The State Bar
of California

OFFICE OF CHIEF TRIAL COUNSEL

845 S Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90017 213-765-1613 emely.cruz@calbar.ca.gov

Sent Via Email

February 6, 2026

Elizabeth Sanz, Esq.
Institute for Justice
901 North Glebe Road, Suite 900
Arlington, VA 22203
Email: bsanz@ij.org

Re: Unauthorized Practice of Law
Case No.: 25-NA-15199
Respondent: Sonja Trauss

Dear Ms. Sanz:

The State Bar has completed the investigation regarding the allegations of the unauthorized practice of law by Sonja Trauss and determined this matter does not warrant further action. Therefore, this matter is closed. The reasons for closure are as set out in our letter advising the complainant of the closure, a copy of which is attached.

We appreciate your cooperation during our investigation of the complaint received. Any further communication directed to the State Bar may be sent via email to emely.cruz@calbar.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Emely Cruz
Investigator II

Enc.

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845 S Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90017 213-765-1613 emely.cruz@calbar.ca.gov

February 6, 2026

Sent Via Email

Kendra Carney Mehr, Esq.
23 Corporate Plaza Dr., Suite 150
Newport Beach, CA 92660
Email: klcm@carneymehr.com

Re: Unauthorized Practice of Law
Matter No.: 25-NA-15199
Respondent: Sonja Trauss

Dear Ms. Mehr:

Please be advised that the State Bar of California has actively investigated your nonattorney unlicensed practice of law complaint against Sonja Trauss ("Respondent").

In your complaint, you allege as follows: "Yimby Law is not a law practice. While they appear to hire licensed attorneys to act on their behalf to file lawsuits, the entity should not be using the word "law" in its title because that misleads the public to believe the group is a law firm. It does not appear any of the staff of Yimby Law are attorneys, but they write letters to California cities threatening legal action and providing grossly incorrect legal analysis of housing laws and city ordinances."

In support of your complaint, you attached a copy of a letter authored and signed by the Respondent as the Executive Director of YIMBY Law and on her own behalf as a California resident impacted by the state's housing shortage. Respondent's letter was sent to the City Council for the City of Rancho Palos Verdes ("City") on March 17, 2025. The letter states that YIMBY Law is not a law firm, but a non-profit corporation that sues municipalities that fail to comply with state housing laws. In the letter, Respondent provides her opinion that the City's downsizing of certain sites will violate state housing laws.

As part of our investigation, we sent an inquiry to Respondent requesting her response to your complaint. On January 23, 2026, our office received Respondent's response via her counsel, Elizabeth Sanz. The response explains that YIMBY Law is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to increasing housing availability and affordability nationwide, that Respondent is

YIMBY Law's Executive Director, and that she is an activist, not a lawyer, who has led the YIMBY ("Yes In My Backyard") movement nationwide. Notably, the response clarifies that neither Respondent nor YIMBY Law represents clients, in court or otherwise. Rather, when YIMBY Law files amicus briefs or lawsuits with itself as the plaintiff, it is represented by counsel. YIMBY Law also provides its views on housing-related policies to California cities via letters similar to the one attached to the complaint.

Our office reviewed YIMBY Law's website (www.yimbylaw.org) and found no evidence to establish that Respondent engaged in the unauthorized practice of law. The website has a page dedicated to legal actions pursued by the organization and contains links to electronic copies of the filings made in such actions. The court documents for the various California-based actions reviewed confirm that YIMBY Law is represented in court actions by legal counsel duly licensed to practice law in California.

Throughout our investigation, there was no evidence obtained that showed Respondent represented clients, advertised legal services, provided legal services or advice, held out as an attorney, or otherwise engaged in the unauthorized practice of law. Respondent's letter offering her view on state housing laws as an affected California resident and as the organization's director and the mere use of the word "Law" in the organization's name does not constitute the unauthorized practice of law in California.

Based on our investigation, our office has determined that the evidence is insufficient to establish that Respondent engaged in the unauthorized practice of law in California. Therefore, we are closing this matter without prejudice. A copy of this letter has been provided to Respondent.

Thank you again for bringing this matter to our attention.

Respectfully,



Emely Cruz
Investigator II