

SB 1422 (Portantino) Drinking Water: Microplastic Disclosure

PROBLEM

Microplastics in drinking water pose a potential threat to the public's health. The State Water Resources Control Board adopts implementing regulations which are required to include the monitoring of contaminants and requirements for notifying the public about the quality of water delivered to customers. Currently, the levels of microplastics in drinking water are not monitored. This bill would change that by requiring the adoption of regulations requiring for testing of microplastics in drinking water, including public disclosure of those amounts.

BACKGROUND

Plastic fibers are found in tap water all over the world, with 83% of samples tested being polluted, according to a scientific study published in Orb Media in 2017. Microplastics can attract bacteria in sewage, and can also contain and absorb toxic chemicals which are later released into the body. Microplastic fibers are also found in beer, sugar, and honey, according to the same study. How microfibers end up in drinking water is still not entirely clear, but the atmosphere is one source. Current water treatment efforts do not account for all microplastics, which is how the fibers end up in drinking water. Further research is necessary to corroborate the results of the study and to determine how exactly the fibers impact human health. However, the fact remains that the plastics are present in water.

It is crucial that the public be made aware of the extent of microplastics present in drinking water because of the potential dangers they pose to human health and the environment. Greater knowledge of the contaminants in drinking water can lead to increased efforts at

recycling, decreased use of plastics, decreased pollution, and an overall healthier public and planet.

Under the California Safe Drinking Water Act, the State Water Resources Control Board adopts implementing regulations and conducts studies to determine the quality of water. The implementing regulations are required to include, but are not limited to including, monitoring of contaminants and requirements for notifying the public of the quality of water delivered to customers. This bill would add microplastics to the list of contaminants monitored, given the high levels present and their potential effects on public health.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the State Water Resource Control Board (State Water Board), on or before July 1, 2020, to adopt requirements for three consecutive years of testing and reporting of the amount of microplastics in drinking water, including public disclosure of those results.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law, the California Safe Drinking Water Act, requires the State Water Resources Control Board to administer provisions relating to the regulation of drinking water to protect public health, including, but not limited to, conducting research, studies, and demonstration programs to ensure a safe supply of drinking water.

SUPPORT

Sierra Club California
Californians Against Waste
California Coastkeeper Alliance
The 5 Gyres Institute
Seventh Generation Advisors

Office of Senator Anthony J. Portantino
SB 1422 – Fact Sheet

Contact: Anthony Molina – (916) 651-4025 or Anthony.Molina@sen.ca.gov

The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and
Education (COARE)
Plastic Pollution Coalition
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StopWaste
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WILDCOAST
UPSTREAM Policy
Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation
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California Product Stewardship Council
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
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