



June 10, 2019

The Honorable Benjamin Allen, Chair  
 Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Quality  
 State Capitol, Room 2205  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for AB 508

Dear Senator Allen:

We write in strong support of AB 508, which would improve the existing process under which the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) may mandate extension of safe drinking water service, particularly as applied to communities and households served by domestic wells.

The undersigned include environmental justice organizations, environmental organizations, and drinking water advocates that are committed to seeing safe drinking water become a reality for all families and children in the state.

Upwards of one million Californians lack safe drinking water. Water that runs from the taps in their homes and in their schools is tainted with arsenic, nitrate, uranium, 1,2,3 TCP, E. coli, and other contaminants and pathogens. For many families, domestic wells have run dry and no water runs into their homes. AB 508 would build on SB 88 (2015) and AB 2501 (2018) to strengthen important tools for addressing this drinking water crisis.

Existing law allows the state water board to require water system consolidation and extension of safe drinking water service to communities and households struggling with drinking water

contamination. However, existing law also requires that the SWRCB take actions and make certain findings that, in practice, have presented barriers to drinking water service in some communities.

In order to remove these existing barriers, this bill would amend the actions and findings that the state board must take to order extension of water service. First, it would clarify that the state water board is not required to obtain written consent from all domestic well owners before ordering extension of drinking water service to the remainder of a community. Second, the bill would clarify that in analyzing economic feasibility of a drinking water extension project the state need not require that any certain percentage of domestic well owners commit to connecting their homes to the consolidating water system so long as the project remains economically feasible and appropriate for those likely to connect. Third, the bill would require the state water board inform in writing owners and tenants served by a contaminated domestic well of the opportunity to secure safe drinking water, the relevant health risks and, if appropriate, when a landlord has declined to connect to the safe drinking water source.

Finally, the bill prohibits water systems from charging, as part of a mandatory consolidation or extension of service, capacity charges that exceed the reasonable cost of providing the service.

Recent amends clarify that written consent is still ultimately required to require consolidation or extension of service to a household served only by a domestic well, and that the SWRCB shall take all reasonable steps to obtain such written consent. In an amendment not intended to have substantive effect, the phrase “capacity connection charge” was also changed to “capacity charge” for sake of consistency with other sections of the Health and Safety Code.

These provisions will make the process for ordering mandatory consolidation and extension of drinking water service more efficient and transparent, while ensuring that residents are informed about relevant health risks associated with the drinking water problems and available solutions. We ask for your support of this measure and thank you for your commitment to securing safe drinking water for all Californians.

Sincerely,



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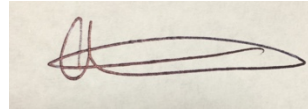
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