



COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
WITH FAMILY FARMERS

April 15, 2019

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia
State Capitol, Room 4140
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 217 -- SUPPORT

Dear Assemblyman Garcia:

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) is a statewide organization that represents both farmers and non-farm Californians who support sustainable food and farming policies. CAFF is pleased to support your AB 217, as amended on March 28, which establishes the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund to improve the quality and availability of drinking water in many rural and low-income areas of the state.

AB 217 is driven by the state's policy that establishes a human right to clean, safe and affordable drinking water. The bill creates a set of fees tied to some of the main sources of rural drinking water contamination. Conventional agricultural practices, with their heavy dependence on synthetic fertilizers and confined animal operations, are a significant contributor to the presence of nitrates in groundwater, which has contaminated much of the drinking water in farm areas of the state. But AB 217 also recognizes that this statewide problem deserves a statewide response, thus we believe the small fee on all public water system connections is appropriate.

The March 28 amendments include an exemption from the fertilizer fee for compost, which CAFF strongly supports and appreciates. Compost contains very low levels of nitrogen compared to synthetic fertilizers, and compost helps to bind nitrogen to the soil so that it is available for long-term plant uptake and does not migrate to groundwater. Additionally, the state has numerous laws and policies that promote the increased production and use of compost as a means of converting methane-producing green waste into climate-friendly soil nutrients. To impose the fertilizer fee on compost would undermine the state's efforts to address climate change and discourage compost use, which actually contributes to the solution the bill seeks. For all these reasons, CAFF is happy to support AB 217 and urges its passage and enactment.

Sincerely,

David Runsten
Policy Director