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April 12, 2021

The Honorable Alex Lee
 California State Assembly
 State Capitol, Room 2170
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Orange County Sanitation District Oppose for AB 339 (Lee)

Dear Assembly Member Lee:

The Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) unfortunately opposes Assembly Bill (AB) 339 related to additional services for virtual meetings and translation requirements. 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 339 would require that OC San provide a call-in option or an internet-based service option that provides closed captioning services at its meetings that are public. While this goal is rooted in good intentions of improving public access to all members of the community, including those with disabilities, the bill ignores technological burdens this would have on local public agencies. If this bill were to pass, OC San could incur possible unbudgeted costs to retrofit existing public meeting software services to accommodate this provision. More research is necessary before this goal can become a reality.

Perhaps more concerning is that AB 339 also requires that OC San provide translation services at its meetings to all languages that are spoken by at least 5 percent of the population of its jurisdiction. As mentioned earlier, OC San represents 2.6 million people in central and northwest Orange County. Our vast and diverse population would most likely result in an untenable cost to provide translation services in an unknown number of languages. Furthermore, the bill does not address how local public agencies would know which languages are spoken by 5 percent of the population, who do not also speak English. OC San strives to accommodate any residents that have any language or accessibility barriers in order to provide them with quality customer services. However, mandating that local public agencies keep an unknown number of translators on staff for all public meetings, including Board Meetings and various Committee Meetings, is unreasonable.

For these reasons, the Orange County Sanitation District is opposed to AB 339. 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

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