



COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Established in 1918 as a public agency

GENERAL MANAGER
Jim Barrett

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Robert Cheng

CLERK OF THE BOARD
Sylvia Bermudez

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Dan Charlton

April 10th, 2025

The Honorable Catherine Blakespear
Chair, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1020 O Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 466 – Co-Sponsor

Dear Senator Blakespear:

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), which serves approximately 270,000 residents in its 1,000 square mile service area, ranging from the San Geronio Pass to the Salton Sea, is pleased to co-sponsor SB 466 (Caballero). This bill provides a period of relief from the threat of litigation while implementing a state-approved compliance plan to reduce Hexavalent Chromium (“Chromium-6”) in drinking water to meet the new maximum contaminate level (MCL) of 10 parts per billion (ppb), which took effect this year.

This bill is necessary because the new Chromium-6 regulations are unlike previous regulatory requirements. Federal environmental regulations and previous state regulations typically allow five years to comply with a new MCL. The new Chromium-6 regulations, however, allow large water districts only two years to comply. CVWD is expected to spend over \$500 million to design, seek approvals, drill new domestic water wells, construct pipelines and build multiple water treatment facilities to meet the new Chromium-6 MCL. As required by the regulation, CVWD will submit a compliance plan to the State Water Board for approval recognizing that it is physically impossible to construct all the necessary facilities to comply with the new Chromium-6 MCL in two years.

The other unusual requirement of the new Chromium-6 regulations is that public notices must be sent to every customer informing them that their drinking water exceeds the MCL for Chromium-6 as soon as the agencies know it will violate the MCL *in the future*. Despite having

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two years to comply with the new regulation, CVWD will be required to send out the notices this year.

The final reason this bill is needed is that Chromium-6 was the constituent made infamous in the *Erin Brockovich* movie. This historical context contributes to heightened public sensitivity, which, in turn, amplifies the legal and reputational risks water agencies face. Water agencies are understandably concerned that the public notices they are required to send before they have time to comply with the MCL will incite litigation that is unrelated to protecting public health.

It is equally important to point out what SB 466 does not do. It does not protect anyone responsible for Chromium-6 contamination. This bill only gives a limited period of relief to water agencies while implementing complex solutions to comply with the new Chromium-6 MCL. SB 466 also does not take away anyone's legal claims; it only provides a temporary window of protection to water agencies that bear no responsibility for the presence of Chromium-6 in their drinking water supply.

For these reasons, CVWD respectfully requests your support for SB 466.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. M. Barrett", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

J. M. Barrett
General Manager