OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

August 9, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader Jeffries:

We write to request your urgent assistance to secure federal funding in a supplemental appropriations measure and the Administration's FY 2025 budget to repair the South Bay International Treatment Plant (ITP) in San Diego, California, which is owned and administered by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC). As a result of needed upgrades and repairs to the ITP, untreated wastewater is polluting the beaches of Southern California, resulting in months of beach closures and an ongoing environmental and public health crisis. We need our federal partners to address this federal responsibility.

The ITP is in very poor condition and in non-compliance with its Clean Water Act discharge permit, impacting the United States Environmental Protection Agency and IBWC's ability to fulfill their commitments under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement Implementation Act. The ITP also requires upgrades to expand its capacity to treat increased amounts of wastewater. We urge you to build federal funding into a supplemental appropriations bill and your FY 2025 budget to address the much needed repairs and plant expansion. Without this funding, sewage will continue to flow untreated, contaminating the beaches of Southern California.

Over the last year, Southern California communities have experienced unprecedented beach closures. Imperial Beach was closed 249 days last year due to untreated sewage in the water, and has been closed for much of this year. Silver Strand has been closed for 122 days, and closures have extended north to Coronado, where beaches have been closed due to sewage for 51 days this year.

Transboundary pollution is not a new issue, but the heavy rains California experienced earlier this year strained the ITP's already aging infrastructure. Southern California communities urgently need federal action to address this environmental and public health crisis; they cannot afford further delays in funding and implementation.

In 2020, Congress appropriated $300 million to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the U.S.-México-Canada Agreement implementing legislation to expand the ITP's treatment capacity and other infrastructure projects. We ask that you implore EPA and IBWC to utilize this existing funding immediately to complete the repairs and deferred maintenance that are necessary to proceed with the plant's expansion. In addition, we ask that you dedicate funding in a supplemental appropriations bill and your FY 2025 budget to complete construction of the expansion of the ITP so that it has the capacity to treat all wastewater before it enters the Tijuana River. This funding is critically important to stop the ongoing harmful discharges into the marine environment that are impacting ecosystems, species, and public health in coastal communities across San Diego County.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to secure the needed funding to address this acute problem affecting Californians.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom
Governor of California

Toni G. Atkins
Senate President pro Tempore

Robert Rivas
Speaker of the Assembly