Dear Senator Caballero:

ORG NAME strongly supports SB 1385 (Caballero), which authorizes residential development on existing lots currently zoned for commercial office and retail spaces such as strip malls or large retail spaces. The objective of the bill is to help facilitate the development of large underutilized or vacant land, particularly in urban areas across the state, for the building of much needed housing.

California is in a housing crisis and the time for decisive action is now. Housing has become enormously expensive for all Californians. Of the 50 U.S. cities with the highest rent prices, 33 are in California. This problem is becoming ever more acute as we continue to build far too few homes for our growing population. The state averaged less than 80,000 new homes annually over the last 10 years – far below the estimated 180,000 additional units of housing each year needed to keep up with current population growth. Governor Gavin Newsom has called for a “Housing Marshall Plan” and the creation of 3.5 million units of housing.

SB 1385 will “upzone” commercial and retail properties to allow residential uses at densities that are deemed affordable by design (e.g., low rise apartments/townhomes/condos) under existing state law, and which do not require taxpayer-funded “Affordable Housing” status or funding. These underutilized or vacant commercial spaces are often prime land, close to public transportation, and contain significant acreage that could be developed for housing or mixed-use. Unfortunately, with the current recession, we can expect an increase in underutilized and vacant commercial spaces; SB 1385 provides an alternative pathway for landowners and developers that will help meet the growing demand for housing.

SB 1385 is an incentive and effective tool that is needed to ensure such land yields substantially more residential development. It is vital that the California Legislature act quickly to curb the housing crisis sweeping the state. For these reasons, we support SB 1385.

Sincerely,

Signatory