



COMMUNITY WATER CENTER  
EL CENTRO COMUNITARIO POR EL AGUA



PolicyLink

Association of People United for Water  
Asociación de Gente Unida por el Agua



April 12, 2019

The Honorable Henry Stern  
Chair, Senate Environmental Quality Committee  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 200 (Monning) Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Stern:

A historic coalition of California organizations writes in **support** of SB 200 (Monning), which would create a **Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund** to address California's statewide drinking water crisis and ensure all Californians have access to safe and affordable drinking water. Paired with a sustainable and adequate source of funding, such as that identified in the Governor's budget proposal, the Fund can solve California's drinking water crisis.

**California has a statewide safe drinking water crisis that affects one million Californians each year.** Data released by the California State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) in 2019 identified over 300 California public water systems serving communities currently out of compliance with federal drinking water standards. Many communities have lacked safe drinking water for years.

Additionally, roughly 2 million Californians rely on domestic wells and state small water systems not regulated by the state and ineligible for most assistance programs, leaving them particularly vulnerable. More troubling still, California's drinking water crisis disproportionately impacts low-income communities and communities of color. These impacted communities can be found in every corner of the state.

**California's statewide drinking water crisis is a serious public health emergency.** Exposure to unsafe levels of drinking water contaminants like arsenic, nitrates, chromium-VI, 123 TCP, coliform and other contaminants found in drinking water can cause serious, even deadly, health impacts. These include a variety of cancers, birth defects, heart disease, thyroid illness and other dangerous conditions.

Existing state and federal funding sources cannot be used to address significant funding gaps such as operations and maintenance costs necessary to sustain treatment systems, emergency and interim water supplies and assistance to Californians not served by a public water system. As a result, small, rural or socioeconomically disadvantaged communities and households throughout the state are either forced to pay exorbitant rates for drinking water or buy bottled water, because they cannot afford the treatment costs or secure long-term financing due to a lack of a demonstrated long-term funding source.

SB 200 is a critical component of the Fund. Independent of revenue sources, SB 200 allows a review and discussion of how the Fund will function. As described in SB 200, the Fund will:

**Require the State Water Board to develop and regularly update a needs assessment that fully identifies the extent of California's drinking water problem.** The Board began publishing a list and map of out-of-compliance water systems in 2017, but that list fails to include Californians not served by a public water system or whose tap water is contaminated by lead or other distribution system contaminants; and does not provide an opportunity to identify systems at risk of falling into chronic non-compliance

**Provide the flexibility to fund the best solution for each community.** The legislation allows the Board to tailor a solution according to community circumstances, rather letting funding availability determine the outcome.

**Identify high-risk areas for California's state small and domestic well owners** at risk of unsafe drinking water and support well testing programs for low-income households.

**Ensure public engagement, transparency and oversight.** The bill requires the State Water Board to adopt an annual funding implementation plan, hold public meetings and workshops, develop a multi-disciplinary stakeholder workgroup, and conduct periodic public reviews and assessments of the Fund.

**The Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund is supported by a historically diverse coalition of California voices.** These include environmental justice organizations that work directly with impacted communities, environmental organizations, agricultural organizations, health advocates, labor unions, civil rights organizations, anti-poverty organizations, food security advocates, municipalities, water agencies, and others. Many impacted community residents have also participated in the legislative process in support of the proposed Fund.

Access to safe, clean and affordable drinking water is a basic human right, and the right to live in neighborhoods free from lead should be beyond dispute. The proposal is predicated on the idea that we must join hands together as a state to ensure all Californians have access to safe and affordable drinking water and healthy neighborhoods – and that we address California's drinking water crisis THIS YEAR in a manner that is not merely a band-aid approach or that lacks funding

certainty but that instead solves this crisis once and for all. We strongly support Senator Monning's Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund proposal, but understand that it can only succeed if adopted in conjunction with a sustainable and adequate source of funding.

Sincerely,

Jackie Rutheiser, Alliance of Child and Family Services  
Jamie Morgan, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association  
Jeff Odefey, American Rivers  
Raul Barraza, Arvin Community Services District  
Miya Yoshitani, Asian Pacific Environmental Network  
Susana De Anda, Asociación de Gente Unida por el Agua  
Marissa Chan, Black Women for Wellness  
Juan Altamirano, CA Audubon  
Jared Sanchez, CA Bicycle Coalition  
Diana Vasquez, CA Environmental Justice Alliance  
Tracey Patterson, CA Food Policy Advocates  
Colin Tateishi, CA Housing Partnership  
Melissa Romero, CA League of Conservation Voters  
Kim Chen, CA Pan-Ethnic Health Network  
Noe Paramo, CA Rural Legal Assistance Foundation  
Justin Skarb, CA Water Service  
Torri Estrada, Carbon Cycle Institute  
Caroline Farrell, Center for Race, Poverty, and the Environment  
Nayamin Martinez, Central California Environmental Justice Network  
Kirsten James, Ceres  
Jennifer Clary, Clean Water Action  
Christopher Sanchez, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights  
Kassandra Hishida, Community Alliance for Agroecology  
Jonathan N, Community Water Center  
Genoveva Islas, Cultiva la Salud  
Camila Chavez, Dolores Huerta Foundation  
Isabel Arrollo-Toland, El Quinto Sol de America

Pablo Garza, Environmental Defense Fund  
Andy Levine, Faith in the Valley  
Sandra Celedon, Fresno Building Healthy Communities  
Jim Lindburg, Friends Committee on Legislation of CA  
Sandra Celedon, Friends of Calwa  
Phoebe Seaton, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability  
Regina Banks, Lutheran Office of Public Policy  
Samuel Molina, Mi Familia Vota  
Jake Ferreira, Mission Readiness: Council for a Strong America  
Luis Alejo, Chair, Legislative Committee, County of Monterey  
Arnie Sowell, NextGen California  
Medha Chandra, Pesticide Action Network North America  
Martha Arguello, Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles  
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Laura Muraida, Strategic Concepts in Organizing & Policy Education  
Lucas Frerichs, The Nature Conservancy  
Alexander Harnden, Western Center on Law & Poverty

CC: Office of Senator Bill Monning