

DRAFT LETTER – Attachment “D”

RE: 2021-22 California State Budget: Housing Accountability Unit

Dear Mayor Garcetti and Honorable Councilmembers:

We oppose the creation of a Housing Accountability Unit (“HAU”) within the Department of Housing and Community Development (“HCD”) in the California State 2021-22 Proposed Budget as it was described in the press conference of Governor Gavin Newsom on January 8, 2021.

The governor’s description of the function of this unit, that was allocated \$4.3 million, was direct and explicit.

It is alarming, unprecedented and unacceptable for the state to send teams into city council, county boards of supervisors, and local planning commissions, to “monitor” whether local city governments are behaving properly “before the articles” in the press come out reporting their decisions (this was stated by Governor Newsom at the press conference).

Basically, it is encroachment by the executive branch of government in the operations of local jurisdictions and their constituents. Executive branch representatives monitor locally elected or appointed officials in order to decide if they are doing the right thing will clearly chill free discussion among the people and their local governments.

With the likes of Senate Bill 9 (“SB 9”), Senate Bill 10 (“SB 10”), that have not only deliberately left out language regarding CEQA review, but also pose a public safety risk in our Los Angeles hillsides by offering no exemption on housing density in our very high fire hazard severity zones (VHFHSZ) (see SB 9), and the highly inadequate “conditional exemption” (see SB 10). Increased density and the substandard and complicated ingress and egress in hillsides puts residents at risk of bodily harm or death, especially during an evacuation.

Local jurisdictions are being blamed and punished for statewide failures that cities and counties have no resources to address – the severe shortfall in low-income housing that clearly requires state subsidies, while the glut of market-rate housing continues to grow, helped by state law focused on production instead of poverty.

With the state’s focus on producing as much market-rate housing as possible, it is highly unlikely that the proposed HAU will improve things. The worsening relations between cities and the state will grow.

We urge you to oppose this element in the California 2021-22 budget.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,