land, making building housing there less attractive to developers. Third, larger developments often have an easier time of securing grants and financing, so the limitation to a maximum of 36 units can make these developments financially unfeasible.

AB 3035, made changes to AB 1783 to respond to these issues in the counties of Santa Clara and Santa Cruz. AB 1783 is limited to sites that are zoned for an

agricultural use and applies to developments consisting of no more than 36 units or spaces. AB 3035 (Pellerin) expanded streamlining in the counties of Santa Clara and Santa Cruz to developments of 150 units or less within 15 miles of an area designated as farmland or grazing by the Department of Conservation.

This bill would expand the list of counties to which these provisions apply to include Fresno, Madera, and Merced.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 8/18/25)

CA Assn of Winegrape Growers  
CDP Rural Caucus

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 8/18/25)

None received

**ASSEMBLY FLOOR:** 76-0, 5/1/25

**AYES:** Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

**NO VOTE RECORDED:** Chen, McKinnor, Papan

Prepared by: Alison Hughes / HOUSING / (916) 651-4124  
8/21/25 16:45:24

\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*