



CACEO
California Association of Code Enforcement Officers

California Association of Code Enforcement Officers
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June 12, 2018

Honorable Mike McGuire
Member of the Senate
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator McGuire:

The California Association of Code Enforcement Officers is in support of Senate Bill 1415 and Senate Bill 1416 and we commend you for introducing these important bills.

Senate Bill 1415 requires building inspections of specified industrial and storage structures, authorizes fees to cover inspection costs, requires reporting of the backlog of mandated building inspections by local governments, and generally extends existing tenant protections and notifications to buildings which are used for human habitation, of which residential buildings are a subset.

Warehouses and factory spaces sometimes are converted to residential use without the knowledge of local officials. These buildings aren't covered under state laws mandating fire inspections, meaning that unsafe conditions can go undetected for years. Even if local officials discover a dangerous building, variation in how judges interpret the law make it difficult for locals to use all of their available tools, particularly when a space is used as an unpermitted residence. At the same time, not all jurisdictions make it easy to bring buildings up to code. Notices of violation often don't tell building occupants what they need to fix or how to fix it. SB 1415 responds by beefing up local inspections by ensuring that spaces often used as unpermitted residences are regularly inspected and allows local officials to charge a fee to cover those inspections. It also ensures accountability by requiring reports on inspections already mandated by law. Once a dangerous building is discovered, SB 1415 improves the tools that local governments have by ensuring that receivership laws and relocation benefits apply to any space used for habitation, regardless of legal status, and by removing other hurdles to enforcement. Finally, SB 1415 makes it easier for tenants and landlords to bring buildings up to code by directing local officials to identify specific violations of building codes and offer advice on how to fix those violations.

Senate Bill 1416 allows cities and counties to recover fines through nuisance abatement liens and special assessments until January 1, 2024.

Local governments use various enforcement strategies to make buildings safer. One important strategy is to fine slumlords for having nuisances on their properties. This hits them where it hurts: their pocketbook. But some recalcitrant property owners maintain nuisances on their properties while ignoring the administrative fines imposed by local governments because they realize that it is challenging for local agencies to enforce these fines through the courts. These fines accumulate into large debts, which hinder cities' and counties' efforts to protect their residents from unsafe buildings. The Golden State experienced the tragic consequences that unabated nuisances can have when the Ghost Ship warehouse caught fire. SB 1416 helps prevent these types of fires by encouraging property owners to take care of nuisances on their property. It enacts a recommendation from the Ghost Ship working group established by the Senate Governance and Finance Committee, which included local officials who have real-world experience with trying to make buildings safer. Using special assessment and abatement liens gives local officials a less expensive and more effective method for collecting unpaid fines and will provide a stronger incentive for property owners to comply with local ordinances. SB 1416 helps local agencies protect the public's health and safety by giving them stronger code enforcement authority that mirrors the authority they already use to collect nuisance abatement costs.

We look forward to working collaboratively with you to secure the passage of these two very important bills.

Sincerely,



John Lovell
Legislative Counsel

Lisa Engel, Chief Consultant, Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development
Debbie Michel, Chief Consultant, Assembly Committee on Local Government
William Weber, Republican Consultant, Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development AND Assembly Committee on Local Government