April 10, 2018

Senator Bob Wieckowski, Chair
Senate Environmental Quality Committee
State Capitol, Room 2205
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 1263 (Portantino) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Wieckowski:

The California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) has taken a “Support” position on SB 1263 (Portantino), which directs the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) to develop, adopt and implement a Statewide Microplastics Strategy. The goal of the Microplastics Strategy is to increase the understanding of the scale and risks of microplastic materials on the marine environment, and identify potential solutions for dealing with microplastic pollution. CASA is an association of California wastewater agencies engaged in advancing the recycling of wastewater into usable water, maximizing beneficial use of biosolids, generating renewable energy, and producing other valuable resources.

Microfiber and microplastic pollution has recently been the subject of great public interest, in particular as it relates to studies reporting that microfibers and microplastics have been detected in almost all sources of water. Various research efforts relating to microplastic (and microfiber) pollution have been initiated in recent years, including some being done in conjunction with the wastewater community. Given the widespread nature and scope of the problem, wastewater agencies and other stakeholders are evaluating possible future approaches and solutions for dealing with microplastic pollution.

SB 1263 would allow the OPC to adopt and implement a Microplastics Strategy that includes the development of standardized methods for sampling, detecting, and characterizing microplastics; the characterization of ambient concentrations of microplastics; an investigation into the sources and relative importance of pathways; the development of a risk assessment framework for microplastics; research on approaches for reducing the introduction of microplastics into the marine environment from all pathways; an evaluation of source reduction options; and recommendations for additional research or policy changes that may be needed. The Statewide Microplastics Strategy would be required to be completed by December 31, 2024, with a report of the findings to be given to the Legislature by December 31, 2025.

Microplastics are ubiquitous in our environment, and yet there is insufficient data on standardized sampling methods, sources and pathways to move forward with a broad solution to the problem. The development of a comprehensive Microplastics Strategy as contemplated in SB 1263 is needed to adequately characterize the problem, measure the risks, identify the sources, and ultimately recommend policy changes to address the issue. For these reasons CASA is pleased to support SB 1263. We appreciate the efforts of Senator Portantino to look at the issue of microplastic pollution in a comprehensive and deliberate fashion.

Sincerely,

Jessica Gauger
Manager of Legislative Affairs