

Date May 10th, 2019

To: The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
The Honorable Frank Bigelow, Vice Chair
Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee

From: Rex D. Frazier, President
Seren Taylor, Senior Legislative Advocate

Re: AB 1516 (Friedman) Fire Prevention: Defensible Space and Fuels Reduction Management



STATE FARM

LIBERTY MUTUAL
INSURANCE

PROGRESSIVE

MERCURY

NATIONWIDE

PIFC Position: Support

The Personal Insurance Federation of California (PIFC) is a statewide trade association that represents five of the nation's largest property and casualty insurance companies (State Farm, Liberty Mutual Insurance, Progressive, Mercury, and Nationwide as well as associate member NAMIC) who write personal lines auto and home insurance in California.

PIFC is pleased to support AB 1516, a measure that will establish requirements for noncombustible zones for homes in high fire hazard areas and authorizes the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to have access to important information on how locals comply with defensible space requirements in very high fire hazard severity zones. The bill also increases awareness of proper vegetation management by prohibiting the planting of incompatible trees under powerlines and by authorizing CAL FIRE to provide assistance to local governments.

PIFC has long supported legislation to develop model defensible space programs to promote positive action by homeowners, contractors and local government. A defensible space area around a building in which vegetation, debris, and other types of combustible fuels have been treated, cleared, or reduced can help slow the spread of fire to and from the structure. It is one of the most cost-effective ways to protect a structure from a wildfire and can often be created by the property owner.

The 2017 and 2018 wildfires were the largest and most destructive in California's history. Since then, the insurance industry has been working diligently to help customers rebuild their homes, replace their personal property, and restore their lives. With the increase in these destructive wildfires now considered the "new normal," we must also focus on the long-term.

As the state looks forward, it is critical that we move towards long-term, comprehensive solutions that can reduce future risk and increase resilience for the next time disaster strikes. Improved vegetation management, increased home and community mitigation efforts, and enhanced emergency response systems are all key components to ensuring California is better prepared to address and to recover from a disaster.

AB 1516 will encourage a greater understanding of California's requirements for defensible space around structures, which is beneficial for all of our communities. For

this reason, PIFC supports AB 1516. If you have any questions regarding PIFC's position, please contact Seren Taylor at (916) 442-6646.

cc: Assemblymember Laura Friedman, Author
Jennifer Galehouse, Deputy Chief Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Suzanne Sutton, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus
Melissa Immel, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
Michael Martinez, Senior Deputy Commissioner and Legislative Director, California Department of Insurance