



April 2, 2019

The Honorable Bill Quirk, Chair  
Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials  
1020 N Street, Room 171  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for AB 508

Dear Assembly Member Quirk:

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 organizations include drinking water advocates, drinking water agencies, environmental, and environmental justice 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 requires that the SWRCB take actions and make certain findings that, in practice, have been a barrier to drinking water service in some communities.

Specifically, the current requirement that the SWRCB obtain written consent from domestic well owners in a community before ordering extension of drinking water service allows a few property owners to stand in the way of a project that would provide safe drinking water to the rest of the community.

This bill would amend the actions and findings that the state board must take to order extension of water service. First, it would eliminate the requirement that the state water board obtain written consent from 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 and shall not require that a certain percentage of domestic well owners commit to connecting their homes to the consolidating water system. Third, the bill would require the state water board, after issuing an order to extend drinking water service, to inform in writing tenants served by a contaminated domestic well of the opportunity to secure safe drinking water and, if appropriate, when their landlords decline to connect to the safe drinking water source.

Finally, the bill would prohibit public water systems subject to an order to consolidate or extend drinking water service from charging mitigation fees to existing communities to the extent that the fees are imposed for the purpose of developing new ground or surface water supplies to serve new growth.

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

Sincerely,



Phoebe Seaton  
Leadership Counsel for Justice &  
Accountability



Diana Vasquez  
California Environmental Justice Alliance



Chione Lucina Muñoz Flegal  
Policy Link



Jennifer Clary  
Clean Water Action



Jonathan Nelson  
Community Water Center



Matthew Baker  
Planning and Conservation League



Tim Frank  
Center for Sustainable Neighborhoods



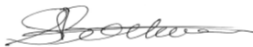
Sergio Carranza  
Pueblo Unido CDC

*Jim Grant*

Jim Grant  
Social Justice Ministry  
Diocese of Fresno



Nayamin Martinez  
Central California Environmental Justice  
Network



Sean Bothwell  
California Coastkeeper Alliance

*Rico Mastrodonato*

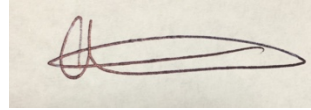
Rico Mastrodonato  
The Trust for Public Land



Juan Altamirano  
Audubon California



Gail Wadsworth  
California Institute for Rural Studies



Christina Livingston  
Alliance of Californians for Community  
Empowerment (ACCE) Action



Emily Harris  
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights



Regina Q. Banks  
Lutheran Office of Public Policy - California