



February 19, 2021

Senator Nancy Skinner
Senator Portantino
Senator Allen

Senator Hurtado
Senator Stern

RE: SB 45 THE WILDFIRE PREVENTION, SAFE DRINKING WATER, DROUGHT PREPARATION, AND FLOOD PROTECTION BOND ACT OF 2022

The Oakland Firesafe Council, a community-based nonprofit covering the wildland/urban interface (WUI) neighborhoods of Oakland and Alameda County, supports your efforts to provide funding to finance a drought, water, parks, climate, coastal protection, and outdoor access for all program. We are pleased to see that wildfire prevention is part of this Bond Act.

The Oakland Firesafe Council represents survivors of the 1991 Tunnel Fire, stewards of open space and representatives of neighborhood associations within the East Bay wildland urban interface, and individual wildfire prevention advocates. We are greatly concerned about reducing the risk of another 1991 firestorm under today's more devastating conditions—climate change, years of drought, increased frequency of high wind events, and a growing spread of a deadly pathogen killing wide swaths of acacia, cypress, oak and eucalyptus trees on our hills. We also recognize that the dense housing of our neighborhoods adds to the increased risk of loss of properties and lives in our wildland/urban interface—which is different from the WUIs of the Sierra forests or the chapparal hills of Southern California.

*As a result of these conditions, we respectfully ask that you consider adding **“properties and residents in the high fire risk severity zones and/or wildland/urban interface”** to your definition of “vulnerable communities.”*

This is necessary because for far too long, state funds for wildfire prevention have focused solely on State Responsibility Areas (SRAs), leaving Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs) without the resources to plan and implement wildfire prevention/fuel reduction efforts that can save lives and property.

Funding for planning is critical—without well thought out and vetted vegetation management plans, there will be no shovel-ready projects in our communities that could take advantage of state funding.

The Oakland Firesafe Council, along with the Claremont Canyon Conservancy and many other neighborhood, environmental and wildfire prevention grass roots organizations, is working to establish an East Bay Regional Wildfire Prevention Vegetation Management Joint Powers Authority for the WUI in Alameda and Contra Costa County. Funding to create and implement such a regional effort would also be extremely helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan J. Piper".

Susan Piper, Chair

