March 23, 2016

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Chair, Senate Environmental Committee
State Capitol, Room 4035
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 970 (Leyva) SUPPORT as amended

Dear Chair Wieckowski:

The California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) is pleased to support SB 970 (Leyva) as amended. For 60 years, CASA has been the leading voice for public wastewater agencies on regulatory, legislative and legal issues. We are an association of local agencies, engaged in advancing the recycling of wastewater into usable water, generation of renewable energy, and other valuable resources. Many of CASA’s members are actively engaged in co-digestion of food waste at existing wastewater facilities, though many more would be interested in participating in the regional projects contemplated by SB 970.

The regional food waste diversion programs in SB 970 will help enable the state achieve its ambitious organics diversion, greenhouse gas, and short-lived climate pollutant goals. Increasingly, wastewater treatment plants are looking to haul in organic waste streams such as food waste to increase their biogas production, thereby increasing potential energy output and diverting organic waste streams that might otherwise be landfilled. This biogas can then be converted to renewable electricity or thermal energy, pumped directly into natural gas pipelines, or converted to one of the lowest carbon intensity transportation fuels in existence.

SB 970 creates a separate grant program within CalRecycle to help regions throughout California work collaboratively with wastewater treatment agencies to divert food waste to a centralized location for digestion, energy production and eventual composting. A recent survey demonstrated that wastewater agencies using existing digestion capacity can handle 75% or more of the food waste that needs to be diverted from landfills to meet statewide goals. A regional program that partners with the local waste haulers, and utilizes existing facilities and digestion capacity, represents an efficient and cost-effective option for achieving those goals. Cooperative regional programs will also ensure the state maximizes resource recovery and reuse by encouraging energy and transportation fuel production with the diverted waste streams that can provide additional important local environmental benefits.

For these reasons, CASA is pleased to support SB 970.

Sincerely,

Adam D. Link
Director of Government Affairs

cc: Senator Connie Leyva
Senator Ted Gaines, Vice Chair, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
Members, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
Joanne Roy, Consultant Senate, Environmental Quality Committee
Morgan Branch, Republican Consultant, Senate Environmental Quality Committee