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Dear Chair Stevenson and Planning Commission members,

As the largest business organization in San Luis Obispo County, representing approximately 1,400 members that employ nearly 34,000 employees throughout San Luis Obispo County, the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce respectfully submits the following comments regarding the Avila Ranch proposal.

Our community faces a severe housing shortage that has been exacerbated over the last decade due to the lack of homebuilding in our community. The Avila Ranch project is one critical opportunity to achieve more housing to address the significant gap that has built up over this time.

This project addresses the city's General Plan objectives and what was imagined and approved through the Land Use and Circulation Element update. And it helps to further what so many residents prioritized during the city's extensive goal setting process this year - more housing and the related infrastructure.

We have averaged a dismal .035% growth rate in housing over the last 10 years, which has significant environmental, social and economic consequences for the future of our region. For those that are already here, prohibitive housing costs mean that employees are spending a higher proportion of their income on housing than is economically wise. This has the greatest impact on renters and lower income households and creates housing insecurity for so many in our community.

By not adequately providing enough housing we are forcing individuals and families to find appropriate housing further away from where they work, which impacts greenhouse gas emissions (our county's commuting patterns are the greatest contributor to these emissions already), their ability to be close to their kids schools, opportunities to volunteer and other civic participation, and the amount of disposable income left to spend outside of housing and transportation. These are just some of the impacts that are felt.

The non-partisan Legislative Analyst Office for the state notes in its February 2016 *Perspectives on Helping Low Income Californians Afford Housing* that adding more supply- even at the higher end of the housing market- indirectly adds to the supply of the lower end of the market. As housing becomes less desirable as its ages, middle income households often seek to move from older, more affordable housing into new housing. And as they move, more housing becomes available for lower-income households.

We need every tool in our tool box to have more affordable housing opportunities for our community, and building more housing – including those that are more affordable by design as this project proposes- is critical to helping those who would like to live here the opportunity to set down roots as others before them have been able to do and become part of the community fabric.

The timing of this project is especially critical. As our community faces the closure of Diablo Canyon and the loss of many high-wage jobs in our community, we need to continue to thoughtfully plan for greater opportunities for employees and job creation in this community. We know that employee recruitment and retention for our small and large employers – private and public alike- is deeply affected by the severe shortage of housing diversity in our community. This impacts our community's ability to have access to the doctors, nurses, and teachers we need as well as the makers and the innovators. We need this planned housing for both our future workforce and for those that already live here and depend on these services.

This project also proposes to address numerous traffic congestion and infrastructure improvements that provide both neighborhood and communitywide benefit. There are new parks and miles of bike paths, bike lanes and pedestrian improvements as well as key road extension and intersection improvements that will help to reduce existing problems in our community.

Your role is essential in addressing the implementation of the General Plan, the LUCE update and the work of advisory body volunteers before you. We urge you to remain focused on the city's vision – shaped by the input of so many over time- that benefits the greatest number of individuals and families in our community for years and generations to come.

Thank you for considering our input.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ermina Karim".

Ermina Karim