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July 19, 2017

The Honorable Lorena Fletcher Gonzalez, Chair  
Assembly Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2114  
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: SB 649 (Hueso): Wireless Telecommunications Facilities – As Amended – OPPOSE**

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez:

On behalf of more than 3.3 million AARP members in California, I am writing in opposition of SB 649, which would harm California consumers. AARP believes that government should conduct the public's business in an open, inclusionary, and equitable manner, and that administrative agencies should promote fairness, openness, and accountability in public decision-making. Unfortunately, SB 649 does just the opposite. It is part of a nationwide effort to undermine the authority of local jurisdictions by allowing the installation of wireless or "small-cell" technology without requiring city or county discretionary permits. The wireless industry has convinced the Federal Communications Commission to launch a proceeding that preempts local authority if permits are not processed as quickly as the industry desires. This is clearly a usurpation of local authority and is contrary to the public's interest in transparent, accountable government.

In addition, this bill aims to bypass the standard California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review, which identifies the environmental impact of physical developments. SB 649 also prevents local jurisdictions from rejecting small-cell towers on public property, with the only exception being fire departments. This essentially negates a jurisdiction's local zoning rights. Furthermore, this bill denies municipalities the right to charge a telecommunications company a fair market rate for the lease and rental of public property, which could potentially harm the economic welfare of the community through lost revenue and subsequent taxation in order to make up for that loss.

In summary, AARP opposes SB 649 because it undermines the authority of local governments and thereby deprives local citizens the right to have a say about where small-cell towers are located in their communities. For these reasons, we urge you to vote "NO" this bill. If you have any questions about AARP's opposition to SB 649, please contact Blanca Castro, Advocacy Director, at (916) 556-3021 or bcastro@aarp.org

Sincerely,

Nancy McPherson, State Director

cc: Senator Ben Hueso

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