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June 9, 2022

The Honorable Buffy Wicks  
Chair of the Housing and Community Development Committee  
California State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

#### **Re: Support for AB 2053 (Lee): Social Housing Act**

Dear Assemblymember Wicks:

On behalf of the YIMBY Democrats of San Diego County, please accept this letter in support of Assembly Bill 2053, which would create the California Housing Authority, a transformative social housing agency.

Adequate housing is a human right, so when the private market is failing to provide housing, our government must intercede. Despite being one of the greatest concentrations of wealth in recorded human history, California fails to provide adequate shelter to its citizens. Over 150,000 Californians are currently living on the street and millions are housing insecure. YIMBY Democrats of San Diego County is dedicated to a future where this is no longer the case.

AB 2053 will create a new Social Housing Agency, which will serve as a crucial tool in the fight against our State's housing shortage. If properly funded and organized, The California Housing Authority can create and manage a significant stock of social housing, allowing California to achieve better housing outcomes.

One significant benefit of AB 2053 is its ability to smooth the downturns of economic cycles. Housing demand is relatively inelastic, yet the private market supplies housing through a series of booms and busts. These booms and busts weaken the construction labor pipeline and make the construction materials markets more volatile. A public housing development agency could step in to support housing construction during downturns. This smoothing effect would make working in the construction industry or supplying materials for this market more financially feasible. In practice, this increases the overall productive capacity of our housing system.

In order to meet our housing needs, California must undergo a significant upzoning process. Yimby Democrats of San Diego unequivocally supports this process and have been vocal advocates of SB 50, SB 9, SB 10, and other bills that attempt to ease the burden of restrictive, exclusionary zoning. However, this upzoning also provides significant financial benefit to existing land-owners. As land is owned disproportionately by the most privileged members of our society, California should try to spread the economic benefits more equitably. Creating a comprehensive

Social Housing Agency allows the public to capture some of the benefits bestowed upon individual land-owners.

AB 2053 also includes provisions to allow limited equity arrangements, a model of homeownership that has proved immensely successful in other parts of the world. The bill would allow qualified citizens to purchase a social housing unit with a 99 year lease. These homes would grow in value at a set rate and are transferable. This equitable version of home-ownership can help close San Diego's racial homeownership gap.

California has made great strides in promoting transit oriented development and more sustainable building practices. However, development patterns are still guided by private developers and lenders. The creation of the California Housing Authority can give the state more control over the future of our built environment. The state can build dense transit oriented developments, efficient Passive House buildings, or use more environmentally friendly building methods such as mass timber if it deems these priorities. AB 2053 puts decision making power back in the public realm.

AB 2053 is an ambitious attempt to solve California's housing crisis. It is using a proven solution from other countries to create a more equitable and sustainable housing system. Thank you for your leadership in addressing our affordable housing crisis with this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angeli Calinog", written in a cursive style.

Angeli Calinog  
President  
YIMBY Democrats of San Diego County