



April 8, 2026

The Honorable Catherine Blakespear, Chair
Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 1097 (Wiener) – Energy Permitting Reform – SUPPORT
Referred to the Senate Environmental Quality Committee**

Dear Chair Blakespear:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing renewable energy trade associations in California, we write to express our support for SB 1097 (Wiener), which accelerates the development of critical energy and infrastructure projects while maintaining species and environmental protections in California through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Specifically, this bill is designed to expedite the construction of clean energy projects by exempting reconductoring of existing transmission lines from CEQA and narrowing the CEQA fair argument standard for clean energy projects.

Our organizations represent the companies and entities developing, building, and procuring the diverse portfolio of clean energy projects essential to decarbonizing California's electricity sector. To reach our SB 100 goals, California will need to bring an additional 134,000 MW online by 2045, but getting projects off the ground is becoming more and more challenging. We are committed to California's clean energy future and to building our projects in a way that balances conservation with swift and efficient deployment of clean energy infrastructure. SB 1097 will remove barriers to clean energy development without compromising environmental impacts.

SB 1097 would expedite transmission reconductoring projects in California. Reconductoring is the process of replacing smaller capacity wires with larger capacity wires on existing transmission poles to enhance transmission capacity using existing infrastructure. SB 1097 exempts certain electricity transmission upgrade and maintenance projects from CEQA under clear and limited conditions, such as inspecting, repairing, replacing, or upgrading power lines when replacing existing wires with advanced conductors that can carry more electricity. To qualify for the exemption, the work must take place entirely within an existing transmission corridor or right-of-way. This bill would allow straightforward upgrades to California's aging transmission infrastructure – like replacing old wires with higher-capacity ones – without triggering additional CEQA reviews that delay necessary improvements and diminish the intended cost reductions. Reconductoring is the lowest-impact, least-cost path to increasing statewide transmission capacity on a highly constrained system, and it is necessary to cost-effectively catalyze clean energy development in the state.

Additionally, SB 1097 narrows the CEQA Fair Argument Standard for clean energy projects by requiring courts to defer to lead-agency determinations supported by substantial evidence, rather than allowing any single expert disagreement to automatically trigger an EIR. Our organizations support refinements to the CEQA process to include limiting extraneous and non-germane communications in building the administrative record and aligning the standard of review for a lead agency's determination to adopt a Negative Declaration (ND) or a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) to parity with the existing standard of review for Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs). Our organizations support shifting from the Fair Argument Standard to substantial evidence, as this change will help advance the timely construction of beneficial projects.

California's environmental leadership has long served as a model to the nation and around the world and CEQA is foundational to that leadership. As we face even more daunting climate impacts, it is imperative that California continue to lead and keep in place the necessary aspects of CEQA that protect our communities. However, too often the CEQA process is used to stymie renewable energy projects – which are a key component to combat global climate change. We cannot allow environmental protections to be misused in ways that block the very clean energy projects needed to address climate change.

For these reasons, we request an AYE vote on SB 1097 (Wiener).

Sincerely,

Shannon Eddy
Executive Director
Large-scale Solar Association

Alexander L. Jackson
Executive Director
American Clean Power – California

Stephanie Doyle
Director, State Affairs, California
Solar Energy Industries Association

Jan Smutny-Jones, Esq.
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California Energy Storage Alliance

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cc: Senate Committee on Environmental Quality and Staff
The Honorable Scott Wiener

