

September 2, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Opposition to AB 1857 (C. Garcia)—Solid Waste

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach (City), I write to respectfully request you veto AB 1857. The City shares the legislation's intent to advance zero waste and has been an active partner in helping to achieve the State's emissions reductions goals. We have supported the legislation's efforts to create a Zero-Waste Equity Grant Program to assist areas with transformation facilities achieve zero waste goals. However, the legislation eliminates diversion credits for utilizing transformation facilities like the one we operate in Long Beach; and despite efforts to strengthen the proposed grant program, the legislation does not appropriate funding to advance the infrastructure and programming necessary to achieve the goals outlined in the legislation. In the many years—perhaps decades—it will take to get to zero waste in California, the bill will simply exacerbate the environmental impacts of waste management given the lack of available alternatives to landfilling.

The City is committed to sustainable waste management practices and has outlined several key objectives in our [Climate Action and Adaptation Plan](#) to reduce emissions related to waste. Transformation of waste into electricity through the City's waste-to-energy facility, the Southeast Resource Recovery Facility (SERRF), is a critical part of the City's multi-faceted approach to sustainable waste management. Furthermore, in an effort to reach zero waste to landfills, the City provides community programs and educational services to encourage reduction, reuse, and recycling. The City is also working diligently to develop an organic waste program in compliance with State requirements. These methods have been shown to substantially decrease greenhouse gas emissions by diverting waste from landfills.

Waste-to-energy is a leading technology to reduce the environmental impacts of landfilling, even when compared to landfills equipped with landfill gas capture technology. Countless scientific studies conducted by State and federal environmental regulatory agencies, such as the California Air Resources Board, CalRecycle, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, have demonstrated that waste-to-energy offers significant greenhouse gas reductions compared to landfilling waste. Methane is 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide over 20 years as a greenhouse gas, and NASA scientists have identified landfills as super-emitters of methane. By contrast, every ton of waste processed at a waste-to-energy facility avoids a ton of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions. At SERRF, 99.5% of particulate matter is removed from gas exhaust using Best Available Control Technology, and the facility is removed from the immediate surrounding community, with the nearest resident being 1.7 miles away.

Recognizing the clear environmental benefits of waste-to-energy, current State law allows jurisdictions to receive diversion credits for up to ten percent of their municipal solid waste when they utilize waste transformation sites. SERRF is the definition of diverting waste from landfills, helping to advance renewable energy production by transforming waste into electricity and significantly increasing metals



recycling. The facility reduces the volume of solid waste by around 90 percent, while recovering enough electricity to power 30,000 homes and recycling an average of 750 tons of metals monthly that otherwise would have been sent to landfills. Diversion credits help jurisdictions that use SERRF fulfill the State requirement to divert at least 50 percent of municipal waste from landfills. The facility helps to ensure the City responsibly disposes of waste generated in our region without having to transport it to environmental justice communities throughout California. SERRF also supports the local economy by providing well-paid jobs to 60 employees, 44 of which are represented by unions.

AB 1857 seeks to remove the diversion credit that jurisdictions receive for utilizing waste-to-energy facilities like SERRF. Eliminating this credit will jeopardize certain jurisdictions' ability to meet State diversion objectives, subjecting them to significant financial and regulatory penalties, and will disincentivize other jurisdictions from using waste-to-energy because it is more expensive than landfilling. Even more importantly, the legislation will undermine the State's environmental goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by forcing jurisdictions to haul municipal solid waste to landfills across California and in neighboring states. Transporting just the City's waste to a landfill, instead of using SERRF, could increase annual truck trips by hundreds of thousands of miles, resulting in significant air quality impacts. Moreover, while all City refuse trucks are powered by compressed natural gas or liquified natural gas, the distance to landfills would require more diesel trucks on the roads.

The City is currently engaged in efforts to achieve zero waste to landfills through technologies like waste-to-energy at SERRF; proactive community education to increase waste reduction, reuse, and recycling; and the development of citywide organics collection and procurement programs. The City is also assessing additional opportunities for waste transformation to improve operations, environmental controls, and organic waste processing at the SERRF site. These facility improvements will result in more long-term advancements in waste reduction and recycling through SERRF while diminishing the need for landfilling.

In contrast to the City's sustainable waste management actions, AB 1857 will directly contribute to an increase in landfilling as the State aims to move towards zero waste. While the City appreciates the legislation's effort to invest in zero waste, AB 1857 does not appropriate funding for the effort, nor does it consider the substantial resources and time it will take to successfully realize these goals. Meanwhile, by removing the diversion credit and disincentivizing waste-to-energy, AB 1857 will undermine one of the best currently available pathways to reduce disposal at landfills by as much as 90 percent, thereby increasing harmful emissions in communities across California.

For these reasons, the City opposes AB 1857 and urges your veto.

Sincerely,



THOMAS B. MODICA
City Manager

cc: The Honorable Speaker Anthony Rendon, State Assembly
The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, State Senate, 33rd District
The Honorable Tom Umberg, State Senate, 34th District
The Honorable Steven Bradford, State Senate, 35th District
The Honorable Mike Gipson, State Assembly, 64th District
The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell, State Assembly, 70th District

