

Urging Cleanup on SB 131





August 7, 2025

200+ Organizations Urging Cleanup on SB 131

Dear Governor Newsom, President Pro Tempore McGuire, Speaker Rivas, and Members of the Legislature:

The 234 signatories write to urge immediate action to keep the commitments made to address urgent changes needed to SB 131, which was enacted with only three days for the public to review the bill, one hearing in the Senate Budget Committee, no hearings in the Assembly, and no meaningful time or process given for the level of scrutiny needed for a bill that is an unprecedented rollback to California's fundamental environmental and community protections.

While we were deeply disappointed in both the process and substance of SB 131, we were heartened by statements made by leadership – on the floor and to members – committing to pursue legislation quickly to address key problems with the bill. Specifically, we want to see a bill that addresses two critical flaws in the bill by:

Adding habitat and lands important for conservation plans to the definition of “natural and protected lands”:

Essential habitat lands and lands necessary to complete Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan reserve or preserve areas must be added to the list of “natural and protected lands” to ensure that the CEQA exemptions in SB 131 avoid and mitigate impacts on important habitat lands and endangered and threatened species. No mitigation for loss of important habitat would lead to an overall loss of habitat in California, potentially pushing declining species closer to extinction. This outcome directly contradicts the state's statutory goal of achieving 30x30. Previous CEQA exemptions have clearly excluded projects that impact habitat for candidate, rare, endangered, threatened, and special status species and for lands essential to completing habitat reserves in Habitat Conservation Plans/Natural Community Conservation Plans (e.g., SB 35 (2017), SB 423 (2023) and AB 130 (2025)).

Removing the Advanced Manufacturing CEQA exemption:

Advanced manufacturing **does not** mean clean. In fact, the broad scope of facilities captured here can be extremely hazardous to the environment and public health. Advanced manufacturing is defined in the Public Resources Code Section 26003(a) as any manufacturing process that “improves existing or creating entirely new materials, and processes” in a number of technological areas. This includes some of the most polluting projects in the state, like mining,

plastic recycling, and aerospace manufacturing. For example, semiconductor manufacturing, a type of facility that is specifically eligible for this exemption, involves significant pollution and hazards. Santa Clara County has twenty-three active Superfund Sites, more than any other county in the United States, because of semiconductor facilities that were found to be leaking dangerous chemical solvents into local groundwater. This broad and vague definition also could include extremely risky facilities like nuclear, lithium compound, heavy metal, or battery manufacturing or really any manufacturing facility if it is using new materials and/or processes. This exemption will result in major harm to California's working-class communities and California's natural environment. The exemption makes workplaces more dangerous and unhealthier, increases toxic contaminants in our communities, and prevents workers, communities, and governments from holding companies accountable to protect community benefits, good jobs, and safe places to live. Our opposition is not to having these facilities themselves in California, but to enabling their development by doing so without environmental review or required mitigation.

We strongly urge you to fulfill your commitment to address these two concerns immediately. SB 131 was touted as helping Californians meet their affordable housing needs.

However, unless these two problems are addressed in a clean-up bill, SB 131 will also result in hundreds of thousands of acres of lost habitat and declining biodiversity and polluting manufacturing facilities sited next door to already overburdened communities with no ability of these communities to engage in these decisions to protect their health and welfare.

We look forward to working with you to rectify these critical environmental and public health issues.

Sincerely,

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