



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

OCT 13 2025

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 616 without my signature.

This bill would establish an independent Community Hardening Commission within the Department of Insurance (CDI) to review current and develop new wildfire community hardening standards every quarter starting January 1, 2026, and make recommendations to expedite certain community hardening practices.

At a time when Californians are grappling with rising insurance costs due to natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, the state has launched multiple efforts to expedite proven and cost-effective home hardening practices, aiming to improve insurability for millions of homeowners. CAL FIRE currently administers California's Wildfire Mitigation Program, established in 2019 to strengthen community-wide resilience against wildfires. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and CAL FIRE, working side-by-side with counties and cities, have launched a statewide wildfire home-hardening playbook that at-risk communities can lift straight off the shelf. In 2022, CDI introduced its "Safer from Wildfires" framework, a first-of-its-kind regulation that requires insurance companies to offer discounts to homeowners and businesses that take specific wildfire mitigation steps. These are just a few examples demonstrating the state's commitment to tackling this important issue.

This year, the Legislature sent me multiple bills with the intention of building upon this ongoing work. Unfortunately, rather than providing a coordinated approach, these measures are in conflict with one another, tasking different state entities with similar objectives. The lack of harmony between these efforts



will not only result in conflicting outcomes but also in confusion for consumers, insurance companies, local governments, and emergency responders.

I encourage the Legislature to revisit this important issue next year and work collaboratively to navigate the different approaches to setting hardening standards, including determining the responsible state entity. In the meantime, California will continue to aggressively implement the multiple initiatives underway to mitigate wildfire risk, encourage cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting, facilitate vegetation management, and address the availability and cost of insurance.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom