



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

June 3, 2024

The Honorable Isaac Bryan
Chair, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 1361 – SUPPORT
As Amended April 8, 2024**

Dear Assembly Member Bryan:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we are pleased to support Senate Bill 1361 regarding the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties; the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

Senate Bill 1361 exempts from CEQA actions taken by a local agency to approve contracts providing services for homeless Californians. CEQA is an important tool to facilitate disclosure (and mitigation) of a project's significant effects on the environment. Unfortunately, CEQA has also provided ample grounds for opponents to frustrate, delay, and derail important public projects and services.

California is grappling with significant housing, homeless, mental health, and substance use disorder challenges. Those challenges often overlap with one another and complicate efforts to provide housing, support, and services for at-risk individuals and families. Efforts to address these issues can be complicated even more by the prospect of individuals or groups using CEQA to stymie local responses. To avoid this risk, California has created several CEQA exemptions applicable to the siting or conversion of transitional and supportive housing and emergency shelters.

SB 1361 creates another important tool to protect local governments from the risk of CEQA challenges related to discretionary contracts to provide support services for homeless residents. Local governments often enter into contracts with both private and nonprofit partners to provide case management; resource navigation; housing navigation; residential; and counseling services. These types of contracts are far from the typical projects CEQA was intended to cover. SB 1361 attempts to avoid future problems in light

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of recent trends where groups and individuals use creative and tangential CEQA challenges to oppose and delay a wide variety of projects.

For these reasons, RCRC supports SB 1361. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jkennedy@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "J" and "K".

JOHN KENNEDY
Senior Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Catherine Blakespear, California State Senate
Members, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Lawrence Lingbloom, Chief Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Casey Dunn, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus Office of Policy and
Budget