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BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 3 ON  
RESOURCES AND TRANSPORTATION

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

June 22, 2021

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State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Post Office Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

**RE: Proposed 2021 Minimum Fire-Safe Regulations—Concerns**

Dear Chair Gilles and Board Members:

We are writing you today because we are concerned that the proposed State Fire Safe Regulations, released by the Board of Forestry on March 15, 2021, fail to adequately protect those that live in the highest fire severity zones in our state. Additionally, we are concerned with any efforts that would further weaken fire safety regulations.

Wildfires in California are continuing to increase in frequency and intensity, resulting in loss of life and damage to public health, property, infrastructure, and ecosystems. In 2020, wildfires burned more than 4.1 million acres. The August Complex Fire in northern California, the largest fire in California's modern history, burned over one million acres. In total, wildfires caused 33 deaths and destroyed over 10,000 structures in 2020. The land area burned in 2020 more than doubled the previous record, roughly 1.8 million acres, which was set in 2018. Furthermore, seven of the state's deadliest fires have occurred since 2017, with over 100 fatalities in 2017 and 2018.

Some of the deaths mentioned above could have been avoided with better roads for ingress and egress and roads that provided access to fire personnel for suppression activities. It is a troubling fact that too many Californians live in communities that will take hours for the residences to evacuate (time they may not have). That fact is why strong state fire safe regulations are needed to avoid making this problem worse. When roads are not upgraded and additional development is

permitted this increases the number of vehicles that will need to use those roads for evacuations, which increases evacuation times for all existing residents.

We respect the fact that in addition to a climate crisis, California is also in a housing crisis. However, we do not believe allowing additional high-end development in high fire hazard severity areas with substandard roads is the answer to that crisis. Instead local governments should work with the state to upgrade strategic roads to allow for higher density and safer development that will also increase the fire safety of existing residents. We support providing state funding to assist local governments in upgrading those roads to meet State Fire Safe Regulations and believe the state is in a fiscal position to do so.

We understand that California Fire Chiefs and fire professionals have made recommendations to strengthen these regulations. We would urge you to listen to those experts that understand the grave fire risk the state is facing, and to resist any attempts to pressure the Board into allowing significant development on substandard roads. We can and should work together to find solutions that allow more housing without sacrificing fire safety at the same time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



**LUZ RIVAS**  
Assemblywoman, 39<sup>th</sup> District



**HENRY STERN**  
Senator, 27<sup>th</sup> District



**BEN ALLEN**  
Senator, 26<sup>th</sup> District



**LAURA FRIEDMAN**  
Assemblymember, 43<sup>rd</sup> District