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May 10, 2021

The Honorable Laura Friedman
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6011
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Orange County Sanitation District Opposes AB 1434 (Friedman)

Dear Assembly Member Friedman:

The Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) unfortunately opposes your Assembly Bill 1434 related to indoor water use standards established by your previous Bill AB 1668 (Friedman, 2018). OC San provides wastewater collection, treatment, and recycling for approximately 2.6 million people in central and northwest Orange County, CA. OC San's primary mission is to protect public health and the environment through its services.

AB 1434 proposes to incrementally lower the indoor water use standards to 40 gallons per capita daily (GPCD) starting in 2030. This indoor water use standard is not based on any substantial findings or studies that have been made available that research measurable, attainable, and viable water use standards. Furthermore, this topic has been recently discussed and debated in 2018 through a very public and transparent process in the Legislature, which eventually led to many in the water community supporting the new indoor water use standards in 2018. This bill seems like an attempt to go back on the previous deals that were struck with various opposition stakeholders, the water community, and the Legislature.

OC San has worked in partnership with the Orange County Water District (OCWD) to fund and operate the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), which works to purify and reuse most of the wastewater being received by OC San. That water is then pumped back into the groundwater basin to be re-used as potable drinking water at a later time. In order for the GWRS to operate at full capacity, OC San needs to continue to see existing levels of flow from wastewater sources. Reducing the water consumption of this region without appropriate data, research, or science, could have contrary effects to the efforts of the GWRS. AB 1434 does not address, incentivize, or give credit to those jurisdictions such as OC San and OCWD that are recycling their water from various sources including indoor water use for drinking water.

OC San has a robust Capital Improvement Program. During the next 10 years, we plan to invest nearly \$3 billion to maintain and upgrade our infrastructure at both our Plants in Huntington Beach and Fountain Valley as well as our collections system throughout our service area in Orange County, CA. As well intended as AB 1434 is, reduced wastewater flows could limit the ability to flush the collection system line which will increase stagnation of wastewater in the pipeline, increase corrosion and odors and will result in a higher wastewater strength which can have unintended consequences and impact the treatment facilities. Wastewater treatment is a biological process with demand for oxygenation, and physical processes and chemical usage related to solids concentration of the wastewater. While wastewater flows may decrease, the treatment demands remain the same or may become more difficult to control. Potential regulations for more nutrient removal will result in higher operation and maintenance costs.

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These provisions are concerning for OC San's planning of future critical infrastructure projects, as a consistent expectation of the wastewater flow into OC San treatment plants are vital data points that drive investments and innovations. This is a short-sighted one-size-fits-all proposal that does not take into account those places of the State, such as Orange County, that are functionally more advanced and progressive than a simple water conservation standard.

For these reasons, the Orange County Sanitation District is opposed to AB 1434. Please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Cabral, OC San's Administration Manager at (714) 593-7581 or via email at jcabral@ocsan.gov should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

David John Shawver
Board Chairman

cc: Orange County Legislative Delegation
Orange County Water District