



COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Established in 1918 as a public agency

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February 6, 2020

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Representative, California 2nd Congressional District
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

via: <https://huffman.house.gov/future-drought-act/comments>

Re: Comment Letter – FUTURE Drought Resiliency Act of 2020

Dear Congressman Huffman:

Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) is supportive of the *FUTURE Drought Resiliency Act of 2020*. CVWD was formed in 1918 to protect and conserve local water sources in the southern California desert region. Since then, the District has grown into a multifaceted agency that delivers irrigation and domestic (drinking) water, collects and recycles wastewater, provides regional storm water protection, replenishes the groundwater basin and promotes water conservation. Below are a few comments and concerns that CVWD has regarding the draft legislation.

Section 101

CVWD recycles wastewater and delivers that recycled water to many of the Coachella Valley's famed golf courses, as well as other large landscape areas. This practice supports sustainability of the Coachella Valley's aquifer, which supplies all the drinking water for CVWD customers and the hundreds of thousands of annual tourists who flock to the area. In order to deliver more recycled water for irrigation, upgrades to our existing facilities are required, and Title XVI funds would be a welcome funding source. Due to statutory restrictions in the state of California, use of ratepayer funds is extremely limited.

Section 108

CVWD is extremely active in expanding domestic water and wastewater services to the disadvantaged communities in the eastern Coachella Valley. Through a planning grant provided by the state of California, CVWD has completed two technical memos outlining a master consolidation plan for 80 small water systems, many of which are served by wells that consistently fail to meet primary or secondary Safe Drinking Water Act standards. The East Coachella Valley Water Supply Project will bring critical services to rural communities, where many farm workers live who labor in the fields CVWD serves with irrigation water from the Colorado River. CVWD applauds the effort to bring the issue of safe and

affordable drinking water to the national spotlight, and show that there are other communities outside of Flint, Michigan that do not have access to this basic human necessity.

However, as currently drafted, there is significant lack of clarity in the legislation with regard to administration of the planned program and appropriated funds. CVWD has been called to testify before the California State Water Resources Control Board as well as a joint hearing before the California State Assembly on the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water topic and would be pleased to provide further technical expertise in this area.

CVWD strongly recommends language be added to Section 108 to clarify that public water systems, such as CVWD, are eligible for funding if the money will be used for assisting the "Eligible Communities" as defined in Section 108(b).

Section 201

CVWD strongly supports amending the federal tax code so that water conservation rebates provided by a water supplier are no longer considered income.

In 2015, CVWD began to require rebate customers to submit Form W-9s and started to issue Form 1099s. Between 2015-2019 CVWD issued \$18.6 million in conservation rebates for items like low-flow toilets, landscape conversions and smart irrigation controllers. Each rebate check issued by CVWD is considered income under the federal internal revenue code, and therefore CVWD has the duty to issue forms to each rebate recipient. Not only is this an administrative burden for CVWD, but it is a disincentive to many homeowners who consider participating in the programs.

In closing, CVWD appreciates the opportunity to review and to provide the above input on the draft *FUTURE Drought Resiliency Act of 2020*. If you have questions regarding the comments, please contact the District's Government Affairs Specialist, Kristen Johnson, at (760) 398-2661 ext. 3564 or kjohnson@cvwd.org.

Sincerely,



J.M. Barrett
General Manager

cc: The Honorable Raul Ruiz, M.D., Representative, California 36th Congressional District
The Honorable Diane Feinstein
The Honorable Kamala Harris