



June 19, 2023

The Honorable Ben Allen
Chair, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 1597 (Alvarez) – SUPPORT
As Amended May 18, 2023**

Dear Senator Allen:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and the League of California Cities (Cal Cities), we support Assembly Bill 1597 (Alvarez), regarding cross-border water pollution.

Assembly Bill 1597 seeks to address cross-border water pollution in the New River and Tijuana River. Funds are to be made available to the North American Development Bank for projects that are consistent with the New River Water Quality, Public Health, and River Parkway Development Program or that provide water quality improvements for the Tijuana River. Considering that some of the most effective projects will be located in a foreign country, AB 1597 appropriately provides that funds can only be used by entities that have consented, or are already subject, to jurisdiction of California's courts.

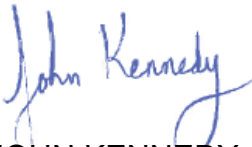
The New River is the most polluted river in the United States and poses significant acute and long-term health risks for nearby populations, including the City of Calexico. The New River is contaminated by raw sewage, pathogens, trash, and numerous other pollutants that result from industrial activities across the border in Mexicali, Baja California. Similarly, the Tijuana River is often contaminated by raw sewage resulting from the failure or overflow of sewage systems in Mexico. These problems present chronic and persistent health risks for Californians and the environment. While both the United States and Mexico have historically provided funding for cross-border pollution prevention projects, funding is always in short supply. As such, even a modest investment in state resources in cross-border pollution prevention projects could result in substantial state savings in avoided health impacts, mitigation measures, and emergency response.

The Honorable Ben Allen
Assembly Bill 1597
June 19, 2023
Page 2

Even more importantly, this bill will help protect the health and safety of hundreds of thousands of Californians who live, work, and recreate in the border region.

For these reasons, we respectfully request your “Aye” vote when this measure is heard before your committee. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at jkennedy@rcrcnet.org, cfreeman@counties.org, or dconklin@calcities.org.

Sincerely,



JOHN KENNEDY
Policy Advocate
RCRC



CATHERINE FREEMAN
Legislative Advocate
CSAC



DAMON CONKLIN
Legislative Representative
CalCities

cc: The Honorable David Alvarez, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Tasha Boerner, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Eduardo Garcia, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Christopher Ward, Member, California State Assembly
The Honorable Thomas Umberg, Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
Members of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
Brynn Cook, Consultant, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
Margie Estrada, Chief Counsel, Senate Judiciary Committee
Scott Seekatz, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus