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March 24, 2025

Assemblymember Matt Haney
Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee
California State Capitol
Sacramento CA 95814

RE: AB 457 (Soria): Streamlining Farmworker Housing Development in Fresno, Madera, and Merced Counties – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Haney:

On behalf of the City of Merced, I am pleased to write in support of AB 457 (Soria), which seeks to streamline the approval of affordable farmworker housing in the Counties of Fresno, Madera, and Merced.

AB 457 will allow the ministerial approval of up to 150 units of affordable farmworker housing within 15 miles of farm or grazing lands in the Counties of Fresno, Madera, and Merced, along with a CEQA exemption for these developments. This bill extends a pilot program created for the Counties of Santa Clara and Santa Cruz by AB 3035 (Pellerin 2024) to also apply in the agricultural heartland of the Central Valley.

The City of Merced, located in California's Central Valley, is a growing community known for its agricultural heritage, vibrant economy, and commitment to sustainable development. As a regional hub, Merced plays a critical role in supporting the surrounding agricultural workforce, including many farmworkers who contribute to the area's economic vitality. The city is dedicated to addressing housing challenges, fostering economic opportunities, and improving the quality of life for all residents through strategic planning and collaboration with state and local partners.

While California's housing crisis is mostly seen as an urban issue, its effects on rural areas are equally devastating. Developments on agricultural land in particular face unique challenges such as a lack of critical water and sewer infrastructure as well as long distances to necessary amenities. AB 457 addresses these challenges by streamlining the development of up to 150 units of affordable farmworker housing within 15 miles of farm or grazing land, providing flexibility and better access to amenities and easing connections to infrastructure. AB 457 cuts unnecessary red



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tape and promotes the development of affordable, dignified housing for the farmworker communities who are the backbone of the Central Valley.

For these reasons, the City of Merced is proud to support AB 457 and respectfully requests an "AYE" vote.

Sincerely,

Matthew Serratto
Mayor
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