



## COSUMNES FIRE DEPARTMENT

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August 5, 2019

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2206  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### **RE: AB 1516 (Friedman) - SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Portantino,

We are writing in strong support of AB 1516 which improves California's fire prevention policies and defensible space requirements. In 2018, California saw the worst wildfires in history setting new records for the largest, most destructive, and deadliest. In the face of megafires, we have a responsibility to invest in and create fire resilient communities. To do this, we must thoughtfully consider how we adapt our communities to deal with the escalating threat of fires.

For communities that are established in high-risk fire areas, we must make those homes and communities more resilient to fire through fire-safe building standards, science-based defensible space programs, evacuation planning, and prevention of human-caused ignitions. Defensible space is vital for protecting homes and communities from wildfire. Homes complying with the newest building standards are ignition resistant only if defensible space requirements are being met.

Currently, the state has no defensible space compliance or inspection data for very high fire severity zones. A KQED analysis of almost a half- million inspection records shows CAL FIRE's inspection rate was just 17% of properties in 2018, far below the agency's 33% goal. AB 1516 will require a survey of local governments' defensible space inspection programs in very high fire severity zones and provide local assistance grants to develop new defensible space inspection programs. AB 1516 will also require CAL FIRE to develop a plan to meet its 33% annual inspection goal and pilot the use of defensible space assessments by trained representatives from Fire Safe Councils, Resource Conservation Districts, and UC Fire Advisors. AB 1516 makes important changes to improve defensible space requirements and compliance, instituting a 0-5 feet noncombustible zone from structures recommended by fire professionals based on investigations of recent fires and referenced in CAL FIRE's 45-day report.

AB 1516 establishes the Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Risk Model to assist communities in determining their wildfire risk. The model is an important new tool that determines the fire risk for a community or parcel using current wildfire hazard severity information and mitigation activities. The model will help ensure we are using effective mitigation measures and help create more fire resilient communities. Similar models exist in other states and have increased support for fire prevention activities.

AB 1516 also requires the use of "right tree right place" for future planting under electrical lines in high fire hazard areas. AB 1516 will require CAL FIRE to develop a guidebook to help property owners find

the right vegetation to plant under electrical lines that will not grow into lines and cause fires. This will reduce vegetation management costs and reduce the number of utility caused wildfires.

We believe the requirements of AB 1516 will improve fire prevention in California to meet the increasing threat the state faces, and we strongly urge your support.

Sincerely,



cc: The Honorable Laura Friedman  
The Honorable Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee