



January 16, 2026

Chair and Members  
California Board of Forestry  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Follow up from our letter to the BOF on May 22, 2025

Dear Chair and Members of the California Board of Forestry:

On behalf of MySafe:LA and the many communities we serve throughout Los Angeles County, I would like to thank the Board for the seriousness, transparency, and care with which it has approached the Governor's 2025 directive to improve and finalize regulatory language related to AB 3074 and the implementation of Zone 0.

We also want to expressly acknowledge and thank the Board for its sustained engagement in Southern California during 2025. Your visits to communities across the region—both to solicit public comment and to conduct on-the-ground tours—have been meaningful. In the City of Los Angeles and throughout Los Angeles County, MySafe:LA serves as the **Regional Fire Safe Council** and as a designated **County Coordinator** for wildfire mitigation, and we appreciate the opportunity to engage with the Board in that capacity.

We further commend the Board for its decision to pause formal action during January and February of 2026 in order to more fully evaluate the substantial volume of testimony, data, and field observations gathered throughout 2025. That decision reflects thoughtful governance and a recognition that durable wildfire policy must be informed not only by urgency, but by clarity and context.

As the Board prepares to resume its work later this winter or early spring, we would like to formally reaffirm the key positions outlined in **our May 22, 2025 letter to the Zone Zero Regulatory Advisory Committee**, submitted on behalf of MySafe:LA and signed by hundreds of residents across Los Angeles County. Those positions remain unchanged, and subsequent engagement has reinforced—rather than weakened—their relevance.

Since submitting that letter, our organization has continued extensive community-level work throughout Los Angeles County. This includes multiple public gatherings focused on defensible space and home hardening, the deployment of a public-facing survey specific to Zone 0, ongoing discussions at the bureau and emergency-operations level with our fire department partners, and continued expansion of community-based mitigation programs. As of January 2026, **MySafe:LA has directly helped establish, organize, and activate 34 Fire Safe Councils and 83 NFPA Firewise USA® sites** across Los Angeles County.

Across these engagements—representing more than 100 distinct communities—we have heard consistent concern regarding how Zone 0 is being understood by homeowners, particularly in dense, older urban-intermix neighborhoods. Importantly, this concern is not rooted in resistance to wildfire mitigation. Rather, it reflects anxiety about feasibility, equity, and expectations.

One area where the Board can provide critical leadership is **public clarity**, particularly regarding the distinction between **defensible space** and **home hardening**. While this distinction is well understood by wildfire professionals, it is frequently blurred in public discourse.

We understand and respect that the Board’s authority regarding Zone 0 is limited to defensible space. At the same time, two realities in Southern California complicate a purely defensible-space framework and reinforce the “one size does not fit all” conclusion articulated in our May 22 letter.

First, much of Southern California’s wildland-urban interface is not forested. It consists of chaparral, ornamental vegetation, slope-driven fuels, and dense urban intermix conditions that behave differently from traditional forest systems.

Second, and more critically, **the age of a structure has a direct relationship to its wildfire vulnerability**. Homes built prior to the adoption of Chapter 7A of the California Building Code—particularly those constructed before 1980—remain at extreme ember-ignition risk, regardless of defensible space actions taken immediately adjacent to the structure. These homes represent significant wildfire “blind spots” throughout the region.

While newer construction benefits from evolving building standards—including the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code (Part 7, Title 24), effective January 1, 2026—these protections primarily apply to new construction and major remodels. The greatest concentration of wildfire risk in Southern California lies within older housing stock located in dense communities such as Brentwood, the Hollywood Hills, Mount Washington, Topanga Canyon, Malibu, and Sylmar, where large-scale retrofitting is constrained by cost, timing, access, and infrastructure.

This reality raises a practical question we increasingly hear from homeowners: ***if older structures are at extreme ember risk, what realistic measures can meaningfully reduce exposure in the near term?*** Defensible space, by design, is intended to slow fire behavior and reduce intensity—not to eliminate risk altogether. In that context, ongoing questions about the role of well-maintained, fire-resistant vegetation as part of a broader risk-reduction strategy continue to surface, particularly where full vegetation removal may be impractical or counterproductive.

We recognize that these questions do not have simple answers. They do, however, underscore the importance of clearly communicating that Zone 0 is a **risk-reduction tool**, not a guarantee of structural survival. Without that clarity, there is a real risk that Zone 0 will be perceived by the public as a measure intended to “stop” fire, rather than to improve outcomes in an ember-driven wildfire environment. Such a perception would be self-defeating and could undermine broader mitigation goals.

Finally, we want to reiterate a point raised in our May 22 submission: **meaningful wildfire resilience in Southern California will ultimately require complementary strategies**, including funding mechanisms that support retrofitting older homes and policies that align defensible space requirements with realistic structural risk. In the absence of such alignment, homeowners in older, denser communities may feel unrecognized despite genuine efforts to reduce risk.

We would also like to note that clarity on Zone 0 has immediate implications for wildfire planning efforts already underway. **MySafe:LA is currently authoring the first-ever Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the City of Los Angeles.** Given the size and complexity of the City, this effort includes a master CWPP supported by shorter, community-specific ancillary plans in priority WUI districts. At the same time, **Los Angeles County is in the process of renewing its CWPP**, with similar needs for clear, accurate, and regionally appropriate guidance related to Zone 0. These documents will directly inform public education, local mitigation priorities, and future funding decisions. Ensuring that Zone 0 is clearly defined, properly contextualized, and aligned with realistic risk conditions is therefore essential—not only for compliance, but for consistent and effective wildfire planning at scale.

Our organization—and the communities we serve—are committed to continuing the active sharing of data, field observations, and community feedback in a constructive and ongoing manner. **MySafe:LA is simultaneously expanding its work to establish, strengthen, and sustain Fire Safe Councils and NFPA Firewise USA® sites across Los Angeles County**, while advancing community-driven mitigation actions intended to measurably reduce future wildfire risk. This work reflects a long-term commitment to wildfire resilience and is focused not only on preparedness, but on addressing the systemic conditions that contribute to wildfire loss in Southern California.

In parallel, **MySafe:LA is deeply engaged in recovery efforts within burn scar areas**, working directly with affected communities to identify persistent vulnerabilities,

infrastructure challenges, and mitigation gaps revealed by wildfire impacts. The insights gained through this recovery work—combined with ongoing mitigation efforts—inform the on-the-ground data, community intelligence, and risk trends we regularly share with the many fire departments we work alongside throughout Los Angeles County, including the Los Angeles *City* Fire Department. This two-way exchange between community experience and operational awareness is essential to improving preparedness, response, and long-term wildfire outcomes across the region.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Barrett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Barrett  
Executive Director  
MySafe:LA  
Safe Community Project

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*Footnote: MySafe:LA's role in establishing Fire Safe Councils and Firewise USA® sites includes community organizing, governance development, risk assessment support, public education, mitigation planning, and coordination with local fire agencies and state partners.*

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