

September 2, 2026



The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SIGNATURE REQUEST – Assembly Bill 1693 (Zbur) Streamlining Local Permitting for Retail Tenant Improvements

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the California Retailers Association (CRA), we write to you as sponsors of this legislation in strong support of **AB 1693**, which will support California's diverse brick and mortar retail sector through streamlined permitting for tenant improvements, while ensuring compliance with all applicable building, health, and safety requirements. **AB 1693** takes important steps to modernize and streamline local permitting for retail tenant improvements, a long-overdue reform that will help retailers reopen, expand, and hire Californians more quickly.

The California Retailers Association is the only statewide trade association representing all segments of the retail industry including general merchandise, department stores, mass merchandisers, supermarkets and grocery stores, chain drug, and specialty retail such as auto, vision, jewelry, hardware and home stores.

CRA members have conveyed to us that permit turnaround times for tenant improvements routinely stretch into multiple months across California counties, with average processing times around 12 weeks and maximums reaching as high as 31 weeks in some jurisdictions. Retailers continue to experience recurring challenges, including extended review periods, multiple rounds of comments, use of third-party reviewers, portal outages, and unanticipated intake requirements. These lengthy review periods significantly delay basic interior buildouts, store openings, and remodels, forcing retailers to carry rent and financing costs for many additional months before they can generate revenue or hire workers.

Throughout the state, the retail industry faces unpredictable local permitting processes for tenant improvements that create significant hardship, such as increased project costs, delayed business operations, and stagnant economic activity. Current law (AB 671, Chapter 470, California Statutes 2025) creates a streamlined approval process for restaurants seeking these types of projects, establishing a similar model for retail projects will be essential for small businesses to thrive in California.

AB 1693 helps address this by requiring local building departments to allow a licensed architect or engineer serving as a qualified professional certifier to review tenant improvements and certify those improvements for applicable building, health, and safety code. The bill would

require the local building department to approve or deny the tenant improvement permit application within 20 business days of receiving a complete application.

This legislation is a step forward in reducing these permitting delays, and it will promote economic activity within California's small business community while maintaining appropriate safety and compliance standards. For these reasons, the California Retailers Association is proud to sponsor **AB 1693**.

We respectfully request you sign this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ryan Allain", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ryan Allain
Vice President, Government Relations
California Retailers Association