

May 18, 2026

The Honorable John Laird
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8720
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 963 (Laird) – California Coastal Commission: Appeals Process Reform – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Laird:

MidPen Housing is pleased to write to you in support of your bill SB 963, which will help modernize and clarify the California Coastal Commission’s Coastal Development Permit (CDP) appeals process.

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 140 communities and over 10,400 homes for low-income families, seniors and those with supportive housing needs throughout Northern California.

As California faces an unprecedented shortage of affordable housing – especially in many of the state’s coastal cities – this bill represents a welcome improvement in the predictability of the residential development permitting processes, while still allowing for good stewardship of the California’s coasts extraordinary public trust resources.

The current “de novo” appeals framework has no time limit for the Coastal Commission’s decision-making process, creating a major source of uncertainty for affordable housing developers. Even projects that have undergone rigorous local review and won approval from coastal cities can be stalled indefinitely by administrative appeals to the Coastal Commission.

SB 963 addresses this by putting clear limits on the information gathering process during the Coastal Commission’s appeals process and establishing a 180 day timeline for deliberation and decision-making on de novo appeals. These guardrails will help ensure that the appeals process is used to address substantive Coastal Act inconsistencies rather than as a tool for bad faith delay, and that such appeals are completed in a clearly defined, reasonable timeframe.

We support SB 963 for the following reasons:

- **Improved Certainty for Developers:** By narrowing the scope and timelines for appeals, SB 963 provides a clearer roadmap for project completion. When developers can accurately predict the regulatory timeline, they can better attract finance, manage costs and navigate the complexities of building in California.
- **Increased Investment in Housing:** Capital is naturally drawn to environments with predictable outcomes. By reducing the risk of arbitrary or prolonged “appeals loops,” SB 963 will encourage greater private and non-profit investment in much-needed homes.
- **Improved Governance:** This bill reinforces the principle of local control while maintaining the Coastal Commission’s independent oversight role. It improves efficiency and transparency of the appeals process and helps ensure that reviews focus on real state priorities such as environmental protection and public access, rather than procedural obstruction.

By establishing a clearer process and a statutory timeline for appeals, SB 963 will support affordable housing development without undermining California's commitment to protecting the coastal environment and the public's right to coastal access.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support SB 963. Thank you for authoring this important legislation. Please feel free to contact Nevada V. Merriman, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy, at 650-477-6195 or nmerriman@midpen-housing.org.

Best Regards,



Matthew O. Franklin
President and CEO

CC: Nevada V. Merriman, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy, MidPen Housing