



Senator Scott Wiener, 11th Senate District

Senate Bill 312 – SB 886 (Wiener, 2022) Fix

SUMMARY

Senate Bill 312 will resolve an issue with SB 886 (Wiener, 2022) that prevents universities from utilizing the bill to streamline student and faculty housing.

BACKGROUND

The University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and California Community College (CCC) campuses across the State are facing a growing housing crisis as enrollment numbers continue to rise and campus expansions fail to keep up with demand. In 2021, the UC system saw a record high number of 250,000 applicants across its 10 campuses, while the CSU system peaked in 2019 with over 800,000 applicants. Additionally, the combined systems are expected to add 15,000 registered students in the upcoming year, alongside the necessary faculty and staff to accommodate the rise in student population.

While the UC system has added over 20,000 additional beds since the 2015-2016 school year and the CSU system has added over 14,000 in the same timeframe, the growth in admissions, combined with decades of limited housing developments have left campuses without the necessary shelter for their students or staff. Housing guarantees for students have been revoked, and housing waitlists across colleges continue to grow. For the fall of 2021 alone, 13 CSU campuses reported having 8,700 students on waitlists for housing, while 8 UC campuses reported 7,500 students – a combined total of over 16,000 students unable to gain access to housing through the university they attend.

This lack of guaranteed housing has adversely impacted the living situations of students and staff alike. According to a 2021 report by the Legislative Analyst's Office, 5% of UC students are currently experiencing homelessness, while that number rises to 16% of UC students if those living in hotels or

transitional housing are included. For CSU students, the rate of homelessness during the academic year is 10%. With over 280,000 students currently enrolled in UCs and 485,000 in CSUs, this means that over 60,000 students at four-year universities in California are currently facing homelessness, with even more facing housing insecurity.

The statistics are even more jarring for our community college system. In a 2019 survey of 40,000 California community college students, 19% of students had been homeless in the last year while 60% had experienced housing insecurity. With 1.8 million Californians currently attending community college, this means over 1 million community college students in this state alone are unable to find an adequate and affordable place to live while pursuing a degree.

PROBLEM

To address the growing student housing crisis, SB 886 provided a statutory exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for UCs, CSUs and CCCs student and faculty housing projects under specified circumstances.

However, one of the qualifications for these projects to utilize SB 886 is a requirement for all buildings to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification. Platinum is the highest level of LEED certification, and as such includes numerous requirements to determine if a building qualifies for certification. Some of these determinations, however, cannot be made until the building is occupied. Given this, SB 886's requirement to certify LEED Platinum prior to being granted the CEQA exemption and the certificate of occupancy simply isn't possible.

SOLUTION

SB 312 addresses this timing issue by requiring that these buildings qualify for LEED Platinum certification, rather than receive the certification, which can be achieved prior to occupancy.

Additional clean up to SB 886 is being considered by the Senate Environmental Quality Committee, and if an agreement is made, those changes will be amended into SB 312 when possible.

Allowing UCs, CSUs and CCCs to utilize SB 886 is a crucial step in addressing the growing student housing crisis, and SB 312 ensures this law is feasible.

SUPPORT

- CALIFORNIA YIMBY
- UC Student Association
- Student HOMES Coalition
- GENU_p

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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