



Oppose SB 607: Don't Gut CEQA's Core Purpose—Preventing Harm Before It Happens

Undermining CEQA's Preventive Mission

We oppose SB 607 because it fundamentally undermines the core purpose of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): to identify and prevent environmental and community harm before it occurs.

Blanket Exemptions Invite Irreversible Harm to Residential Communities

SB 607 exempts rezonings and infill housing developments from CEQA review, stripping communities of their ability to assess environmental impacts. Every community deserves a safe environment—and sensitive areas such as historic districts and fragile ecosystems require especially careful, site-specific analysis. Blanket exemptions ignore these realities and risk irreversible consequences.

A Dangerous Reversal of the 'Fair Argument' Standard

Critically, the bill overturns CEQA's longstanding "fair argument" standard. Under current law, if there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant environmental impact, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required. SB 607 reverses that. It allows a lead agency to skip the review based on *any* fair argument—even if credible, even overwhelming, evidence of environmental harm exists.

A Loophole for All Kinds of Harmful Projects

This shift makes it easy for projects to bypass preparing EIRs—the heart of CEQA. Not only environmentally destructive housing projects, but also power plants, waste facilities, chemical plants, and many other types of development (with few exceptions) could evade meaningful environmental review under the bill's broader exemptions and loopholes.

Incomplete Information Leads to Poor Decisions

CEQA is not a box-checking exercise—it is a vital fact-finding process. Environmental, cultural, and health risks are rarely disclosed by project proponents. Preliminary reviews often begin with incomplete or biased information. Making binding decisions without full knowledge is poor public policy and a direct path to preventable harm. Full environmental review prevents this danger.

Weakening Oversight and Accountability

SB 607 curtails this essential process. It allows projects to evade full review based on superficial compliance with categorical exemption criteria—even when one disqualifying factor might indicate far-reaching impacts. It restricts the public record, narrows future review, and shields flawed projects from scrutiny—undermining transparency and accountability.

Protect What CEQA Was Designed to Do

CEQA's strength lies in its rigorous, public process—one that uncovers hidden risks and ensures better decisions. SB 607 dismantles this safeguard and puts California's environment, health, and heritage at risk.

Conclusion: SB 607 Should Be Stopped

This bill should not proceed out of committee.