

AB 1623: RHNA – Student Housing Quarters

Assemblymember Laurie Davies

IN BRIEF

AB 1623 would require certain types of student housing quarters, as determined by the Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD), that are built within the jurisdiction of a local government, regardless of whether they have been issued a completed entitlement, a building permit, or a certificate of occupancy, to count toward a local government's share of the locality's lower income regional housing needs allocation (RHNA). The bill would also require HCD to count the certain types of student housing quarters reported pursuant to specified provisions toward the local government's regional housing needs allocation progress.

THE ISSUE

Currently, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) does not fully credit cities for student-specific housing in their RHNA cycles. This creates several unintended consequences:

Disincentivized Collaboration: Cities have less incentive to approve large-scale university housing projects because those units don't help them meet their state-mandated goals.

Inaccurate Data: Thousands of "beds" are created every year that do not appear in housing counts, even though they directly reduce the number of students competing for traditional apartments in the local market.

Neighborhood Displacement: When universities fail to provide adequate on-campus housing, students are forced into "naturally occurring affordable housing," driving up rents and displacing long-term residents in surrounding communities.

CURRENT LAW

Established in 1969, the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) is a state-mandated process to ensure that cities and counties plan for enough housing to accommodate all economic segments of the community. It operates in 8-year cycles and takes into consideration the following:

Regional Determination: The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) calculates the total housing need for a region based on population growth, overcrowding, and vacancy rates.

Local Allocation: Regional planning bodies (like SCAG in Southern California or ABAG in the Bay Area) distribute that total number among individual cities and counties.

The Housing Element: Each city must then update the "Housing Element" of its General Plan to prove it has enough correctly zoned land to build its assigned share of units.

THE SOLUTION

AB 1623 would modernize California's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process by allowing local jurisdictions to count student housing units, specifically those built by public and private post-secondary institutions, toward their state-mandated housing production goals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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