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## **HCD Strengthens Efforts to Increase Housing Accountability**

*Welcomes New Leader for Housing Accountability Unit*

**SACRAMENTO** – The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) today provided a big boost to its new Housing Accountability Unit (HAU) with the appointment of David Zisser as its new leader. The new Accountability Unit will play a critical role in ensuring that local leaders fulfill their legal responsibility to plan, zone for, and permit their share of the state’s housing needs.

“The Governor has set ambitious housing goals for California, and it’s imperative that we do everything in our power to work with all our partners to achieve those goals,” HCD Director Gustavo Velasquez said. “The appointment of David Zisser will help us amplify and grow our accountability efforts. His vast experience in housing policy will be an enormous benefit to HCD and we are excited to welcome him to the team as the leader of the Housing Accountability Unit.”

Zisser will head up a team charged with expanding on HCD’s accountability work through a holistic strategy that combines: Prohousing incentives and planning grants supporting local jurisdictions to comply with state housing laws; education and technical assistance to help jurisdictions understand the law, and strong accountability actions for non-compliance as needed. He brings more than 14 years of professional experience in local, regional, and statewide housing policy, advocacy, and accountability to HCD, and his appointment comes less than a month after Governor Newsom announced the launch of the HAU at a bill signing ceremony in Oakland.

As part of the 2021-2022 state budget, HCD received new positions to grow its accountability efforts and as part of this expansion was able to form the Housing Accountability Unit with a total of 25 staff. The new team will work to boost the accountability efforts already taking place at HCD. Currently, HCD has the authority to enforce various state housing laws, including: Housing Element Law, including housing element fair housing and program commitments; Housing Accountability Act; No Net Loss Law; Density Bonus Law; Land Use Discrimination Law; Accessory Dwelling Unit laws; Affordable Housing Preservation; Noticing Law; and Surplus Land Act. The HAU will also be empowered to take escalating enforcement steps to bring municipalities into compliance with state housing legislation in the event of persistent non-compliance.

“A housing element is no longer a paper exercise – it’s a contract with the state of housing commitments for eight years and the Housing Accountability Unit will hold jurisdictions to those commitments,” said Megan Kirkeby, HCD Deputy Director for Housing Policy.

While the accountability work is still growing, the existing team has been busy. To date, HCD has issued 253 letters ranging from inquiries, technical assistance, notices of noncompliance, and housing element decertification.

As an example of its success, 320 housing units were approved in September in Norco when the City Council overturned the Planning Commission's original denial of a housing project. Prior to the appeal hearing, HCD provided technical assistance that highlighted the city's commitments in its housing element and obligations under the Housing Accountability Act (HAA).

In another instance, the City of Bakersfield formally welcomed Casa Esperanza, a transitional home for women and their children who have been experiencing homelessness. Technical assistance provided by the Housing Accountability Unit led the City to update its municipal code to properly accommodate transitional and supportive housing, paving the way for Casa Esperanza.

The formation of the Housing Accountability Unit and addition of new staff to this work will allow HCD to more proactively pursue outcome-based resolutions that increase housing supply throughout California.

In addition, starting January 1, 2022, HCD will also have authority to enforce Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing law, The Housing Crisis Act of 2019 – SB 330, Streamlined Ministerial Permit Processes – SB 35, By Right Supportive Housing Provisions – AB 2162, By Right Low Barrier Navigation Centers – AB101, and limitations on development standards – AB 478.

While education and technical assistance is always the first step, the Housing Accountability Unit will hold jurisdictions accountable for their housing element commitments and these other state laws.

### **David Zisser Bio**

David Zisser most recently served as the Associate Director of Housing California, a statewide affordable housing and homelessness advocacy organization. He previously served as Senior Staff Attorney at Public Advocates, where he created a robust practice around Surplus Land Act accountability and led the organization's efforts to **enforce local jurisdictions' obligations to affirmatively further fair housing**. Zisser started his career in local government as a Housing Fellow at the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. He went on to serve as Counsel at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law where he developed a post-Katrina Gulf Coast initiative, working with dozens of local organizations in Louisiana and Mississippi to **hold communities accountable for affordable housing, fair housing, tenant protections, equitable development, and environmental justice**.

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*The California Department of Housing and Community Development is dedicated to the preservation and expansion of safe and affordable housing, so more Californians have a place to call home. Our team works to ensure an adequate supply of housing for Californians and promotes the growth of strong communities through its leadership, policy and program development. For more information, please visit [www.hcd.ca.gov](http://www.hcd.ca.gov) and follow us on Twitter, @California\_HCD; Facebook, @CaliforniaHCD; and LinkedIn.*