



Union of Concerned Scientists



Carbon Cycle Institute



PolicyLink



April 2, 2021

The Honorable Senator Bob Hertzberg
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SUPPORT-- SB 552 (Hertzberg) Drought Resilient Communities Act (As Introduced on February 18, 2021)

Dear Senator Hertzberg:

We write in support of the Drought Resilient Communities Act (SB 552), which will help ensure small and rural communities are better prepared for the next drought. Specifically, the bill would improve local planning, increase data collection, update emergency responses, and improve statewide coordination. These tools are critical for communities most at risk and will help prevent catastrophic water shortages for areas most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Under California law, small water suppliers and rural communities are often not covered by established water shortage requirements. Recognizing this significant gap in drought resiliency planning, the legislature passed SB 606 (Hertzberg, 2018) and AB 1668 (Friedman, 2018). Conjointly, the bills required the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to propose to the Governor and the Legislature, by January 1, 2020, recommendations and guidance regarding the development and implementation of countywide drought and water shortage contingency plans to address drought planning for small water suppliers and rural communities. To fulfill this legislative requirement, DWR created the County Drought Advisory Group (CDAG), which consisted of State agencies, cities, counties, small communities, small water suppliers, and other stakeholders, and had many discussions on the best way to improve the preparation of small communities for the next drought. This report, due for release this spring, provides important guidance for small community drought preparation.

The last drought represented nothing less than a human catastrophe for thousands of Californians who lost water, a disaster we cannot afford to repeat. Moreover, we know that it is not a matter of if but rather when the next drought will hit because of the clear science and data. Without planning in place for small and rural communities, hundreds of thousands of people are at risk of going without water to meet their basic household and drinking water needs in the next drought. This directly threatens California's ability to secure the Human Right to Water for all. We must have proper drought resiliency planning to protect basic access to water.

We can do better as a state and take the lessons learned to prevent what happened during the last drought from happening again. The Drought Resilient Communities Act represents a historic effort to avoid catastrophic impacts on drinking water for areas most vulnerable to climate change. For these reasons, we strongly support and urge your AYE vote on SB 552.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Clary, California Director
Clean Water Action

Uriel Saldivar, Senior Policy Advocate
Community Water Center

Michael Claiborne, Directing Attorney
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Accountability**

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