



Igor Tregub
Councilmember District 4

REVISED AGENDA MATERIAL for Supplemental Packet 1

Meeting Date: June 16, 2026

Item Number: 38

Item Description: **Adopt a Resolution in Support of SB 954 (Blakespear):
Addressing Non-Housing CEQA Exemptions for Industrial
Manufacturing and Environmental Health Protections**

Submitted by: Councilmember Igor Tregub

Summary of changes: The edits remove the resolution and update all mentions of the resolution to “position of support.”



Igor Tregub, Councilmember District 4

Ben Bartlett, Councilmember District 3

Cecilia Lunaparra, Councilmember District 7

CONSENT CALENDAR

June 16, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Igor Tregub (Author), Councilmember Ben Bartlett (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Cecilia Lunaparra (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Adopt a Position of Support for SB 954 (Blakespear): Addressing Non-Housing CEQA Exemptions for Industrial Manufacturing and Environmental Health Protections.

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RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Position of support for California Senate Bill (SB) 954 (Blakespear), which amends non-housing California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions enacted in SB 131 (2025), including clarifying and narrowing the “advanced manufacturing” exemption, establishing environmental and labor safeguards for exempt industrial projects, extending CEQA exemptions for daycare facilities in residential zones, and ensuring habitat for protected species remains subject to environmental review, and distribute copies to Governor Gavin Newsom, Senators Jesse Arreguín and Catherine Blakespear, and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks to support its passage.

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CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECT

In 2025, the California Legislature enacted SB 131, a broad CEQA reform measure that created numerous new and expanded exemptions from environmental review. While much of the public discussion surrounding SB 131 focused on streamlining housing production and climate-resilient infrastructure, the legislation also established significant new exemptions for non-housing industrial and manufacturing projects categorized as “advanced manufacturing.”¹ The current statutory definition of “advanced

¹ https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260SB131

manufacturing” is extremely broad and was adapted from an economic development tax credit framework rather than an environmental review context, potentially applying to industrial activities such as lithium extraction², plastics processing, chemical manufacturing, fertilizer production, metal recycling, pesticide manufacturing, and medical waste incineration.

These exemptions allow qualifying industrial projects to bypass portions of CEQA review that would otherwise evaluate and mitigate impacts to air quality, water quality, tribal cultural resources, environmentally sensitive habitat, and nearby residential communities. Environmental justice advocates, labor organizations, tribal representatives, and legislators raised concerns that the exemption lacked adequate safeguards and could expose communities, particularly low-income communities and communities of color already burdened by cumulative pollution, to increased toxic emissions and industrial hazards. Potential health impacts associated with inadequately reviewed industrial facilities include exposure to particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, and other hazardous pollutants linked to asthma, respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease, cancer risk, and adverse childhood health outcomes, especially in sites near schools, daycare centers, and senior housing facilities.

12 state Senators and 20 state Assemblymembers subsequently signed a letter urging corrective legislation to address these unresolved issues. SB 954 was introduced as a targeted clean-up measure intended to ensure that CEQA reforms are implemented consistently with California’s environmental justice, public health, labor, and tribal protection goals. Importantly, SB 954 pertains only to the non-housing industrial and manufacturing provisions enacted under SB 131 and does not alter existing housing streamlining measures.³ The bill would narrow the advanced manufacturing exemption by adding environmental and public health guardrails, including zero-emission backup generation requirements, industrial zoning and setback standards, protections for tribal cultural resources, and community benefits and labor standards. The bill would also expand the daycare CEQA exemption to include residentially zoned daycare facilities and ensure habitat for protected species remains subject to environmental review.

SB 954 is supported by a broad coalition of labor, environmental justice, public health, and environmental organizations, such as the Planning and Conservation League, Sierra Club California, Environment California, Clean Water Action, and Save the Bay,⁴ also including the Alameda Labor Council, Asian Pacific Environmental Network Action, California Nurses Association, Communities for a Better Environment, Natural

² Fact Sheet

³ https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260SB954

⁴ <https://righttoknow-wicks.org/>

Resources Defense Council, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, and Urban Habitat.

Supporting SB 954 aligns with the City's commitments to environmental justice, public health, labor protections, and equitable land use policy by ensuring that industrial development does not disproportionately burden vulnerable communities with additional toxic pollution and associated health impacts.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This item supports legislation intended to reduce harmful industrial pollution, preserve sensitive habitat, protect tribal cultural resources, and strengthen environmental safeguards for communities located near industrial operations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Minimal staff time is associated with outreach to the recipients.

CONTACT PERSON

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Olga Bolotina, Chief of Staff, obolotina@berkeleyca.gov

Amy Johnson, Legislative Aide, amjohnson@berkeleyca.gov

Attachments:

1. [Proposed Language for Letter of Support](#)
2. Fact Sheet

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Date: June 16, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom

Governor of California

The Honorable Catherine Blakespear

California State Senate

The Honorable Jesse Arreguin

California State Senate

The Honorable Buffy Wicks

California State Assembly

RE: Support for Senate Bill 954 (Blakespear) – Environmental Justice and Public Health Safeguards for CEQA Exemptions

Dear Governor Newsom, Senator Blakespear, Senator Arreguin, and Assemblymember Wicks:

The Berkeley City Council is writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 954 (Blakespear), which provides important clarifications and safeguards to the non-housing California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions enacted through Senate Bill 131 (2025). We respectfully urge your support for this measure and its timely passage.

The current statutory definition of advanced manufacturing is exceptionally broad and was adapted from an economic development tax credit framework rather than one designed to protect environmental and public health interests. As a result, the exemption may apply to a wide range of industrial activities, including lithium extraction, plastics processing, chemical manufacturing, fertilizer production, metal recycling, pesticide manufacturing, and medical waste incineration.

These industrial activities can generate significant environmental and public health impacts if not appropriately reviewed and mitigated. By allowing qualifying projects to bypass portions of CEQA review, the current exemption may limit evaluation of potential impacts to air quality, water quality, tribal cultural resources, environmentally sensitive habitat, and nearby residential communities. Communities already experiencing disproportionate pollution burdens, including many low-income communities and communities of color, could face increased exposure to toxic emissions and industrial hazards without adequate environmental safeguards.

**Deleted: RESOLUTION NO. ##,###N.S. ¶
RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF CALIFORNIA
SENATE BILL 954 (BLAKESPEAR) RELATING TO
NON-HOUSING CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY ACT (CEQA) EXEMPTIONS FOR
INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING AND
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROTECTIONS¶
WHEREAS, in 2025 the California State Legislature
adopted a trailer bill that was signed into law, which
creates new and expanded exemptions from
environmental review under the California
Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)—including an
exemption for so-called “advanced manufacturing,” and¶**

**¶
WHEREAS, at the time of the passage of the bill in
2025, many advocates and elected officials raised
concerns about insufficient protections for communities
from exposure to toxic chemicals, pollution of air and
water supplies, loss of habitat for sensitive species,
damage to tribal resources, and an overly broad
definition for advanced manufacturing, and ¶**

**¶
WHEREAS, constraining and significantly narrowing
the advanced manufacturing pollution loophole will not
interfere with or alter other reforms to speed up
approvals for and construction of new infill housing,
and ¶**

**¶
WHEREAS, for the purposes of exemption from CEQA
review, the state currently defines “advanced
manufacturing” to include, but not necessarily limited
to, new or proposed expansion projects involving
lithium processing, plastics processing and fabrication,
chemical manufacturing, fertilizer development, metal
recycling, pesticides manufacturing, and medical waste
incineration. ¶**

**¶
WHEREAS, over 30 state legislators signed a letter in
2025 urging prompt legislative action to fix the
outstanding issues in the bill, yet no corrective action
had been taken last year, and ¶**

**¶
WHEREAS, SB 954 would, in addition to constraining
the potentially harmful and unhealthy advanced
manufacturing exemption, expand the CEQA
exemption for daycare facilities, extends labor
standards for certain exempt projects, and ensure that
projects threatening habitat for protected species
undergo environmental review, and¶**

**¶
WHEREAS, SB 954 is supported by Alameda Labor
Council, Asian Pacific Environmental Network Action,
Blue-Green Alliance, California Interfaith Power &
Light, California Nurses Association, Center for
Environmental Health, Clean Water Action,
Communities for a Better Environment, The
Greenlining Institute, Natural Resources Defense
Council, Save the Bay, Sierra Club California, West
Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, United Auto
Workers, Urban Habitat, 350 Bay Area Action, and ...**

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SB 954 provides a balanced and targeted solution. The bill does not alter the housing streamlining provisions enacted under SB 131. Instead, it focuses specifically on non-housing industrial and manufacturing exemptions by establishing reasonable environmental, labor, and public health guardrails. Among other provisions, SB 954:

- Clarifies and narrows the advanced manufacturing exemption to ensure it is applied appropriately;
- Requires important environmental and public health protections, including zero-emission backup generation requirements and industrial zoning and setback standards;
- Protects tribal cultural resources and community interests;
- Establishes community benefit and labor standards for exempt projects;
- Extends CEQA exemptions for daycare facilities located in residential zones; and
- Ensures that habitat for protected species remains subject to environmental review.

These amendments help preserve California's commitment to environmental justice while maintaining support for economic development and clean industry. The bill reflects the concerns raised by legislators, labor organizations, environmental justice advocates, tribal representatives, and public health experts who have called for greater accountability and safeguards in the implementation of SB 131.

SB 954 is supported by a broad coalition of organizations dedicated to protecting public health, workers, and the environment, including the Planning and Conservation League, Sierra Club California, Environment California, Clean Water Action, Save The Bay, the Alameda Labor Council, Asian Pacific Environmental Network Action, California Nurses Association, Communities for a Better Environment, Natural Resources Defense Council, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, and Urban Habitat.

Supporting SB 954 is consistent with the City of Berkeley's commitment to environmental justice, public health protection, responsible land use planning, worker protections, and equitable economic development. The bill ensures that industrial growth does not come at the expense of vulnerable communities and helps maintain public confidence in California's environmental review process.

For these reasons, Berkeley City Council respectfully supports Senate Bill 954 and urges its passage.

Sincerely,

Berkeley City Council

[cc: Governor Gavin Newsom](#)
[Senator Catherine Blakespear](#)
[Senator Jesse Arreguin](#)
[Assemblymember Buffy Wicks](#)

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