

Mayors' & Councilmembers' Association of Sonoma County

*Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Rohnert Park,
Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Sonoma & Windsor*

April 1, 2019

To: Sonoma County Legislative Delegation:
Senator Mike McGuire
Senator Bill Dodd
Assembly Member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Assembly Member Marc Levine
Assembly Member Jim Wood

RE: CASA: Committee to House the Bay Area
Notice of GENERAL OPPOSITION

The Mayors' and Councilmembers Association of Sonoma County Legislative Committee took unanimous action to Generally Oppose the CASA Compact.

The cities in Sonoma County are united in both our concern for the growing housing crisis and our commitment to diversifying our housing stock and increasing the number of affordable units within our respective city limits to meet the changing needs of Sonoma County. We know you share our concern over rising rents, longer commutes, and a real estate market that has become inaccessible to our working families. Despite these common values, we cannot support the CASA Compact.

We understand why a regional plan has been prepared, but we do not understand why the process to develop that plan failed to include outreach and meaningful feedback from the cities who will be affected. We support creative and bold action to address the Bay Area's affordable housing needs, but we cannot support a plan that will penalize our residents because of the lack of foresight of cities and counties who were more than happy to welcome large employers while ignoring the question of where the new employees would live and what would happen to people in that community—and in surrounding communities—whose wages were not as high.

Despite this procedural failure, we share our more specific concerns below in hope that the legislation proposed to move CASA forward will be fine tuned to address the underlying issues that led to this crisis without penalizing cities, like those of us in Sonoma County, who are actively working to increase our affordable and workforce housing:

One-size-fits-all approach to housing densities and land-use decision-making:

Sonoma County is a diverse county that encompasses urban, suburban and rural communities. As we have worked to improve our transportation infrastructure, including the SMART train, cities with stations developed and adopted MTC grant-funded Stationary Master Plans. Legislation that applies one-size-fits-all metrics puts these plans in jeopardy and would eliminate the character of our rural and urban communities.

The cities in Sonoma County have populations that range from 7,000 to 175,000, with eight out of nine having populations of less than 50,000. Our communities grew with our local economies but now face challenges in housing our working families in light of the growing number of higher income earners who commute to jobs outside of our county. With increasing populations comes higher costs in maintaining

our infrastructure and providing municipal services to our residents. Consequently, it is essential to plan the construction and maintenance of our infrastructure to meet our changing housing needs.

Diversion of existing revenue sources from cities:

We oppose a new regional agency that would have the power of the purse strings to choose winners and losers in allocating either regionally collected funds or state funds. We oppose any efforts to divert local dollars to a regional enterprise that would send taxpayer dollars outside of our county.

Representatives of our cities have made repeated requests to MTC to share its data on the projected economic impact on each Bay Area city. This information has never been shared, and we are starting to doubt it was ever calculated. In this vacuum, we have been forced to create our own economic assumptions and believe Sonoma County would be sending \$150 million annually to a new agency knowing that the return to source is uncertain, at best.

Like many of our longtime residents, even we, as cities, have been priced out of our own real estate market. Raising revenue for the acquisition of property and construction of affordable housing is essential, and we welcome opportunities to assist in our ongoing efforts to facilitate the construction of affordable housing units in Sonoma County.

The cities in Sonoma County recognize the need for increased and diverse housing opportunities for all income levels in our community. We feel this acutely with the loss of over 5,000 homes during the 2017 wildfires and have committed to continue to address this need locally. Santa Rosa, our county seat that suffered the brunt of that devastation, has been a true leader in taking action to build more housing. As proposed, CASA would limit our ability to raise local funds, negotiate development agreements with developers to facilitate mutually beneficial housing projects, and to truly meet the needs of our communities.

For these reasons, the Mayors' and Councilmembers Association of Sonoma County Legislative Committee shares with you our General Opposition to CASA. It is anticipated that full deliberation of the CASA Compact will occur at the Mayors and Council Members' Association of Sonoma County membership meeting to take place on April 11th. It is our recommendation that they oppose CASA.

Sincerely,



Rachel Hundley
Council Member, City of Sonoma
Chair, Mayor's and Councilmembers' Association of Sonoma County Legislative Committee

cc:
Chair ABAG, Sonoma County Supervisor David Rabbitt
Chair MTC, Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty
Senate Housing Committee Chair, Senator Scott Wiener
Chair of the Housing and Community Development Committee, Assembly Member David Chiu
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