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April 2, 2019

The Honorable Bill Quirk, Chair
Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee
1020 N. Street, Room 171
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Orange County Sanitation District Support of AB 1672 (Bloom)

Dear Assemblymember Quirk:

The Orange County Sanitation District (Sanitation District, OCSD) is pleased to support Assembly Bill (AB) 1672 (Bloom). The Sanitation District provides wastewater collection, treatment, and recycling for approximately 2.6 million people in central and northwest Orange County, CA.

AB 1672 would establish labeling requirements and performance standards for wet wipes so that Californians will know whether a product can be discarded safely by their plumbing. In recent years, wet wipes have gained popularity as they're designed for a variety of daily household purposes, and some are advertised as "flushable," which encourages residents to dispose of wipes products generally by their toilet instead of in the trashcan. Because many wet wipes are not compatible with sewer systems and infrastructure, flushing these products can result in them getting caught in pipes or accumulating with fats, oils, and grease. This can cause them to become large obstructions, which in turn creates a costly backup of giant rags which get stuck in pump systems and motors and damage expensive agency equipment.

In 2011, OCSD conducted nearly 1,000 preventative or corrective de-ragging maintenance calls on 10 of our 15 regional pump stations. Total labor cost was over \$300,000. Today, we continue to expend labor to avoid clogging that could lead to a sewer spill. Now our crews routinely remove non-dispersibles from our three hardest-hit stations every Monday and Thursday. On August 13, 2012, the equivalent of 40 large trash bags of non-dispersible materials overburdened our new headworks and completely plugged three new washer compactors. It took six to eight hours and up to 10 plant employees to restore normal operations.

Our operations and maintenance costs are going up. Spending more public agency money to reengineer the problem away by installing new machinery is not a viable solution and can raise long-term operating costs. For example, installing grinders can help prevent clogging; but the remaining residue may exacerbate a settling problem in force mains or the treatment plant. These challenges are being experienced by agencies around the state and AB 1672 would ensure wet wipes packaging clearly communicates whether the product can safely be discarded through a toilet or will not break apart like toilet paper



Our Mission: To protect public health and the environment by providing effective wastewater collection, treatment, and recycling



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and should not be flushed.

For these reasons, the Orange County Sanitation District is pleased to support AB 1672, and we respectfully request your support when the bill is heard before you on April 9, 2019.

Sincerely,

David John Shawver
Board Chairman

cc: Assembly member Richard Bloom
Members, Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee
Jessica Gauger, California Association of Sanitation Agencies
Orange County Legislative Delegation
Paige Brokaw, Consultant, Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Material Committee