



CITY OF LAVERNE CITY HALL

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June 10, 2025

Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted via the Legislative Position Letter Portal

RE: Opposition to SB 629 (Durazo) Wildfires: Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Vegetation Management.

Dear Honorable Assembly Natural Resources Committee Members:

On behalf of the City of La Verne, we must respectfully oppose SB 629, which proposes new mandates regarding the designation of fire hazard severity zones and the enforcement of vegetation management and defensible space requirements.

While the City of La Verne supports meaningful strategies to increase wildfire resilience and protect communities in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, SB 629 introduces problematic criteria and enforcement provisions that are not sufficiently grounded in fire science. Specifically, the bill's trigger for reclassification of hazard severity zones, any fire over 1,000 acres, resulting in more than 10 structures destroyed, or one fatality, fails to recognize that these thresholds are not inherently tied to wildfire behavior in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). Fires meeting these metrics can and do occur in densely populated urban areas, where vegetation management and defensible space strategies are neither relevant nor effective.

This bill also imposes significant local obligations, mandating the reclassification of areas and establishing a costly new inspection and enforcement regime, without assurances of full state reimbursement. The cumulative impact would be an unfunded mandate on local fire and planning agencies, creating administrative burdens that divert resources from actual fire mitigation and emergency preparedness.

We urge further dialogue with local fire personnel, scientists, and municipalities to better define science-based criteria for fire hazard zone designation and to assess the practical implications of local implementation. Without these necessary refinements, SB 629 risks undermining local control, misapplying wildfire mitigation resources, and creating unmanageable costs for cities across California.

Sincerely,

Tim Hepburn
Mayor