

October 15, 2019

The Honorable Kamala Harris
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: S. 2466, the Water Justice Act – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Harris:

I am writing today on behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to express our support for the Water Justice Act (S. 2466). As you may know, last year Monterey County became the first county in the nation to recognize the human right to safe and clean drinking water.

Drinking water contamination is a widespread problem in Monterey County, as is adequate source capacity for many residents, especially those in disadvantaged communities. Contaminant levels for nitrates, arsenic, or fluoride currently confirmed in 235 of the 1296 county-regulated water systems exceed primary drinking water standards for these contaminants and require the use of bottled water as an interim emergency measure.

Resolving a contaminated water system is costly and residents and communities often lack the technical, managerial or economic means to do so. Typical solutions include consolidation with a water system that meets standards, drilling a new well, or installing treatment measures. Consolidation is preferred, but many systems are not adjacent to other water systems with adequate supply, capacity, quality, or willingness to consolidate - or the cost of the necessary infrastructure is a barrier. A solution could be to drill a new well, but sufficient groundwater may not be available or may be contaminated. Treatment is an option, but treatment maintenance is costly and time consuming and generates waste products that may present challenges for proper disposal.

Despite the history of proactive water policies at the state level, Monterey County residents still face formidable water challenges. Disadvantaged communities disproportionately bear the health and financial impacts of contaminated water or inadequate access to safe water.

The funding opportunities presented by the Water Justice Act would be extremely beneficial to Monterey County, and we are pleased to offer our support for your important legislation. We thank you for your leadership on this important issue facing Monterey County and other communities across the nation.

Sincerely,

John M. Phillips
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein