

THOMAS CAREY WHITE III

The Honorable Scott Wiener

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Dear Senator Wiener:

I am writing to let you know that I agree with your position on SB 822 with respect to net neutrality, and appreciate you taking up this issue. I also agree with your efforts to expand solar facilities and clean energy in California. These efforts will benefit our state and our future.

But I disagree with the approach taken in your bill SB 827, which seeks to expand housing development in California by overturning all local initiative or planning. I believe that while the goal of helping people find housing is laudable, the means proposed in this bill will result in much of the character of our local neighborhoods being homogenized through vertical building. Thirty years from now, when both you and I are off the scene, those who come after us will be sorry that the state legislature passed this bill. There are better ways, and I hope you will consider them.

I believe this bill is a mistake for California. Here are the reasons why:

- California's beauty was made possible by far-sighted citizens working for the last hundred years to stop exactly the sort of high-rise developments this bill wants to let developers build everywhere. That work of preservation of what makes a place special has always been and will always be done locally by the people that love the place. This bill, had it been in place years ago, would have negated the hard work that kept so much of our state's beauty for so many years. Our city would be today be lined with eighty-five-foot condominium towers, in every direction, as far as the eye can see.
- The most revered cities in the world are those that planned thoughtfully and locally over centuries. This bill would preempt all local planning in the belief that one size fits all for the entire state of California.
- The people who live in low-density areas, and those who would like to live there, don't want to live in Manhattan. This bill would bring Manhattan to them.
- There are many, many ways to build more housing without destroying what so many of us hold dear. Instead, this bill chooses to use a sledgehammer to crush local initiative.

I believe that you want to help the state. But this bill goes to far. It allows the state to seize control of your neighborhood. And mine.

Like many people, I would be affected. I live in the outer Richmond district of San Francisco, where housing heights range from two to four stories, but would more than double under your bill once developers were permitted to bring their eighty-five-foot-tall condo towers out to line the parks and the shoreline. Yes, I read the bill, and it does indeed appear to let someone buy the houses across the street from me, 150 feet from Sutro Heights Park, and build a condo tower there. And they will, because they can make money doing so.

Here are several ways you can improve the bill.

- **Appeals process:** Set up an appeals process in which the neighbors can plead their case in public. There isn't one in this bill. How can that be fair?
- **Eminent domain-like process:** Pay the neighborhood something for what the state decides should be done to them. This is a decision by the state that some neighborhoods should give more than others; that's fine, but let's make it fair. Give something back to the neighborhood -- parks, schools, something -- when you take away the look-and-feel that they built over the years.
- **Pay equity:** This bill will be sold to us on the basis that we need housing for teachers and firefighters, but in fact what's built will be more luxury condos. That is always what gets built. That is why developers of high-end properties support this bill. How about go directly to the source of the problem and pay teachers and firefighters enough to live in the neighborhoods they serve? Perhaps with a tax on luxury condos.

There's a common theme in all of those points: Neighborhoods. Local communities. The places where we all live. This bill treats the entire state as one, as though neighborhoods do not matter. It seizes control of our neighborhoods. That's not fair, and it's not required in order to achieve your goal.

There are many, many ways you could improve this bill. I hope you will consider them.

Thank you,



Carey White