\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair

Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee Assembly Budget Committee

State Capitol, Room 5019 State Capitol, Room 6026

Sacramento, CA 95814 Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Inclusion of IRWM Funding in Drought Relief and Resiliency Package**

Dear Senator Skinner and Assemblymember Ting:

The <insert name of agency or organization> **strongly supports the inclusion of $510 million in statewide funding for** Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) regions **in the final drought relief and resiliency package.** We request the funding be allocated to IRWM Funding Areas based on hydrologic regions as defined by the California Water Plan, consistent with the previously approved Proposition 1 Water Bond. The $510 million request exactly replicates the amount allocated to IRWM regions through Proposition 1.

California’s IRWM program is well established and the associated infrastructure that the Program already has in place makes it attractive as a vehicle for rapid allocation and deployment of drought relief and response funding. IRWM is a highly effective and efficient collaborative effort to plan and implement water management solutions on a regional scale. The IRWM approach delivers a higher value for investments by considering all interested entities, working across jurisdictional boundaries, encouraging diverse partnerships through collaboration, and prioritizing multiple benefit projects. **The** **48** **IRWM regions represent 99% of the state’s population, and efficiently serve as a funnel to provide funding for projects that directly benefit the people they serve, including disadvantaged communities and Native American Tribes**.

In addition to robust IRWM funding, we encourage consideration of funding for other important water resources priorities, such as water quality improvement, water recycling, desalting, dam safety rehabilitation, regional water system interconnectivity, groundwater sustainability and stormwater management**.** We believe that this water resource funding is an important component to the protection of public health through funding drinking water and wastewater projects, while creating jobs in California when we desperately need them. **The IRWM process puts us in a great position to get projects under way in a meaningful fashion with a prioritized list of projects that has been vetted at the local level through IRWM plans.**

In his Water Resilience Portfolio released last year, Governor Gavin Newsom identified IRWM as one of the best programs to implement major portions of the Portfolio. IRWM funds a diverse set of projects that meet the goals of regional partnership and climate resilience. In the past, IRWM has funded conservation, recycled water, stormwater, groundwater recharge, habitat restoration, salt removal and many other projects on a regional scale -- exactly the types of projects that can advance and improve regional and inter-regional water resiliency and sustainability, and in a manner that is expedited, responsive to drought conditions, and utilizes existing infrastructure and programs to deliver project benefits.

Investment in IRWM is leveraged by matching local funds. Over the past several years, the state has invested approximately $1.45 billion in bond funds in IRWM projects, and the regions throughout the state have matched that amount with an additional $5.6 billion spent on those collaborative projects. The matching funds required under previous bond allocations leverage state investment and increase overall funding for regional and inter-regional water resilience.

We appreciate your leadership on water and climate issues and look forward to answering any questions you may have. **We strongly urge including $510 million in a final drought relief and resiliency package to help facilitate the achievement of regional and inter-regional water resilience as proposed by the Governor through the Water Resilience Portfolio and in response to the pressing water shortage and drought conditions facing California.**

Sincerely,

Copies to your region’s state legislators

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