

January 19, 2023

The Honorable Scott Wiener
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 6630
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 4 - Affordable Housing on Faith Lands Act - Support

Dear Senator Wiener,

On behalf of MidPen Housing Corporation, we write in support of Senate Bill (SB) 4, the Affordable Housing on Faith Lands Act. This measure would make building affordable housing easier, faster, and cheaper on land owned by faith-based institutions and nonprofit colleges.

MidPen Housing is one of the nation's leading nonprofit developers, owners, and managers of high-quality, affordable housing and onsite resident services. Since MidPen was founded in 1970, we have developed over 125 communities and 8,500 homes for low-income families, seniors and those with supportive housing needs throughout Northern California.

Across California, faith-based organizations and non-profit colleges are seeking to partner with affordable housing developers to build critically needed affordable homes on their own land. These faith-based organizations are long-standing community anchors and are driven by their values to support those most in need and help address our homelessness crisis.

Per a study by the UC Berkeley Turner Center, there are approximately 38,800 acres of land—roughly the size of the city of Stockton—used for religious purposes and are potentially developable. A significant share of that acreage (45 percent) is located in the state's "high" or "highest" resource opportunity areas, signaling an opportunity for building housing in neighborhoods with lower poverty rates and greater economic, educational, and environmental amenities.

Unfortunately, the land that these organizations hold can often be locked into complicated and cost-prohibitive local zoning rules and regulations. These can range from standards which allow only a few units to be built on large parcels to others which limit any housing construction at all.

The variety of red tape and obstacles in the way make development financially infeasible and discourage institutions from moving forward with projects that would benefit their low-income and unhoused neighbors.



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A 2022 report from the California Department of Housing and Community Development found that we need to build 1.2 million affordable homes over the next decade to meet our housing goals. Over the last few years, California has added an average of 19,000 affordable units a year. At this pace we will not reach our state goals without increased streamlining for affordable housing production.

SB 4 will streamline the building process and offer new tools for neighborhood leaders to build safe, stable, affordable homes for local residents and families. This bill will allow places of worship to build 100% affordable housing projects, creating a valuable option in the midst of the state's housing and homelessness crises. It also provides significant untapped benefits for faith-based organizations, from supporting an organization's charitable mission to providing revenue that can stabilize the organization's finances.

Equally important, this Act will help our state's construction workforce rise and thrive. Construction workers will be protected by the requirement to pay prevailing wages. On projects with at least 50 units, contractors must offer apprentices employment and pay for health care for construction workers and their dependents. This creates an economic base and new opportunities for construction workers and provides our state with the highly skilled workforce it needs to build our future.

This is a common-sense opportunity for us to partner with trusted community leaders. The catastrophic tragedies we see on the street every day call for urgent and bold action and this bill will help us move forward. Thank you for your leadership on these critical housing and homelessness issues and for all these reasons, we support this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew O. Franklin', is written over a faint, light blue circular watermark.

Matthew O. Franklin
President and CEO
MidPen Housing Corporation

CC:

Nevada V. Merriman, Director of Policy, MidPen Housing
Senator Mike McGuire
Senator Bill Dodd
Senator Susan Eggman
Senator Steve Glazer
Senator Nancy Skinner
Senator Scott Wiener



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Senator Josh Becker
Senator Dave Cortese
Senator John Laird
Assemblymember Jim Wood
Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Assemblymember Lori Wilson
Assemblymember Damon Connolly
Assemblymember Phil Ting
Assemblymember Matt Haney
Assemblymember Mia Bonta
Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan
Assemblymember Liz Ortega
Assemblymember Diane Papan
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Assemblymember Ash Kalra
Assemblymember Gail Pellerin
Assemblymember Robert Rivas
Assemblymember Dawn Addis