COUNTY OF TULARE

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ALLEN R. ISHIDA
Chairman of the Board

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Assembly Environmental Safety & Toxic Materials Committee
1020 N Street, Room 171
Sacramento, California 95814

To Whom It May Concern:

When considering how to fund solutions for drinking water challenges for disadvantaged communities it is important to consider many factors. Current data must be analyzed, contaminant sources must be evaluated, and current programs must be scrutinized. Many factors have contributed to the state of drinking water systems in the State. There is no silver bullet to address the situation and any action will have a ripple effect on other areas.

The UC Davis Nitrate Study has many merits; however, it is critical to note that the project funding was not sufficient to allow for in-depth research to source nitrates and make sound scientific findings to support regulatory action. The study relied on data that spanned 20 years and does not accurately reflect current trends and impacts. The study also used simplified mass balance equations in lieu of analyzing chemistry at a particular well to determine where nitrates were originating and how much was actually going into groundwater.

The study's conclusions are cause for concern as they will directly and negatively impact Tulare County. There should be substantive analysis and comprehensive data to support recommendations for any regulatory action. The facts are that nitrates present in groundwater will remain at concentrations that threaten public health for many decades into the future, even if current human impacts ceased. Isolating current fertilizer use as the culprit and targeting the agricultural industry to fund solutions is a fallacy.

Three of the top four contaminants found in drinking water are naturally occurring. The remaining contaminants are due to historical use and are a legacy issue. Arsenic, radioactive constituents and nitrate (to an extent) are found naturally in many aquifers. Nitrates and per chlorates are a legacy from past use. Taxing fertilizer and regulating its use will not affect these toxins. There is a need to provide funding for communities that face problems with these types of contaminants. Encouraging regionalization is a good start for addressing naturally occurring as well as legacy pollutants. There is a distinct need to streamline the funding systems that exist and to include language that promotes and incentivizes regional solutions.

The California Department of Public Health, California Department of Water Resources, and the State Water Resources Control Board have funding available to finance drinking water projects for disadvantaged communities. These agencies have failed to max out their annual allocated funding to finance such projects. It is essential that these agencies streamline their administrative processes and collaborate with each other in order to maximize funding for communities prior to new programs being established. It is impossible to know the amount of additional funding necessary without the existing programs operating at full capacity.

Please carefully consider the impacts of regulatory action. More precise research must be completed and funding streamlining must be established prior to developing an expensive publicly funded program.

Sincerely,

Allen Ishida
Chairman, Tulare County Board of Supervisors