



February 7, 2017

Chair Felicia Marcus and Board Members  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, 24th Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Support for Safe and Affordable Drinking Water**

Dear Chair Marcus and Board Members:

The above listed organizations urge continued progress toward addressing safe and affordable drinking water challenges this year through a collaborative and transparent process that engages both key drinking water stakeholders and the broader California public, **with the goal of having crafted and enacted meaningful, implementable, safe and affordable drinking water solutions by the end of the year.**

**Urgent Need to Address Lack of Safe and Affordable Drinking Water**

Safe and affordable drinking water is a fundamental human right enshrined in California law, but one that is still not realized for too many Californians. Critical drinking water

needs still remain unresolved, leaving families and communities across the state without safe and affordable drinking water:

- Hundreds of communities that have been unable to consistently provide safe drinking water, some for decades.
- Treatment costs put clean drinking water out of reach for many communities, especially those with small and lower income rate payer bases.
- More and more families and individuals are struggling to afford a basic amount of safe water due to unaffordable water rates.
- The lack of a sustainable funding source to meet ongoing operations and maintenance needs and other drinking water needs persists as a primary obstacle to safe drinking water

### **Addressing Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Needs in 2017**

We acknowledge the work the State Water Board has already undertaken in preparation for its February 8 workshop on safe and affordable drinking water. Looking forward, solutions to California's drinking water challenges should be crafted through a transparent and collaborative stakeholder process, but should also be conducted with the urgency deserving of the problem and with a goal of enacting meaningful solutions this year through either the legislative or the budgetary process. Such solutions should at a minimum achieve the following:

- Establish of a new Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund at the State Water Board, which can complement existing funding sources of funding to meet unmet drinking water needs
- Adopt of new funding mechanisms to provide sources of sustainable funding for chronically unmet needs, such as for ongoing operations and maintenance costs and costs associated with treatment of drinking water.
- Create of a statewide affordability program to ensure all families can afford the basic provision of safe drinking water.
- Leverage the Office of Sustainable Water Solutions (OSWS) as a “one-stop shop” with multi-disciplinary technical assistance programs by housing the new Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund within OSWS.
- Institute systems to support the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, including 1) a regular assessment of statewide safe and affordable drinking water needs, and 2) a regular evaluation of how well implemented solutions/programs are achieving safe and affordable drinking water objectives.

In the crucial months ahead, we encourage the Board to undertake a rigorous stakeholder process to engage drinking water stakeholders on its safe and affordable cost estimates, which we understand will be released on or around February 8. The goal should be to establish a common understanding of the problem amongst stakeholders, and then to work from a common set of facts. To help further those aims, all data generated as part of any cost estimates should be made available for

stakeholders to review. A similar process should be initiated around development of revenue-generating options. All assumptions and data associated with development of possible fee mechanism options should be shared with drinking water stakeholders.

## Conclusion

Safe drinking water should not be a privilege in California; it should be a right that we both celebrate and guarantee for all Californians. By doing so, California will lead the way forward for the country and the world in achieving the Human Right to Water. We look forward to partnering with the Board and other drinking water stakeholder this year to craft and implement meaningful solutions. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the extensive work of State Board staff involved in this effort.

Sincerely,

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Co-Director & Attorney at Law  
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Dennis Cuevas-Romero  
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American Heart Association/American  
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Jena Price  
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California League of Conservation  
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Kyle Jones  
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