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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### **SB 911 (Becker) - Transfer of real property: fire hazard severity zones: compliance documentation**

**Version:** March 10, 2026

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** May 4, 2026

**Policy Vote:** JUD. 12 - 0, L. GOV. 7 - 0

**Mandate:** Yes

**Consultant:** Bob Franzoia

**Bill Summary:** SB 911 would require, in cases where the buyer assumes the obligation to document compliance with defensible space requirements, the seller to notify the local fire department or the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), as applicable, of the written agreement and the buyer's obligation.

**Fiscal Impact:** Estimated \$6.1 million in 2026-27 and \$5.6 million annually thereafter to maintain funding for 31 inspectors to conduct defensible space inspections of private property within state responsibility areas (General Fund).

Unknown, potentially significant costs for local enforcing agencies to ensure compliance with defensible space, vegetation management, and fuel modification requirements. The bill authorizes enforcing agencies to charge a fee sufficient to cover their administrative and investigatory costs.

**Background:** The Office of the State Fire Marshall (SFM) supports the mission of CalFire by focusing on fire prevention and provides support through a wide variety of fire safety responsibilities. Additionally, the SFM classifies certain lands within the state into fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs). Each zone is based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors present, including areas where CalFire identifies winds as a major cause of wildfire spread. Unlike an insurance company's risk assessment of a house in the woods, which might take into account its composite wood sidings, hazard maps only take into account the lasting facts about a location.

**Proposed Law:** Requires sellers to notify the applicable fire agency of a buyer's obligation to document defensible space compliance, and mandates inspection by the applicable fire agency if no documentation is provided.

If the local fire department or CalFire has not received documentation of compliance within one year of the date of the close of escrow, the fire department or CalFire must inspect the property. The local fire department or CalFire can delegate the responsibility to conduct a compliance check to a third-party, nonprofit entity that it or the SFM deems qualified to conduct defensible space programs and compliance inspections and reinspections. This bill allows inspections and reinspections to be conducted in person or remotely, as specified, or by documentation of completed work. A local fire department can prioritize inspections as needed and charge fees to cover the cost of the program.

**Related Legislation:** SB 629 (Durazo), 2025 would have required CalFire and local agencies to conduct annual defensible space inspections and established a process for designating post-wildfire safety areas to ensure compliance with defensible space and other requirements that apply in FHSZs. Governor Newsom vetoed SB 629 with the following message:

*“I am returning Senate Bill 629 without my signature.*

*“This bill would, among other things, create a newly defined post-wildfire safety area designation and would require the Office of the State Fire Marshal of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to include new criteria when mapping Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZs).*

*“Wildfire risk and hazard modeling are crucial tools for informing wildfire mitigation strategies and allocating resources to prevent ignitions and effectively respond to wildfires before they become catastrophic. Since 2019, my Administration, in partnership with the Legislature, has invested over \$5 billion in wildfire mitigation, response, and forest resilience. All of which have been guided by leading-edge science and modeling, with most of it developed right here in California.*

*“I remain strongly supportive of this work and the work of OSFM to enhance its modeling capabilities and maintain updated, robust FHSZs to further inform wildfire mitigation measures. This work is actively underway, and though I find this bill’s intent laudable, it presents new, ongoing, and significant costs to the state not accounted for in this year’s budget.*

*“For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.”*