OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

OCT 08 2023

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 249 without my signature.

This bill would require community water systems serving schoolsites with buildings constructed before January 1, 2010, to test for lead at each of those schoolsites' potable water system outlets. It also establishes notification and remediation requirements for local educational agencies if testing results show certain lead levels for any outlet and requires the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to collect, track, and publicly post certain compliance data, and enforce this bill's provisions.

Minimizing childhood exposure to lead in drinking water is a critical issue. While I support the author's commitment to ensure safe drinking water in schools, this bill contains several problematic provisions and cannot be implemented as drafted. The bill constitutes an entirely new enforcement role for the State Water Board, requires the creation of a costly database for tracking compliance and enforcement, and contains an infeasible implementation timeline.

Although some funding was included in the 2023 budget for testing and remediation, the bill lacks key provisions for efficiently administering the funding and is inadequate to cover the full cost of implementation. Additionally, this bill creates a reimbursable state mandate with ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund costs that could range into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

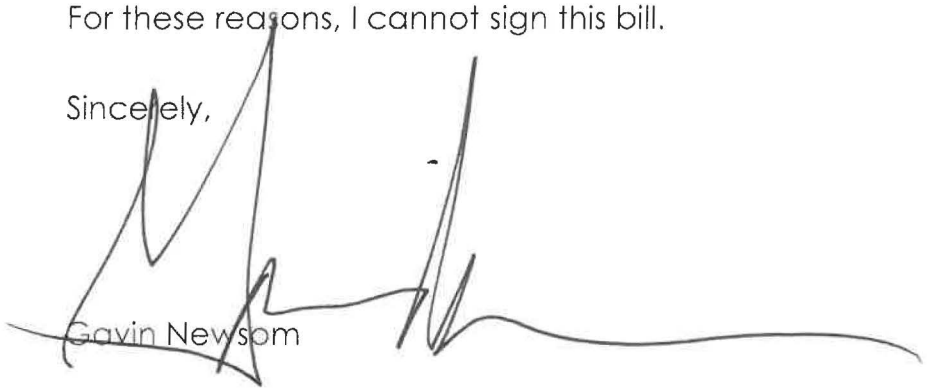
In partnership with the Legislature, we enacted a budget that closed a shortfall of more than $30 billion through balanced solutions that avoided deep program cuts and protected education, health care, climate, public safety, and social

service programs that are relied on by millions of Californians. This year, however, the Legislature sent me bills outside of this budget process that, if all enacted, would add nearly $19 billion of unaccounted costs in the budget, of which $11 billion would be ongoing.

With our state facing continuing economic risk and revenue uncertainty, it is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications, such as this measure.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom