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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT
ORANGE COUNTY'S GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

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April 16, 2019

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Room 4140
Sacramento, CA 94249-0056

RE: Safe Drinking Water for All Act (AB 217) - Oppose Unless Amended

Dear Assemblymember Garcia:

The Orange County Water district (OCWD; the District) is respectfully opposed to Assembly Bill 217 unless it is amended to address our concerns. AB 217 would impose an annual Safe and Affordable Drinking Water "fee" per service connection on all public water systems.

Though AB 217 was recently amended to not include a schedule of fees or allow subsequent amendments to the annual fees, these amendments do not go far enough to address the District's concerns. From a tax collection cost standpoint, the recent amendments improved the bill in that community water systems would no longer need to hire additional staff to implement the tax. That said, AB 217 still imposes a water tax.

The AB 217 water tax would work against keeping water affordable, and affordable water is an element of the Human Right to Water. Public water agencies required to pay the tax would need to pass the cost of the state tax onto all of their customers. This tax also establishes a precedent in the state of California for other water taxes. The District has chosen to support SB 669 (Caballero), which would create a Safe Drinking Water Trust without the inclusion of a water tax.

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For these reasons, OCWD respectfully opposes AB 217 unless it is amended. Please contact OCWD Legislative Affairs Liaison Alicia Dunkin at (714) 477-3750 or adunkin@ocwd.com, or me, if you have any questions and/or if we may be of any assistance to you or your staff.

Sincerely,



Vicente Sarmiento, Esq.
President