

January 7, 2026

The Honorable Jesse Arreguín
Chair, Senate Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 521
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 299 (Cabaldon) - SUPPORT
As Amended January 5, 2026**

Dear Chair Arreguín:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California, Le Petit Elephant, the California State Association of Counties, Build Up California, Napa County Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County Supervisor Liz Alessio, American Planning Association (California Chapter), League of California Cities, Low Income Investment Fund, Community Resources for Children, and the Urban Counties of California, we are pleased to support Senate Bill 299 (Cabaldon), which seeks to protect daycares from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) misuse.

Senate Bill 299 expands a recently-enacted CEQA exemption for day care centers to projects located in residential areas.

CEQA is commendably intended to improve decision-making and mitigate a project's significant impacts on the environment. That being said, it is difficult to imagine that any of CEQA's original supporters could have envisioned it being used against daycare

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centers. Unfortunately, CEQA has recently been used in an attempt to derail a daycare facility in Napa.

Le Petit Elephant Nursery and Preschool (LPE) in was founded in Napa December 2015 with a dream of creating a nurturing, joyful, and inclusive space where children could learn through play, explore the outdoors, and be immersed in the magic of early childhood education. Ten years later, LPE sought to expand into a new facility to accommodate additional children. LPE received the necessary local approvals and was awarded state, local, and federal grants. But then local neighbors filed a lawsuit to block the project, even complaining about the impacts that would be caused by the sounds of children in their neighborhood and youth-based activities at the center. The litigation nearly derailed the project, as the delay cost LPE a pre-approved Small Business Administration Loan that could only be replaced with a high-fee bridge loan. The experience was even highlighted in the [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

Senate Bill 131 (Budget, Chapter 24, Statutes of 2025) sought to exempt day care centers from CEQA and thereby insulate much-needed projects from the real possibility of expensive and protracted CEQA compliance and litigation. While we sincerely appreciate the Legislature's attempt to exempt daycares from CEQA, SB 131's exemption does not apply to daycares located in "a residential area", which is where the overwhelming majority of facilities are (and should be) located. Instead, SB 131 merely provides a CEQA exemption for daycare facilities located in commercial, industrial, or agricultural areas. SB 299 builds upon that new exemption by expanding it to day care centers in residential areas, provided the parcel on which the project is located is not zoned exclusively for residential use.

There is a significant need for additional daycare facilities throughout the state. CEQA cannot be used to undermine the role daycare centers play in the development and enrichment of young children, especially considering the impact daycares have on children, families, and local economies. SB 299 helps providers and communities expand daycare opportunities.

For these reasons, and given the demonstrated need to prevent future CEQA abuse, we are pleased to support Senate Bill 299. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



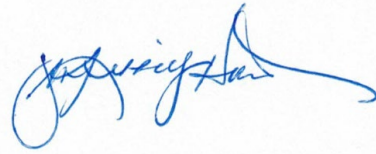
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The Honorable Sasha Renée Pérez, California State Senate
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