



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

September 5, 2017

The Honorable Bill Monning
Member, California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 623 – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Monning:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), thank you for accepting our proposed amendments which allows us to support your Senate Bill 623. This measure will establish a fund to assist those who do not have access to safe drinking water. RCRC is an association of thirty-five rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

Existing law, through the California Safe Drinking Water Act, requires the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to administer provisions relating to the regulation of drinking water for the protection of public health. The Office of Sustainable Water Solutions was established within the SWRCB for the purpose of promoting permanent and sustainable drinking water as well as wastewater treatment solutions for the people of the State.

Previously, RCRC was troubled by provision within SB 623 that would authorize the SWRCB to promulgate a regulatory program requiring that small systems and individual domestic wells be tested for contaminants. It was our view that this was unnecessary, given existing data at the local level, and diverted funds away from where it is needed most - improving drinking water for the targeted communities. We were also concerned with the lack of specificity around the funding mechanism regarding the collection of the proposed fee on small water systems. The recent amendments address our concerns as follows:

1. The provision requiring the testing of all domestic wells by the SWRCB have been deleted in their entirety.
2. The measure no longer requires the collection of a water fee on those systems with 200 or few service connections.

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3. Provisions have been added to direct the SWRCB to work with local health officers in the collection of data that will assist in identifying those areas of greatest need and highest risk of nitrate contamination of groundwater.
4. We acknowledge that the inclusion of new fees on water systems to fund this initiative is difficult. And, we appreciate that in addition to this new levy, SB 623 also looks to revenue streams from the regulated community to address agricultural practices of the past that may have resulted in nitrates reaching groundwater as well as the public to address the naturally occurring contaminants, including human sources. We also note that despite being aware of this problem for years, funding to address the situation has, heretofore, not been forthcoming. Given this background, we concluded that this is the most equitable approach to providing safe drinking water to these communities.

The lack of safe drinking water in some of California's rural communities, many of which are low-income, is both a public health and social issue that deserves to be addressed. RCRC appreciates your legislative efforts on this issue not the least of which is the drawing together of a broad coalition of diverse stakeholders. We look forward to the successful passage of SB 623.

If you believe we can be of further assistance in the passage of SB 623, please contact me at mwarmerdam@rcrcnet.org or (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "MaryAnn Warmerdam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MARY-ANN WARMERDAM
Senior Legislative Advocate

cc: The Honorable Kevin De Leon, President pro Tempore of the State Senate
The Honorable, Robert Hertzberg, Member of the State Senate
The Honorable Bill Dodd, Member of the State Senate
The Honorable Ed Hernandez, Member of the State Senate
The Honorable Jeff Stone, Member of the State Senate
The Honorable Andy Vidak, Member of the State Senate
The Honorable Richard Bloom, Member of the State Assembly