**AB 2099 Sample Support Letter**

Assemblymember Mark Stone (D-Monterey Bay) has introduced AB 2099, *Safe Drinking Water Benefit for Food Insecure Families*, a bill that intends to leverage the State’s Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system to deliver interim, supplemental drinking water benefits to low-income Californians with inadequate access to safe drinking water.

We encourage organizations and individuals to use this sample letter or write their own letter in support of AB 2099.

**Please submit your support letter as soon as possible!**

**Organizations:**

* **Please email letters on your organization’s letterhead to****Arianna.Smith@asm.ca.gov****,** **hector@cfpa.net****, and** **tracey@cfpa.net**

**Individuals:**

* **Please email letters to** **hector@cfpa.net** **or fax to 213.482.8203**

**[Date]**

The Honorable Mark Stone

State Capitol, Room 5155
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0029

**RE: Support for AB 2099- Safe Drinking Water Relief**

Dear Assemblymember Stone,

**[I am/Name of your organization is]** writing to support AB 2099 (Stone), as amended on May 27, 2016. AB 2099 aims to utilize the State’s Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system to deliver interim, supplemental drinking water benefits to low-income Californians facing inadequate access to safe drinking water.

Too many Californians live with unsafe drinking water due to contamination from nitrates, arsenic and other toxins. As the drought persists, thousands of domestic wells have gone dry, affecting tens of thousands of people.  Many disadvantaged communities on small rural water systems face chronic water quality problems. While the State focuses on long-term infrastructure solutions, short-term solutions must be responsive and efficient for those in need. Families in poverty cannot afford to wait for long-term solutions to the state’s water crisis.

Despite efforts to address California’s water issues, many residents still face daunting challenges.  The drought continues to exacerbate water quality issues for disadvantaged communities who disproportionately bear the health and financial impacts of unsafe drinking water. This issue affects households across the state, and is felt most acutely in the Central Coast, Central Valley and Sierra Foothills, where residents face persistent water problems and economic hardship.

**AB 2099** offers an innovative and effective way that intends to activate the state's EBT system to deliver benefits to purchase safe drinking water when local supplies are inadequate.

**[I /We]** support AB 2099 because **[choose one or more of the following reasons or add your own]**

**Water is a human right that no one should go without.** In 2012, California became the first state in the nation to legally recognize the human right to water. Assembly Bill 685, also known as the Human Right to Water Bill, affirms Californian’s commitment to ensuring affordable, accessible, acceptable, and safe water sufficient to protect the health and wellbeing of all its residents.

**Families across the state need access to safe drinking water.** An analysis of California health data suggested that about 250,000 Californians sometimes go without water due to insufficient supply or are exposed to contaminated water, and that many of these residents reside in rural, economically disadvantaged communities.[[1]](#footnote-1) [[2]](#footnote-2)

**Families should not be spending scarce resources to pay for clean water.** Californians should not be forced to choose between drinking contaminated water and expending scarce household resources to pay for clean water. In the Central Valley, some households devote approximately 20 percent of their annual median income of $14,000 to pay for water and sanitation services and to purchase bottled water.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**State funds intended to provide emergency drinking water exist, but do not always reach those in need.** Governor Brown and the Legislature have dedicated funding streams to provide replacement drinking water, but these programs are insufficient.  Many residents served by failing small water systems and wells live without safe water for years- we should ensure that existing funds are targeted to those with the highest level of need.

**The State’s Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system is a proven and effective system to deliver benefits to households**. Research has shown that the use of EBT cards has many advantages for delivering public benefits. For recipients, EBT offers greater convenience, improved security, and reduced stigmatization. For state governments, EBT provides cost and time savings, operational efficiencies, and promotes accountability while stimulating local economies.

**[If you prefer, insert your own reasons here.]**

We thank you for authoring AB 2099 and for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

**[Your name and title]**

**[Your organization, if applicable]**

cc. Tracey Patterson, California Food Policy Advocates (sponsor)

  Hector Gutierrez, California Food Policy Advocates (sponsor)

1. Wilber, M. 2003. Californians without Safe Water. Sacramento: California Department of Water Resources, Statewide Planning [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Moore, E., and E. Matalon. 2011.  Human Costs of Nitrate-Contaminated Drinking Water in the San Joaquin Valley. Oakland, CA: Pacific Institute [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Salceda. A, Saied, K. and Zulow, C. 2013.  The Human Right to Water Bill in California.  See UN Report, supra note 3, at ¶ 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)