



June 11, 2024

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 June 5, 2024**

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 federal courts in California.

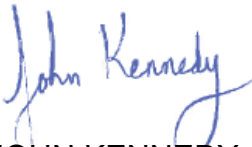
The New River is the most polluted river in the United States and poses significant acute and long-term health risks for nearby populations, including the City of Calexico. The New River is contaminated by raw sewage, pathogens, trash, and numerous other pollutants that result from industrial activities 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.

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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](mailto:jkennedy@rcrcnet.org), [cfreeman@counties.org](mailto:cfreeman@counties.org), or [msparkskranz@calcities.org](mailto:msparkskranz@calcities.org).

Sincerely,



JOHN KENNEDY  
Policy Advocate  
RCRC



CATHERINE FREEMAN  
Legislative Advocate  
CSAC



MELISSA SPARKS-KRANZ  
Legislative Representative  
Cal Cities

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 Brian Jones, Member, California State Senate  
The Honorable Catherine Blakespear, Member, California State Senate  
The Honorable Steve Padilla, Member, California State Senate  
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  
Scott Seekatz, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus