



COUNTY OF SAN BENITO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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May 10, 2022

Assemblymember Chris R. Holden
Chair, Assembly Committee on Appropriations
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 1953 (Maienschein): Drinking Water: Accessible Water Bottle Refill Stations
As amended March 29, 2022 – OPPOSE**

Dear Assembly Member Holden,

On behalf of the San Benito County Board of Supervisors, I write in respectful opposition of AB 1953 by Assembly Member Brian Maienschein. This bill would require, by January 1, 2025, the owner or operator of a transit hub, local park, public building, publicly owned building, shopping mall, or municipal golf course (that has a water infrastructure source), to install and maintain at least one, accessible water bottle refill station.

AB 1953 would place an enormous burden on all public entities. The requirement that all public buildings install an accessible water bottle refill station where water is available will be enormously costly and challenging. As amended on March 29, this includes buildings without public access and may include areas where employees visit infrequently (say a lift or water pumping station), historic buildings, main office buildings, substations, limited-use facilities, and many more.

A significant discussion in the policy committee focused on lead in plumbing in the 7,500 public water systems in California. However, this bill would not change any portion of that large and complex issue. The bill includes no funding, nor does it designate a funding source for the cost of installation and maintenance of these refill stations. Local agencies currently installing such systems are spending about \$8,000 per renovation. It is important to note that this cost does not include the fact that every drinking fountain by law requires a sewer connection, even if no sewer utility currently exists. The connection fees for establishing a sewer connection can run in the tens of thousands of dollars. Furthermore, in highly visible locations, refill stations must be vandal-proof, again adding significant cost.

This bill also contemplates that every city, county, special district and required entity purchase, design, retrofit, and install a refill station within 24 months (should the bill pass on or before August 31, 2022 and become effective January 1, 2025). We have concerns this is an unattainable goal given the costs of inflation facing local agencies, not to mention supply chain issues in recent years and the cost of planning, design and retrofit of all buildings within the state.

We would like to reiterate our commitment to reducing plastics. There are many ways to achieve these goals by working together to find innovative and cost-effective solutions, respecting the funding streams and real-world challenges our state's public agencies face.

For these reasons detailed above, San Benito County must respectfully oppose AB 1953. If you have any questions or concerns regarding our position, we ask that you reach out to our County Advocate, Michelle Rubalcava from Nielsen Merksamer Parrinnello Gross & Leoni, LLP at mrubalcava@nmgovlaw.com or (916) 446-6752.

Respectfully,

Bea Gonzales
Chair of the Board of Supervisors
Board of Supervisor, 5th District
San Benito County

CC: The Honorable Brian Maienschein
Members, Assembly Committee on Appropriations