[INSERT DATE]

The Honorable Anna Caballero

Chair, Senate Governance and Finance

California State Senate

California State Capitol

Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUPPORT** – **SB 684** – **Building Homeownership**

Dear Senator Caballero,

I write on behalf of [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] to support Senate Bill 684, which will help increase home ownership opportunities and address our housing crisis by streamlining approvals for small-lot, modest and affordable “Missing Middle” homes for-sale. **Coupled with existing housing production measures, SB 684 is essential to ensuring that moderate-income families, and families of color, have an opportunity to build generational wealth through homeownership.** Importantly, SB 684 establishes a streamlined path for local governments to zone for small housing developments of up to ten homeownership units per parcel, increasing access to an important tool to uplift communities of color. These small homes are generally more affordable and accessible and will help local governments comply with existing housing element law.

My organization, [INSERT NAME AND MISSION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION].

**California’s Homeownership Crisis Disproportionately Impacts Moderate-Income Communities of Color**

Today, California has a statewide housing shortage of nearly 3.5 million homes[[1]](#footnote-1) and for the past decade has produced only 45% of the number of housing units needed to meet our growing population.[[2]](#footnote-2) Homeownership is the primary way in which most Americans build wealth and assets. California has the third highest median home price in the country[[3]](#footnote-3) and the high-cost of housing has pushed what was once a modest goal further out of reach. People of color, who make up more than 60% of the state’s population, pay the heaviest price for the broken housing market in California. African American homeownership rates are 26% lower and Latino homeownership rates are 19% lower than White Californians.

There is no single reason for the severe homeownership gap in California, but the California Legislative Analyst’s office has identified a lack of housing supply as one of the culprits. According to the 2016 report on housing affordability, the LAO reported that “the state’s housing shortage also makes many Californians—not only low–income residents—more likely to commute longer distances, live in overcrowded housing, and delay or forgo homeownership.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

**SB 684 Will Help Address Our Housing Shortage and Includes Critical Tenant and Environmental Protections**

Today, state and local laws make it extremely difficult for local governments to do common-sense rezonings quickly – even very mild efforts are often mired in expensive, decades-long litigation. SB 684 will enable more for-sale homes to be built on a single parcel of land as long as the appropriate legal assurances and protections are provided. Critical tenant protection laws in place under SB 35, SB 330, and SB 8 will apply under SB 684. This includes ensuring that new development does not remove low-income and rent-controlled housing, or housing occupied by tenants within the last 7 years in multifamily zones and only applies to vacant lots in single family neighborhoods. In order to qualify for streamlining, these small infill developments of 10 units or fewer also must comply with local inclusionary requirements, setbacks, and height limits. They must also comply with environmental sustainability standards. Prioritizing development near job centers can also reduce greenhouse gas pollution from long commutes.

Together these changes will make small homes – often built by small builders – easier, faster, and less expensive to build. This will benefit homebuyers and allow more people, such as teachers, nurses, and first responders, to live where they work. Californians – especially people of color – are struggling to become homeowners and build wealth due to extremely high costs, driven by the lack of housing supply. Removing barriers to ownership represents an opportunity for the expansion of the American Dream to all Californians.

**[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] is therefore happy to support SB 684. Thank you for bringing this essential bill forward.**

Sincerely,

[INSERT SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE]

[PRINT NAME AND TITLE]

cc: Senator Seyarto, Vice Chair Senate Governance and Finance Committee

Members, Senate Governance and Finance Committee

1. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/urbanization/closing-californias-housing-gap [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/SHA\_Final\_Combined.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.businessinsider.com/average-home-prices-in-every-state-washington-dc-2019-6#2-district-of-columbia-626911-50 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3345 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)