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Build With Strength Thanks Los Angeles City Council for Ensuring Safer Buildings

The Public Safety Committee moves the fire life safety motion "Building a Safer Los Angeles" forward

Los Angeles, Calif. —On Wednesday, Councilmember Monica Rodriguez led the Public Safety Committee in a unanimous vote of 4-0 to pass out of Committee a motion that would ultimately enact fire life safety building practices in the city of Los Angeles. Councilmembers Bob Blumenfield and Rodriguez, a co-sponsor of the motion, announced the initial release of the Motion in June of 2019.

Build With Strength, a coalition of housing advocates, architects, builders, engineers, union organizations, emergency services personnel, faith leaders, and community activists testified in support of the City Council's efforts. Strengthening local and national building codes and ensuring the use of non-combustible materials, especially in fire prone Los Angeles and all of California, is among the organization's top priorities. Build with Strength stands ready to work with the Council and all stakeholders that are impacted in this debate to help assure that the Los Angeles City Council develops the most safe and effective measures possible.

"This motion and the eventual ordinance will not raise the cost of low income or single family housing in our communities. With the costs of non-combustible materials far lower than traditional construction materials – this motion will mean overall construction costs will be less expensive and will protect our most vulnerable populations by providing safe and resilient housing," said Rev. Walter Contreras, Vice President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC). "Our diverse coalition is in support of this motion because we know that it means that the most vulnerable communities, who cannot afford to live in low-density areas, will be housed in buildings that are resilient to the threat of year-round fire season."

Coalition members in Los Angeles include: The Los Angeles Urban League, The Los Angeles/Orange County Building and Construction Trades Council, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Southern California, The California Conference of Carpenters, and the National Latino Evangelical Coalition.

There are already measures in the city of Los Angeles that address increased fire risk in densely populated communities through the City's Building Code and Fire District 1. This motion instructs the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) and Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) to identify areas in the City where the stricter code dictates that builders and construction workers use enhanced fire protections and fire-resistant materials during the building process. This initial motion only covers areas located in Fire District 1, which includes many of Los Angeles' high density, commercial zones.

Blumenfield and Rodriguez's motion specifically instructs the Los Angeles Fire Department, the Department of Building and Safety and the city attorney's office to prepare and present an ordinance to expand Fire District 1. The proposed motion will now be considered to the Planning & Land Use Management Committee.

"We support Chairperson Rodriguez's and Councilmember Blumenfield's efforts to address the escalating threats of wildfires by ensuring building materials keep pace with the challenges of our changing climate," said Rob Lovelace of the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters. "We believe that finding the right balance between enhancing public safety and building a more sustainable environment may be challenging, but it's absolutely achievable. Advancing this item is the necessary next step to finding that balance."

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