
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 648
Author: Zbur (D), et al.
Amended: 9/2/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 6-1, 6/18/25
AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Cortese, Laird, Limón
NOES: Choi

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE: 5-2, 7/16/25
AYES: Durazo, Arreguín, Cabaldon, Laird, Wiener
NOES: Choi, Seyarto

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 63-5, 5/27/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Community colleges: housing: local zoning regulations: exemption

SOURCE: Abundant Housing LA
Los Angeles Community College District
Santa Monica Community College District
Student Homes Coalition

DIGEST: This bill exempts community college districts (CCDs) from complying with local zoning ordinances for university housing development projects that are constructed on property owned or leased by the CCD, provided certain conditions are met. If the project includes housing units for faculty or staff, this bill requires that a portion of those units be made available at affordable rents to extremely low income and lower income faculty and staff.

Senate Floor Amendments of 9/2/25 add Senator Arreguín as a co-author.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the California Community Colleges (CCC) as a postsecondary education system administered by the Board of Governors, composed of locally governed community college districts. (Education Code (EC) § 70900)
- 2) Authorizes CCDs to lease or develop property and facilities, subject to relevant education and government code provisions. (EC §§ 81330, 70902)
- 3) Defines “faculty and staff housing project,” “student housing project,” and “university housing development project” with exclusions for high-risk or environmentally sensitive lands. (Public Resources Code § 21080.58)
- 4) Provides general police power to cities and counties, including authority over land use, zoning, and general plans. (California Constitution, Art. XI, § 7; Government Code (GOV) §§ 65300 et seq.)
- 5) Requires city and county zoning ordinances to align with general plans and housing elements. (GOV §§ 65588, 65860)
- 6) Allows K–12 school districts to override local zoning for classroom facilities, but does not clearly extend this authority to CCDs. (GOV § 53094)

This bill:

- 1) Exempts specified housing projects from local zoning laws when built on property owned or leased by a CCD if the site is:
 - a) Within a one-half mile radius of a main campus (as defined in EC § 94849);
or
 - b) Within a one-half mile radius of a satellite campus that existed before July 1, 2025.
- 2) Specifies that if the project includes units for faculty and staff, the CCD shall ensure that a portion of the units are made available at affordable rents to extremely low income faculty and staff and to lower income faculty and staff.
- 3) Establishes the following definitions:
 - a) “Affordable rent” means an amount consistent with the rent limits established by the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee.

- b) “Extremely low income faculty or staff” means an employee of the California Community Colleges who satisfies the requirements of Section 50106 of the Health and Safety Code.
- c) “Lower income faculty or staff” means an employee of the CCCs who satisfies the requirements of Section 50079.5 of the Health and Safety Code.
- d) “Satellite campus” means an auxiliary classroom or a teaching site not a part of the main campus.

Comments

- 1) *Need for this bill.* According to the author, “This bill is aimed at addressing housing insecurity for our community college students and staff and preventing homelessness. California’s community college students face some of the highest rates of housing insecurity and homelessness in the state. By eliminating zoning barriers to the construction of critical housing projects, California will take another bold step toward tackling our affordable housing crisis. Housing is a fundamental need for community college students and staff. This legislation will cut through red tape and ensure that students can focus on their studies, and staff can focus on their work, without the stress of not knowing where they will sleep at night.”
- 2) *Addresses an urgent student success and equity issue in the CCC system.* Housing insecurity is a major impediment to academic persistence and degree completion, particularly in CCCs, where students disproportionately come from low-income households, are older, more likely to work full time, and are often parenting. Data from the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) indicates that roughly 60% of CCC students report housing insecurity and nearly 25% have experienced homelessness. For students navigating transportation barriers, caregiving duties, or unstable living conditions, housing near campus can be the critical difference between continuing and dropping out. This bill supports a policy goal long championed by the state: expanding basic needs infrastructure to promote postsecondary attainment and close equity gaps.
- 3) *Creates a pathway for faculty and staff housing to support recruitment and retention in high-cost regions.* Recruiting and retaining high-quality faculty and staff is a persistent challenge for many CCDs, particularly in high-cost regions where housing affordability significantly outpaces public sector wages. While CCC and California State University (CSU) tenure-track faculty salaries are broadly comparable, neither system offers widespread housing stipends, and CCC face additional pressure due to their reliance on part-time faculty and

classified support staff. This bill may allow districts to invest in workforce housing solutions that enhance employment stability, improve student support, and reduce attrition among mission-critical personnel.

- 4) *Advances intersegmental alignment with UC and CSU housing policy flexibility.* The state has granted the University of California (UC) and CSU broad discretion to develop student and faculty housing projects without local zoning restrictions, recognizing these projects as mission-driven public purposes. This bill would extend similar authority to CCDs, narrowing a structural discrepancy that has hampered CCC participation in recent housing bond programs and constrained project feasibility timelines. From an education policy perspective, this parity supports a more coordinated statewide approach to public postsecondary housing that reflects the state’s “cradle-to-career” strategy.
- 5) *Responds to implementation challenges in the CCC Student Housing Grant Program.* The 2021 and 2022 budget agreements created new pathways for CCCs to receive capital funding for student housing. However, several projects stalled or were never submitted due to uncertainty over local zoning, permitting timelines, and potential community opposition. This bill complements that investment by reducing regulatory delays and encouraging more districts to pursue on-campus or near-campus housing solutions. While this bill does not allocate new resources, it may increase the return on existing state investments by unlocking shovel-ready development sites.
- 6) *Maintains discretion for locally elected governing boards while accelerating housing solutions.* Unlike UC and CSU, which are governed by state-appointed boards, CCCs are governed by locally elected boards of trustees. This bill retains those governance structures and places the zoning exemption in their hands. As a result, housing projects would still need to undergo local board deliberation and approval, ensuring that decisions are made transparently and reflect district-level priorities. This structure balances the urgency of student housing needs with democratic accountability in local communities.

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

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/2/25)

Abundant Housing LA (Co-Source)

Los Angeles Community College District (co-source)

Santa Monica Community College District (co-source)

Student HOMES Coalition (co-source)

Associated General Contractors, California Chapters
Association of California Community College Administrators
Cabrillo Community College District
California Apartment Association
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
California Yimby
Circulate San Diego
City of Santa Monica
Coast Community College District
College of the Redwoods
Community College League of California
Community for Excellent Public Schools
Compton Community College District
County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
Cuesta College
East Bay Yimby
Foothill-De Anza Community College District
GenUp
Grow the Richmond
Housing Is a Human Right OC
Long Beach Community College District
Los Angeles Community College District Academic Senate
Los Rios Community College District
Mountain View Yimby
Napa-Solano for Everyone
Northern Neighbors SF
Peninsula for Everyone
People for Housing - Orange County
Power CA Action
Power California Action
Riverside Community College District
Safe Place for Youth
San Diego Community College District
San Diego Housing Federation
San Diego Unified School District
San Francisco Yimby
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District
Santa Cruz Yimby
Santa Monica Democratic Club
Santa Rosa Yimby

SloCo Yimby
South Bay Yimby
Southern California College Attainment Network
SPUR
Streets for All
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
The Two Hundred for Homeownership
Ventura County Yimby
Welcoming Neighbors Home
Yimby Action
Yimby Los Angeles

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/2/25)

City of Cupertino

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 63-5, 5/27/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Fariás, Bains, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Davies, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: DeMaio, Dixon, Lackey, Sanchez, Tangipa

NO VOTE RECORDED: Bauer-Kahan, Castillo, Chen, Flora, Gallagher, Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hart, Macedo, Nguyen, Ta

Prepared by: Ian Johnson / ED. / (916) 651-4105
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