[Place on your letterhead or include your address block]

Email your letter:

To: Annie Fryman, Legislative Aide, Senator Scott Wiener (ann.fryman@sen.ca.gov)

Cc: JR Starrett, Director of Advocacy and Community Engagement, NPH (jr@nonprofithousing.org)

*Please also submit to* [*https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/*](https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/%20) *(note that your organization will need to create a free account)*

[Insert Date]

The Honorable State Senator Scott Wiener

California State Senate

State Capitol

Sacramento, CA 94249

**Re:  Support for SB 268 – Expanding Transparency for Local Tax Measures**

Dear Senator Wiener,

[Insert your organization's name] strongly supports SB 268, which will support fair elections for local community affordable housing, education, and other critical needs, by expanding transparency and voter clarity on local revenue measure impacts.

[Include 1-2 sentences to briefly describe your organization: *You may include how many people you serve and where, how many people you employ and where, etc.*]

**Voter Transparency & Clarity**

SB 268 will expand transparency for local tax measures while addressing recently enacted ballot label requirements that have proven to be problematic for bonds and tiered tax rate measures.

In recent years, Elections Code Section 13119 has been amended to modify the local ballot label requirements for measures that impose a tax or raise the rate of a tax. While these provisions were enacted with the intention of increasing transparency to voters regarding the costs of proposed ballot measures, they actually have resulted in less transparency because of voter confusion. This is largely owing to newly required text in a place -- on voters’ ballot question -- that has limited space. The new requirements take up about one-third to nearly all of the available space on the ballot question that would otherwise be used to describe how bond proceeds will be spent in the community.

The existing law is creating significant voter confusion and threatening our ability to meet the educational, housing, health, flood protection, and other needs of California residents.

**SB 268 Fixes the Problem while Expanding Transparency**

SB 268 offers both clarity and transparency in its solutions, recognizing that it is essential that local agencies educate their communities on what projects will be funded and how tax revenues are ultimately spent. SB 268 will:

* Clarify that financial measures stated in the ballot label or in the voter information guide are *estimates*, and *not* caps above which a local jurisdiction would be subject to legal challenge.
* Require local measure that imposes or increases tiered tax rates, authorizes the issuance of bonds, or imposes a tax with a rate structure that cannot be accurately described in the ballot label, to include in the ballot label the words “See voter guide for information” and specifically reference the following:
	+ Public Benefits – How tax revenue will be spent to provide public benefits;
	+ Rates – A list of all the tax rates that would apply;
	+ Duration – An explanation of when or if the tax expires;
	+ Annual Revenue – Best estimate of annual tax revenue;
	+ Tax Amount Changes – Any factor that would change the amount of tax paid over time;
	+ Average Tax Rate – If rates vary year to year, such as with bonds, provide an average tax rate;
	+ Highest Tax Rate – If rates vary year to year, provide the estimated highest tax rate and the year it would apply; and
	+ Total Debt Service for Bonds – The estimated cost of borrowing if all the bonds are issued and sold
* Any local tax measure exempted from the requirement to provide the rate, duration, and annual revenue specifically in the ballot label would be required to include key financial measures that include all those in existing law and more in the voter information guide.

**Improved Voter Transparency and Clarity**

**SB 268 delivers on the intended transparency of former amendments by also prioritizing voter clarity about the measures on which they are asked to vote**. The bill ensures that voters are receiving full information about the measures they vote on, in the right space to suit the extended communications. Importantly, by reducing voter confusion, this bill will also protect the ability of local agencies and communities to support schools, roads, hospitals, flood protection, fire protection, and other vital public services, while ensuring accurate, clear cost information is provided to voters.

Thank you for your leadership in drafting legislation that updates our election code to ensure both transparency and clarity. As a [your organization/industry type] and as a member of the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH), we look forward to working with you to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,

[Insert Your Full Name]

[Insert Your Title]

[Insert Your Organization’s Name]