March 29, 2021

The Honorable Richard Bloom
State Capitol Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 818 (Bloom) Solid waste: premoistened nonwoven disposable wipes. Notice of Support. (As introduced 2/1/21)

Dear Assembly Member Bloom:

The Los Angeles County Division of the League of California Cities (Division), representing 86 cities in the county, supports your AB 818 (Bloom), which establishes standardized labeling for single-use wet wipes to provide clear and consistent consumer information about what products are not safe to flush.

The widespread availability of both flushable and non-flushable wipes and lack of clear and consistent labeling leads to consumer confusion about how to properly dispose of these products. Consumers frequently use the toilet to dispose of wipes used for babies, cosmetics, surface cleaning, and disinfecting, even when they are the cause of costly sewer clogs.

Since Governor Newsom’s Stay-At-Home order, Executive Order N-33-20, enacted on March 19, 2020, a shortage of toilet paper has resulted in people turning to baby wipes, and flushing them. As a result, local officials reported a large influx of non-flushable debris in sewer systems, causing costly and dangerous maintenance. For over a decade, wipes have been one of the leading causes of residential and public sewer systems clogs, spills and equipment problems, costing California wastewater operators at least $50 million a year. These clogs also result in environmental damages when sewers overflow and when wipes shed plastic microfibers, causing microplastic particles in wastewater effluent. Following the onset of the statewide Stay-At-Home order, agencies that have never experienced wipes-relate sewer overflows have now reported their first wipes related clogs and sewer spills. Several agencies have reported total equipment failures when their pump systems are overwhelmed with wipes, costing them $60K per pump. Agencies are reporting increases in maintenance intervals to unclog heavy equipment like pumps and lift stations, and to clear sewer lines with high powered jets. The problems were so pronounced that on March 17, 2020, the State Water Resources Board issued a public advisory to stop flushing wipes.

To solve these problems, AB 818 would require certain single use wet wipes to be clearly labeled with “DO NOT FLUSH” and a related symbol. AB 818 would also establish the California Consumer Education and Outreach Program to ensure the
public understands they should not flush wipes and requires manufacturers to participate in a
collection study, conducted in collaboration with wastewater agencies, to gain an understanding of
consumer behavior on premoistened nonwoven disposable wipes.

For the many reasons described above, the Los Angeles County Division supports AB 818 (Bloom).

Blanca Pacheco
President
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