May 19, 2017

The Honorable Mark Stone
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 3146
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1129 (Stone): Oppose, Unless Amended

Dear Assembly Member Stone:

The California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) regretfully has taken an “oppose, unless amended” position on AB 1129, which makes statutory changes to the California Coastal Act relating to the construction of coastal shoreline protection devices including seawalls, revetments, breakwaters, groins, harbor channels, cliff retaining walls and other construction that alters natural shorelines processes. CASA is an association of local public agencies that provide wastewater treatment, water recycling, biosolids management, and renewable energy services to millions of Californians. Through these efforts our member agencies ensure public and environmental health in the communities they serve.

Many California wastewater agencies discharge into the Pacific Ocean and have large-scale treatment and ancillary facilities located within the coastal zone. These include ocean outfalls and supporting structures that are essential to the wastewater treatment and discharge process. By nature of being located on coastal property, these agencies build and maintain coastal protection structures like seawalls, breakwaters, and cliff retaining walls. These critical structures are necessary to ensure public health and safety, and are monitored, maintained, and replaced routinely. Agencies are obligated under their NPDES permit requirements to protect and maintain their publicly owned infrastructure, and hindering their ability to effectively protect that infrastructure could expose the public to unnecessary health and safety risks.

AB 1129 requires any construction that alters natural shorelines to only be permitted for existing structures and defines “existing structures” as those in existence as of January 1, 1977. The bill does not require the Commission to approve a permit for coastal protection structures constructed after January 1, 1977. CASA is concerned that these provisions create significant uncertainty relative to local infrastructure planning and could jeopardize agencies’ ability to provide essential public services. This bill severely limits the options available to local governments in protecting our vital infrastructure and could result in tremendous costs to local agencies and ratepayers.

For these reasons, CASA must respectfully oppose AB 1129. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Jessica Gauger
Manager of Legislative Affairs