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April 7, 2021

Assembly Member David Chiu
Chair, Housing and Community Development Committee
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, Room 156
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairperson Chiu and Members of the Housing and Community Development Committee:

**Subject**: **AB 672 [Planning and zoning law: rezoning authorization: golf courses]**

The California Alliance for Golf (CAG), a California corporation, is a consortium of the state's leading golf organizations/associations/businesses that speaks on behalf of the $13.3 billion California golf community and its millions of players, thousands of workers, and roughly one thousand golf facilities. We submit the following comments in accordance with the Alliance's procedures for taking positions on proposed legislation and regulation.

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**Speaking on behalf of the California golf community, the California Alliance for Golf opposes AB 672 for the following reasons**.

- AB 672 singles out golf and only golf among California's parks/open space activities for blanket exemptions to the Public Park Preservation Act of 1971 (Public Resources Code Section 5400-5409) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- Any legislative exemption for one form of park/recreational or open space use from the protections of the Public Park Preservation Act and/or CEQA would create the slipperiest of slopes toward similar legislative determinations regarding other forms of parks and/or recreational uses – e.g., soccer fields, baseball diamonds, university campuses, land conservancies/preserves, trails, equestrian centers, and tracks.
- AB 672 is top-down state-mandated zoning, usurping land use functions historically and traditionally performed at the local level.
- AB 672 is disruptive and divisive, and would set the stage for lengthy, highly charged, expensive, litigious, and highly distracting local land use fights that are likely to be far more trouble and expense than they are worth.

- AB 672 does little to nothing to mitigate the state's housing shortage while doing great harm to the overwhelming majority of the state's golfers that play public golf courses as well as to the many municipalities that depend upon the net revenues of their municipal golf systems to fund general recreation programs that would otherwise require taxpayer support.

CEQA and the Public Parkland Protection Act have been mainstays of California land use planning for 50 years. Local zoning control has been a mainstay much longer. Singling out golf courses and only golf courses as the one land use that takes all three of these public planning and policy mainstays out of the hands of the cities and counties that have long been the arbiters of zoning authority and the local communities that have long been best suited to weigh the environmental impacts of loss of open space, loss of recreational opportunities, traffic, noise, and myriad other factors that affect the quality of their lives does little if anything to solve a housing shortage; however, it does much to accelerate a process that takes more and more control over such quality of life issues from local communities and repose it in a state authority totally removed from the lives, businesses, and fortunes of those affected.

The logic underlying AB 672 – that golf is an intrinsically and officially disfavored use of land -- does not stop at golf courses. This logic could equally apply to other recreational uses: Soccer fields, football fields, baseball diamonds, racetracks, equestrian facilities, picnic areas, privately-owned amusement parks, land conservancies and trusts to name a few. Taken together, they touch virtually every segment of the state's population. The slope here is as slippery as it is dangerous. Devotees and operators of other recreational uses would be threatened by the precedent set by AB 672 – that the legislature by fiat and without findings can determine that any one or all of these uses constitute officially disfavored uses of land in California.

Removing golf and only golf from the 50-year-old protections of CEQA and the Public Park Preservation Act amounts to a determination by legislative fiat that golf is no longer part of the greater family of publicly accessible recreational activities. The State of California should not be favoring or disfavoring specific recreational activities nor picking winners and losers among them.

Golf play in California remains 30% up even as COVID-19 wanes and competing recreational and entertainment activities become available to Californians, testament to the unique health and social benefits golf provides. Reading it out of the public recreational space for infinitesimal public benefit serves no good purpose.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact Southern California Golf Association Director of Governmental Affairs Craig Kessler at (310) 941-4803 or CAG's legislative consultant Tony Rice at (916) 690-0023.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Ferrin, CGCS
President, California Alliance for Golf

cc: Members and Staff, Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee
Assembly Member Cristina Garcia