City of Santa Rosa
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March 24, 2025

The Honorable Catherine Blakespear
Chair, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 7720
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 454 (McNerney): State Water Resources Control Board: PFAS Mitigation Program– SUPPORT

Dear Chair Blakespear:

On behalf of the City of Santa Rosa, I am writing to express our strong support for SB 454, which would establish a statewide per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) Mitigation Fund intended to help local water agencies, including cities, leverage funding to pay for the cleanup of man-made PFAS contamination in drinking water and wastewater. This funding tool would assist water and wastewater agencies by paying for costs that would otherwise be passed onto local ratepayers through water and wastewater rates.

The City of Santa Rosa Water Department (Santa Rosa Water) delivers approximately six billion gallons of drinking water, each year, to over 55,000 customer accounts, and maintains the sanitary sewer system for over 49,000 customer accounts in Santa Rosa, serving a population of approximately 178,000 residents. Additionally, Santa Rosa Water operates the Santa Rosa Regional Water Reuse System, which serves approximately 230,000 residents in Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Sebastopol, and unincorporated portions of Sonoma County. The hub of the Water Reuse System is the Laguna Treatment Plant, which cleans and recycles approximately 7 billion gallons of wastewater each year from homes, businesses, and industry in the region. During dry to normal years nearly 100% of our tertiary recycled water is beneficially reused for agricultural and urban irrigation, as well as to recharge the Geysers geothermal steam fields to produce clean and renewable energy.

As a public water and wastewater system, Santa Rosa Water is responsible for delivering safe, clean, and affordable drinking water that meets all state and federal drinking water standards and protecting our local waterways and environment through adherence to the Clean Water Act. Ensuring compliance with these stringent standards can have significant financial impacts on public water and wastewater agencies and their ratepayers, which ultimately impacts the affordability of water.

PFAS, characterized as "forever chemicals" due to their stability in the environment and resistance to breaking down, are a large group of man-made chemicals that have been used extensively since the 1940s and can today be found in our food system, drinking water supplies, and air. Despite legislative efforts, PFAS are still manufactured, distributed, and used globally and continue to passively contaminate water supplies and wastewater systems. Local water agencies are not the source of these chemicals or responsible for the development of the products that introduced PFAS into the water supply and wastewater systems, yet they are responsible for the costs of monitoring for their presence, treating the water, and disposing of the contamination.

CITY COUNCIL
100 Santa Rosa Avenue, Room10
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
Phone: 707-543-3010 Fax: 707-543-3030

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In April 2024, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced new national, legally enforceable maximum contaminant levels (MCL) of 4.0 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and PFOS as individual contaminants and a standard of 10 ppt for three other chemicals – PFNA, PFHxs, and HFPO-DA (commonly referred to as GenXChemicals). The EPA estimates that the nationwide cost for public water agencies to comply with the proposed PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulations (NPDWR) will be between $772 million and $1.2 billion annually. The specific cost for California's public water agencies to comply with the NPDWRs is currently unknown.

This year, the State Water Resources Control Board is expected to initiate a formal rulemaking process to set a drinking water standard for PFAS. Existing law requires a contaminant's MCL to be established at a level as close to its Public Health Goal as is technologically and economically feasible. Existing law also requires state drinking water standards to be at least as stringent as federal standards set by the EPA. With California's MCL anticipated to be at least as protective as the federal MCL, the costs associated with treating California's water supplies will be significant.

SB 454 would propose the development of the PFAS Mitigation Fund to leverage current and future state, federal, and private funding sources to dedicate funding for the State Water Resources Control Board to support local water agencies in addressing the critically important infrastructure costs to treat for PFAS and help ensure safe drinking water supplies for vulnerable communities.

For the reasons above, the City of Santa Rosa strongly supports SB 454 and respectfully requests your "AYE" vote when the bill is heard in the Senate Environmental Quality Committee. Santa Rosa is a member of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), which represents over 460 public water agencies that deliver approximately 90 percent of the water used in California. As a member agency, we fully support the comments and recommendations they have provided you.

Thank you for your attention on this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Peter Martin, Deputy Director of Water Resources at 707-543-4294 or via email at PMartin@srcity.org.

Sincerely,

Mark Stapp
Mayor

Thank you for your support!
Mark

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