

June 24, 2026

The Honorable Chair and Members
California State Senate
Local Government Committee



Re: AB 956 (Quirk-Silva) — OPPOSE

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

WAKE UP CALIFORNIA strongly opposes AB 956. Homeowners already have the option to add two accessory dwelling units plus a junior ADU. The real effect of this bill is not to help families add housing — it is to convert a homeowner program into one targeted to developers.

That conversion falls hardest on the smallest houses that could be preserved as starter homes. A 1,200-square-foot house on a 5,000-square-foot lot is, today, a starter home available to a first-time buyer. Under AB 956, that same lot becomes a developer's target: convert the garage or interior space to one unit and add two detached ADUs in the rear — four rental units where a family home stood. The results of this conversion:

- Starter-home prices increase dramatically, as the land's new opportunity value to a developer increases.
- Starter-home inventory permanently shrinks, as for-sale houses' lots are converted into small dwelling complexes that never return to the ownership market.

California has already seen robust ADU growth statewide. Any further expansion deserves clear economic and social analysis first — including the discriminatory impact of these programs on CTCAC-designated low-opportunity communities. And while the loss of starter homes is not itself measured, it surely affects opportunity — which cuts against California's own commitment to affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH).

The bill also collides with the state's own fire-safety law. AB 956 keeps four-foot side and rear setbacks, while California has adopted a five-foot Zone Zero ember-resistant requirement (AB 3074) for high and very high fire severity zones. This is a conflict that is unfortunately often ignored in new zoning for density. Wildfire loss in California is driven overwhelmingly by *structure-to-structure spread* — one building igniting the next. Ministerially approving four dwellings on a small lot with minimal setbacks by right — statewide — creates the exact ignition conditions fire science tells us to avoid. As fire hazard zones expand with a changing climate, setbacks for ADUs and all infill housing should be raised to five feet to match Zone Zero — not frozen below it.

AB 956 has already cleared the Assembly and the Senate Housing Committee. We respectfully urge this Committee to vote NO on AB 956.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Kalish", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amy Kalish
President & Co-Founder
WAKE UP CALIFORNIA
wakeca.org