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**ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT**  
ORANGE COUNTY'S GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

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August 8, 2019

The Honorable Mike Levin  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1626 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: The Desalination Development Act (H.R. 3723) – Support

Dear Mike Congressman Levin:

The Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) writes in support of your effort to enhance the responsible development of ocean and brackish desalination projects. The Desalination Development Act (H.R. 3723) would provide important standards and timelines to help expedite the planning, design and construction of these projects. The authorization of funding to support such projects is critical to ensure certainty. OCWD has led the way in the development of advanced, alternative water supply projects with the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS). The lessons learned by the District are applicable to the priorities of your legislation.

Overall, H.R. 3723 creates a sound path to identify viable desalination projects that hold the promise of providing a sustainable water supply that protects the coastal and near coastal waters. The District does have a concern with the bill's mandate that a project must be part of a state approved plan or is requested by the state for federal participation. In the case of the GWRS, OCWD pursued the development of the project relying upon federal, state and local resources. If the GWRS project's approval for federal assistance rested upon state approval consistent with a plan, OCWD most likely would have experienced delays in the project's completion, creating additional costs for our ratepayers. The District respectfully requests that H.R. 3723 be revised to adopt the approach of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Title XVI and WIIN water recycling review and approval processes. If state input is considered necessary, it should be through a simple recommendation by the state that the project should receive federal assistance.

Like GWRS, regional desalination projects will be developed through local sponsors. The concept of consistency with a state plan could negatively impact the ability to

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develop meaningful projects that could deliver locally developed sustainable supplies and reduce the need for imported water supplies irrespective of any plan.

The District also recommends that a project is determined to be consistent with the bill's criteria in the event the Secretary of the Interior fails to notify Congress within thirty days of such a determination by the Secretary. This would eliminate delays in federal assistance.

Again, OCWD deeply appreciates your work to advance the development of sustainable water supply projects that will deliver multiple benefits. As you work toward passage of H.R. 3723, we look forward to working with you. Please do not hesitate to contact Alicia Dunkin, Legislative Affairs Liaison, at [adunkin@ocwd.com](mailto:adunkin@ocwd.com) or (714) 378-8232 if we may be of any assistance.

Sincerely,



Vicente Sarmiento, Esq.  
President

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Kamala Harris  
Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (CA-38)  
Congressman Gil Cisneros (CA-39)  
Congresswoman Katie Porter (CA-45)  
Congressman Jose Luis Correa (CA-46)  
Congressman Alan Lowenthal (CA-47)  
Congressman Harley Rouda (CA-48)