January 30, 2020

The Honorable Jim Cooper
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6025
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 1958 – SUPPORT
As Introduced January 16, 2020

Dear Assembly Member Cooper:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to express our support for your Assembly Bill 1958, which would protect critical flood protection infrastructure by bolstering the maintenance of levees throughout California. RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

As you know, current law establishes the Central Valley Flood Protection Board (CVFPP) which are responsible for various flood control activities along the Sacramento River, the San Joaquin River, their tributaries, and related areas. The CVFPP requires every plan along or near the banks of the Sacramento-San Joaquin river systems or any of their tributaries to be approved before construction is commenced. Current law also prohibits a levee from being cut or altered without the permission of the CVFPP.

California is responsible for approximately 1,600 miles of levees in the Sacramento-San Joaquin river systems, many of which are in RCRC member counties. It is imperative that levees are regularly maintained and in-operation against erosion and other threats, including major earthquakes, rising sea levels, and water seepage. Yet, some of these levees date as far back as the 1850s, and are extremely susceptible to costly repairs. The threat is exacerbated by unauthorized excavations on these levees that weakens the integrity and stability of the levee systems.

AB 1958 strengthens protections against the various threats to premature levee damages by prohibiting a person from concealing, defacing, destroying, modifying, cutting, altering, or physically or visually obstructing any levee that is part of the State Plan of Flood Control (SPFC). In addition, AB 1958 would authorize the CVFPP and/or
its designees to inspect and remove any obstructions made to any levee, and further authorizes peace officers to enforce provisions punishable by a misdemeanor.

Protecting the Central Valley’s flood control infrastructure is crucial when the protection of life and property are at stake. AB 1958 would protect levee systems against future unauthorized excavation, as well as reduce flood risks to critical levees that are part of the SPFC by ensuring activities are monitored that could potentially impact California’s critical public infrastructure.

For the above reasons, RCRC supports your AB 1958. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at mwarmerdam@rcrcnet.org or (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,

MARY-ANN WARMERDAM
Senior Legislative Advocate

cc:  The Honorable Bill Dodd, Member of the State Senate
     The Honorable Richard Pan, Member of the State Senate
     The Honorable Heath Flora, Member of the State Assembly
     The Honorable James Gallagher, Member of the State Assembly
     The Honorable Kevin McCarty, Member of the State Assembly