



URGENT ITEM AGENDA MATERIAL

Government Code Section 54954.2(b)
Rules of Procedure Chapter III.C.5

**THIS ITEM IS NOT YET AGENDIZED AND MAY OR MAY NOT BE
ACCEPTED FOR THE AGENDA AS A LATE ITEM, SUBJECT TO THE
CITY COUNCIL'S DISCRETION ACCORDING TO BROWN ACT RULES**

Meeting Date: July 27, 2021

Item Description: Support for SB 290

This item is submitted pursuant to the provision checked below:

- Emergency Situation (54954.2(b)(1) - majority vote required)
Determination by a majority vote of the legislative body that an emergency situation exists, as defined in Section 54956.5.
- Immediate Action Required (54954.2(b)(2) - two-thirds vote required)
There is a need to take immediate action and the need for action came to the attention of the local agency subsequent to the agenda for this meeting being posted.

Once the item is added to the agenda (Consent or Action) it must be passed by the standard required vote threshold (majority, two-thirds, or 7/9).

Facts supporting the addition of the item to the agenda under Section 54954.2(b) and Chapter III.C.5 of the Rules of Procedure:

The need for action came to the attention of the Council subsequent to the agenda for this meeting being posted. There is a need to take immediate action, as the state's legislative deadline for bills to be passed will be prior to the next meeting of the Council after recess. As home to UC Berkeley, the UC campus with the lowest percentage of students housed on campus and the highest rents in the surrounding housing market, the City of Berkeley has an acute interest in the production of low-income student housing and therefore the passage of this legislation.



CITY COUNCILMEMBER
RIGEL ROBINSON
DISTRICT 7

CONSENT CALENDAR
July 27, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Rigel Robinson
Subject: Support for SB 290

RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter to Senator Nancy Skinner and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks in support of SB 290, which would improve the Density Bonus Law by further incentivizing the inclusion of low-income student housing in student housing developments, among other changes.

BACKGROUND

SB 290, introduced by Senator Skinner, makes several amendments to the State Density Bonus Law. Most relevant to the City of Berkeley, it grants one incentive or concession to student housing developments that set aside at least 20% of their units for low-income students.

The housing crisis in Berkeley is significantly exacerbated by an acute shortage of housing for students near the UC Berkeley campus, caused by both a legacy of the failure of the campus to build adequate on campus housing, the campus' continued practice of charging excessive and above market rate rents for on campus housing, and local development policies which have historically restricted the construction of dense housing near the campus. While the City has taken multiple steps in the last few years to remove limits to density near campus, especially on Southside, a shortage remains. This is particularly acute for low-income students who often cannot afford rents in newly constructed buildings.

This shortage causes a significant reduction in living standards for students in on- and off-campus housing, with many people sharing few rooms in apartments built for a fraction of the occupancy. Additionally, the pressure from excess student demand farther from campus drives displacement and gentrification throughout the Berkeley community.

By incentivizing on-site affordable housing for students, SB 290 will take a significant step towards addressing the student housing shortage and target its benefits at the low-income students who need the most assistance.

Other changes in the bill are minor or will not significantly impact Berkeley. These include additional parking concessions, not relevant to Berkeley due to the City's recent

changes to parking minimums, as well as a clarification on the definition of ‘total units’ which comports with how the City already calculates our local inclusionary requirement.

As SB 290 furthers the City’s efforts to incentivize the production of low-income student housing, the Council should adopt the recommendation and endorse the bill.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, Council District 7, (510) 981-7170
Joanne Park, Intern

Attachment:

1: Letter of support

2: Bill text

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB290

July 27, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: City of Berkeley's Support for SB 290

Dear Senator Skinner,

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey its full support for SB 290, in particular its incentivization of the production of low-income student housing. As home to UC Berkeley, the UC campus with the lowest percentage of students housed on campus and the highest rents in the surrounding housing market, we are acutely aware of the need to provide housing for students which will not drive them into financial hardship and detract from their ability to fully engage in campus life.

The lack of affordable student housing also has negative consequences for the broader Berkeley community. As students are forced farther and farther from the campus footprint to look for housing, they compete with long-term residents and drive displacement and gentrification in our community. Building more and more affordable student housing will relieve pressure for the entire Berkeley community.

While this bill will provide an important source of affordable student housing, we firmly believe the ultimate and only solution to the ongoing student housing crisis is a significant increase in direct state funding for the construction of on-campus student housing, coupled with a significant reduction in on-campus rents. We appreciate those efforts that have already been taken towards those ends and encourage you to continue and redouble them.

Thank you for this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,
The Berkeley City Council

CC: Assemblymember Buffy Wicks