



Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City

June 11, 2026

Senator Josh Becker (Chair)
Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee

RE: Oppose AB 1740 unless Amended and Request to Include Letter in Committee Record from Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City

Dear Senator Chair Becker and Senator NRC Committee members,

The Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City (“SMCLC”) opposes AB 1740 in its current form. We urge the Committee to either amend it to strip out the housing exemption language and retain full Coastal Commission’s jurisdiction over coastal housing development or reject it altogether as bad public policy.

SMCLC is a non-profit, volunteer group of Santa Monica residents formed in 2005 after the city unveiled a plan for a developer to demolish Santa Monica Place on public land to build a new shopping center along with several 21-story residential towers. SMCLC organized the community to demand a public process. Eventually, the project was dropped.

Over the years, SMCLC has played a major role in local public policy, insisting that residents have a meaningful role in major development decisions that affect their lives, that such developments be sustainable, and that city government act transparently and in good faith. (<http://www.smclc.net>)

As to this bill, Santa Monica has failed its residents on each of these grounds. The city sponsored this bill without apprising residents that it was doing so or adopting any public notice or process to enable discussion as to the most important public asset we have – our coastline. The City Council did not vote to sponsor AB 1740. Instead, the city worked in secret on the bill and sent one councilperson to an Assembly hearing to speak in support.

To date, there is still no transparent public process as to AB 1740 despite repeated public requests for one. Recently, the City Council announced that the City and the Coastal Commission were negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to adopt a long delayed Local Coastal Plan – but did so without agendizing or discussing AB 1740 in relation to the MOU. (<https://www.smdp.com/council-backs-coastal-program-push-amid-public-skepticism-over-motives/>)

Residents have requested that the City Council hold a hearing to discuss whether the City's support for AB 1740 is no longer necessary and should be withdrawn. The City continues to deflect those requests. <https://www.smclc.net/AB1740-6-10-26.html>

These troubling actions by the city lead to one inescapable conclusion:

In secretly shepherding this bill, the City of Santa Monica had one critical objective in mind: to gain control over future coastal housing development by stripping Coastal Commission oversight. The proof of this is in the wording of the bill itself: the failure to jointly agree on a local coastal plan by mid-2029 shifts all coastal multi-unit housing development approvals to the City. The City, not the Coastal Commission, is in the driver's seat. It does not have to engage in good faith negotiations on housing – it just has to run out the clock while it works with developers behind the scenes as the City did in secretly sponsoring this bill without public input.

While some city politicians as well as Assembly member Rick Zbur have portrayed the bill as benign – as provisions mainly about improving bike access or streamlining business permits (e.g. outdoor dining) — that is incorrect and those issues are not in contention as the May 25, 2026, AB 1740 opposition letter from the Coastal Commission to Assemblymember Rick Zbur explains.

This bill, if enacted, is bad for Santa Monica and will be bad for every coastal city in California, as well as the Coastal Commission:

- 1) It runs directly contrary to the central purpose of the Coastal Commission and the expressed will of Californians to protect our coastline from overdevelopment by wealthy interests – never more important than it is now with the density of development occurring throughout our communities;
- 2) It fails to consider any potential consequences, including reduced public access to the coast or any environmental impacts to the coast for building higher, denser housing;
- 3) It fails basic good governance and fosters distrust: Before sponsoring the bill, Santa Monica did not provide any public process that would have enabled Santa Monicans to know about or have a say concerning the future, irreversible development of the most important public asset in our city;
- 4) It eviscerates the essential purpose of Coastal Commission oversight to protect coastal resources for all and perverts the local coastal plan process by rewarding Santa Monica with local control to develop the coast if no local coastal plan is adopted; and

- 5) It is bad public policy to adopt a bill for one coastal city that tests how easily Coastal Commission authority can be weakened and will lead to developer pressure to do the same for other coastal cities in California.

In sum, this bill operates as the “camel’s nose under the tent.” It would undermine and erode Coastal Commission authority without acknowledging that Californians of all persuasions believe the Coastal Commission is the only effective barrier to unchecked coastal development and do not trust local governments or developers to serve as its substitute.

For all these reasons, we urge you to stand with the Coastal Commission and reject this bill.

Sincerely,

Diana Gordon
Victor Fresco
Co-chairs SMCLC

Cc: Assemblymember Rick Zbur

Santa Monica community groups