



MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

October 2, 2024

The Honorable Robert Garcia
United States House of Representatives
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for H.R. 9008 (Garcia)—The SEWER Act

Dear Congressman Garcia,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach (City), I write in support of H.R. 9008, the Surveilling Effluent Water for Epidemic Response Act, also known as the “SEWER Act”. H.R. 9008 would allocate \$150 million for each of the next five fiscal years to support the CDC’s National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS), which provides the public health infrastructure to monitor infectious diseases through wastewater across the country. The City supports legislation and funding to better prepare for and respond to community needs in the event of public health emergencies, pandemics and naturally occurring disasters.

Wastewater monitoring is a valuable, efficient, and robust tool that public health officials use to guide public health decision making across the nation. People with certain infections (such as COVID-19), can shed pieces of the virus or bacteria when they use the bathroom, shower, wash hands, or launder clothing, even if they are asymptomatic. These pieces of virus or bacteria travel from the toilet, sink, shower, or other drain through the sewage system. Before wastewater is treated, wastewater operators take samples to send to the laboratory. Laboratories test the wastewater sample to detect and report on the different types of infections that are circulating in a community. Public health officials use wastewater data to better understand disease trends in communities and make decisions, such as providing guidance on how to prevent infections or increasing testing or vaccination options.

According to data from the NWSS, in California, the wastewater viral activity level of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is currently High. Public health officials watch for sustained increasing levels of specific viruses or bacteria in wastewater and use these data to alert clinicians, hospitals, and other stakeholders so that they can quickly take appropriate action to safeguard the community’s health. The City of Long Beach owns, operates and maintains the sanitary sewer system that carries water from toilets, showers, sinks, and dish and clothes washers away from homes and businesses. Long Beach Utilities operates and maintains over 700 miles of sanitary sewer lines, safely collecting and delivering over 40 million gallons of wastewater per day to the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County for treatment. The SEWER Act will provide the necessary support to continue wastewater surveillance testing across the nation, tracking disease spikes by monitoring their presence in sewage.

Wastewater monitoring is an early detection tool that can prepare communities for and take action to address increasing cases of infectious diseases, including SARS-CoV-2, influenza A, and mpox. Allocating \$150 million annually to the NWSS will boost wastewater surveillance and enhance disease monitoring, which will help the City respond faster to future public health emergencies.

For these reasons, the City supports H.R. 9008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Richardson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Rex Richardson
City of Long Beach

cc: The Honorable Senator Alex Padilla
The Honorable Senator Laphonza Butler
The Honorable Congressmember Nanette Barragan, 44th District