

Six (6) Sample Letters Opposing SB 50 — For CA Senators On List

LETTER #1

Dear Senator [NAME]:

I belong to a community group that recently asked land-use experts and city leaders to help us understand what SB 50 actually does — not what YIMBYs or Sen. Wiener say it does.

We have learned from all sources that SB 50 will bring far more displacement and gentrification than Wiener's similar failed bill, SB 827, and will WORSEN the affordable housing crisis.

In your district, developers could decimate thriving areas. We urge you to strongly oppose SB 50.

We learned that SB 50 strips city zoning and planning powers in thousands of working-class and middle-class neighborhoods, not merely those areas near transit.

It's a radical attack on families, letting developers choose to "up-zone" to 6 stories and higher, in "job rich" areas — communities near good schools and jobs, but nowhere near transit.

Under SB 50's "Rule of 10," which is hidden in a clause about what is required in buildings of 11 units or larger, luxury developers get major incentives for erecting 10-unit apartment buildings — without a single affordable unit to address the affordability crisis. The same would be true of wiping out single-family areas across the state to erect fourplexes without a single affordable unit to address the affordability crisis.

SB 50 is "weaponized" by amendments to the Housing Accountability Act of 1982. If SB 50 becomes law, cities can only reject 6-story to 8-story luxury towers in single family areas if the proposed building itself directly "harms public safety." An impossible test.

Under SB 50, developers become the new city planners. SB 50 empowers developers to leave out parking entirely, wipe out green belts, side yards and setbacks where children play, and ignore local sustainability and design standards.

The San Francisco nexus study discovered that luxury developers must set aside 30–40% of the units as affordable to make up for severe gentrification that they cause. SB 50 overrides this concept, promoting mass gentrification and non-affordability.

We will see the mass destruction of family housing in favor of luxury singles or one-bedrooms in the new Wiener Fourplexes or Wiener 10-Unit Buildings, forcing families farther and farther from their jobs.

Imagine the nightmare, and please oppose SB 50.

Thank you,

[YOUR NAME]

LETTER #2

Dear Senator [NAME]:

There is no amendment that can fix the disastrous Senate Bill 50, and I urge you to oppose it.

My family members are your constituents, and we are all deeply concerned that Sen. Scott Wiener's bill is far more severe and gentrifying than his failed SB 827.

I know this because I've spent been talking with former city planners and land use experts to decipher the obscure references in SB 50.

My neighborhood has single-family homes with families raised over generations. It's far away from any busy bus stop. But SB 50 puts ALL single-family neighborhoods in the bull's-eye.

Investors will buy up single family homes, destroy them, and *erect luxury towers up to 85 feet high* — that's the height estimated by the San Francisco Planning Department, who says SB 50's mention of 45- to 55-foot limits *is not the final outcome due to overlooked clauses in Sen. Wiener's bill.*

SB 50 kills home ownership, *concentrating more and more land in the hands of rental investors — a Wall Street scandal in the making.*

SB 50 would *wipe out our single-family neighborhoods NOWHERE NEAR TRANSIT that have "good schools, above median, and are jobs-rich."*

Nobody wants to be "The Next San Francisco" that Sen. Wiener so clearly embraces. San Francisco's up-zoning model has fueled skyrocketing costs. *San Francisco has approved 58,000 UNBUILT units that investors are sitting on, waiting for the right profit point to build.* Zoning is NOT the problem, folks. We learned this from a city planning commissioner.

A damning new gentrification study by scholar and author Joel Kotkin shows that in every city focused on up-zoning, the SB 50 model has made social inequity and housing costs far, far worse.

Finally, SB 50 is "weaponized" by Skinner/Wiener's 2017 amendments to the Housing Accountability Act of 1982. If SB 50 is not killed, *cities can only reject 6- to 8-story luxury towers in single family areas if they "harm public safety."* Developers become city planners under this incredibly loose rule.

Please kill this unfixable bill. There are positive bills. This isn't one of them.

Thank you,

[YOUR NAME]

LETTER #3

Dear Senator [NAME]:

I have family members who are your constituents, and we have been talking about Senate Bill 50. As a renter, I see SB 50 as an assault on local control that turns over city planning to developers.

We don't need looser local controls over our zoning laws to provide more housing. What we need is a different model to create affordable housing, not doubling down on theories that are clearly fueling gentrification and human displacement and homelessness.

Density bonus laws have failed to provide serious amounts of affordable housing around transit, and SB 50 makes that failure far worse.

Los Angeles has approved scores of luxury structures with a tiny bit of affordable housing, near transit stops. But as a USC study verified last year, LA is pushing the poor away from transit — and upscale residents refuse to use transit.

Did you know that transit ridership in Los Angeles has plummeted to 1985 levels after spending billions of dollars? It's been in the *LA Times* quite a bit. Metro ridership in LA has dropped 19% just since 2013. And BART and the Bay Area have seen massive transit ridership drops in the past couple of years after spending billions of dollars.

Transit-oriented development of mostly market-rate units — the very heart of Wiener's failing philosophy — is the core belief system of SB 50. It will fail miserably and hurt a lot of people.

Did you know that Los Angeles has approved more than 14,000 units of entitled "transit-oriented" projects — fully approved — that investors aren't in any hurry to actually build because they are waiting for bigger profits?

SB 50 doubles down on these failures. I'm for things that work, and I know there are senators with serious ideas not driven by YIMBY beliefs or backing from developers, such as Sen. Beall's SB 795.

Please oppose SB 50. The rule for any new legislation should be "first do no harm."

Thank you,

[YOUR NAME]

LETTER #4

Dear Senator [NAME]:

I am extremely concerned over a little-discussed issue at the core of Senate Bill SB 50, that puts developers in charge of planning decisions in many of the cities you represent.

I wanted to alert you and ask you to oppose SB 50, because no amount of rewriting can fix this fatally flawed bill.

I've taken a deep dive into the bill, along with others who are reviewing the, frankly, non-transparent language in SB 50.

I am among a group of friends and family who are very active in local elections, social justice, and homelessness. We now understand this widely misrepresented bill.

SB 50 puts developers in charge of their own zoning and planning, to an unprecedented degree whose outcome is unknown. This experiment can only harm the poor, renters, and communities of color, which the bill claims to protect. Under close examination, it is clear that SB 50 will harm these communities.

The bill contains a threat to “sensitive communities” that unless they up-zone, Sen. Wiener will do it for them via SB 50. This godlike power is experimental, dangerous, and not in keeping with California's ideals.

It claims to protect existing renters, but virtually no cities in California have a registry of existing renters. Imagine the falsehoods as developers rush to tear down affordable buildings to erect luxury buildings, by claiming that the affordable building was “empty for the required number of years.” According to who? What a mess this will be, clearly harming renters.

Finally, the bill's aggressive invitation to developers — to sue cities that question the developers' judgment — is outrageous.

I urge you to vote against this bill.

Thank you,

[YOUR NAME]

LETTER #5

Dear Senator [NAME]:

I am a longtime resident of [CITY NAME] and wanted to tell you why our working-class area opposes SB 50, and you should too. This bill fails to protect renters and older homeowners from what is a highly experimental, mass gentrification policy.

SB 50 claims to temporarily prevent developers from razing “rental housing,” but a close reading shows that the only renters protected are those who live in a handful of California cities that have carefully registered their renters by name — and dates of occupancy.

Almost no California cities can accomplish this gargantuan task.

In all cities that cannot handle mass registration of renters — nearly every city in your district — developers need only lie to comply with SB 50's “protection” of buildings that contain, or recently contained, renters.

Rents have skyrocketed amidst a growing luxury housing glut. Economists from Zillow have warned LA Mayor Eric Garcetti that his embrace of luxury housing projects that include few affordable units is creating a larger and larger affordability gap every year.

Scott Wiener’s SB 50 doubles down on this terrible mistake.

There are thoughtful ideas for creating affordable housing. SB 50 is thoughtless. Please oppose it.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

LETTER #6

Dear Senator [NAME]:

I am writing to ask you to strongly object to SB 50. Its vision to usurp local control in every jurisdiction in California aside from severe fire zones and a handful of coastal zones, is not only undemocratic, but will cause undue harm to countless areas.

While author Scott Wiener says he wants to build more housing, the method is wrongheaded and far worse than his failed 2018 bill, SB 827.

Claims that SB 50 was toned down from his disastrous SB 827 are false. It is a direct attack on renters, yet is ironically steeped in pro-renter phrasing.

It is clearly an attack on homeownership as well, vastly expanding the areas where 65-foot to 85-foot luxury towers can be built — SB 50 does this by targeting “job rich” areas and areas with “good schools.”

If these areas are above median income but ARE NOT near high-frequency transit, developers can buy up homes, then choose to up-zone the land to luxury apartment towers and fourplexes that are unaffordable to those who live there.

Under SB 50, developers are openly encouraged to sue any city that rejects their development plan.

SB 50 was written with San Francisco as its template, but there is no other city like San Francisco in all of California. Few cities are built on a tight grid, few have handy transit systems (many won't for decades), and very few cities are ballooning up with younger singles without children as is San Francisco due to its extreme tech sector influx.

We are renters. We are families. We need room to breathe, not dorm-like boxes at crazy rents that efficiently move we “workers” to our jobs and back.

Please stop this runaway train and focus on the good ideas, not flashy disasters.

Thank you,

[YOUR NAME]