



April 1, 2019

The Honorable Senator Ben Allen  
 Senate Committee on Environmental Quality  
 State Capitol  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 669 (Caballero) Drinking Water Trust Fund: Oppose**

Dear Chair Allen and Committee members:

On behalf of the above-listed organizations, we regrettably must oppose SB 669 (Caballero) - the proposed Drinking Water Trust Fund. While we appreciate the commitment from the author to address the state's drinking water crisis, we feel that not only is the funding source infeasible, but that the bill as written fails to address the broad challenges of ensuring safe and affordable drinking water for all Californians.

The challenges of ensuring safe and affordable drinking water are multi-faceted and require similarly diverse solutions. This proposal does not reflect that diversity of need, and as a result fails to create a comprehensive program that brings safe drinking water to all Californians. Among its shortcomings:

- Only 3,000 of the state's 7,500 public water systems would be eligible for funding. Among the 4,500 ineligible systems are hundreds of schools serving thousands of students.
- Up to 2 million Californians not served by a public water system are not eligible for assistance. This has been long identified as a key funding gap in available funding programs and was most clearly highlighted in the multi-year plight of East Porterville during the drought.
- Hundreds of schools and daycare centers that detect lead in their drinking water taps will not qualify for funding to replace pipes and fixtures.
- The bill does not incorporate polluter responsibility into its funding stream. Nitrate is the most common manmade contaminant in California's groundwater supply, accounting for about 25% of the state's drinking water contamination.
- By limiting available solutions to one – consolidation – the bill fails to even address all of the systems it considers eligible. Our estimate is that at least half of community water systems will be able to benefit from consolidation; but that still leaves hundreds of systems without assistance.
- The bill proposes to provide some level of funding for operations and maintenance costs, but not the capital funding needed to install the treatment systems for which the bulk of this funding is needed.
- Most notably, this bill is merely a promise to provide assistance: it would not actually provide relief to the more than 1 million Californians without access to safe drinking water unless and until a multi-billion dollar investment of General Funding is secured – which we estimate would take 4-5 billion dollars.

Unfortunately, SB 669 provides more restrictions than flexibility in its short fund outline. Because of that, **most Californians with unsafe drinking water will NOT receive sustainable, long-term access to safe and affordable drinking water under this statute.**

Our organizations applaud leadership in the Governor's office and the legislature to establish a flexible and sustainable fund and funding sources that will help *all* Californians achieve safe drinking water.

We look forward to working with you to achieve safe drinking water this year.

Sincerely,

*Juan Altamirano, California Audubon*

*Melissa Romero, California League of Conservation Voters*

*Noe Parama, CRLAF (California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation)*

*Caroline Farrell, CRPE (Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment)*

*Allen Hernandez, CCAEJ (Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice)*

*Kevin Hamilton, Central California Asthma Coalition*

*Nayamin Martinez, Central California Environmental Justice Alliance*

*Maricela Morales, CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy)*

*Kirsten James, Ceres*

*Jennifer Clary, Clean Water Action*

*Pablo Rodriguez, Communities for a New California Education Fund*

*Jonathan Nelson, Community Water Center*

*Genoveva Islas, Cultiva LaSalud*

*Pablo Garza, Environmental Defense Fund*

*Diane Takvorian, Environmental Health Coalition*

*Pastor Trena Turner, Faith in the Valley*

*Phoebe Seaton, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability*

*Eddie Carmona, PICO*

*Matthew Baker, Planning and Conservation League*

*Chione Flegal, PolicyLink*

*Sergio Carranza, Pueblo Unido CDC*

*Alexander Harnden, Western Center on Law and Poverty*