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The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

I am writing regarding the alarming news that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has identified additional communities in my Congressional district whose drinking water is contaminated with arsenic. This is simply unacceptable. I call on the EPA to use every tool at its disposal to protect these communities and deliver long-term solutions to this issue.

There is no clearer environmental injustice than vulnerable children in our communities having to drink arsenic-contaminated water that harms their development and ability to learn. As a physician, I have seen the effects contaminants like arsenic have on children's development. Additionally, we know that continued exposure to arsenic will increase their chances of lung, bladder, and skin cancers, as well as heart disease, diabetes, and neurological damage. Yet over the past three years, the EPA has identified at least eight mobile home parks and other communities in my Congressional district whose water systems have dangerous levels of arsenic.

This issue has been a priority for me since the EPA issued its first Emergency Order against Oasis Mobile Home Park in 2019. When I first became involved, I suspected that this was a widespread issue and called for the EPA to conduct wider testing of water systems to determine whether additional communities were exposed to contaminated water. This latest news that four additional mobile home parks have drinking water that exceeds the arsenic Maximum Contaminant Level only strengthens my belief that we need a comprehensive plan to end this environmental injustice once and for all.

I appreciate the EPA's decision to issue enforcement orders to address these violations when they detect them. All available tools must be used to significantly scale and speed up our investigation and assessment; our short-term response where contamination is found; and our implementation of a long-term solution.

While I firmly believe in additional solutions, such as closing mobile home parks that have a history of repeated violations, neglect, and noncompliance; another viable solution is to

consolidate these water systems with the local water district, the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD). My office has been in contact with CVWD, and they identified approximately 80 small, private water systems that are eligible to consolidate with their domestic water system. While CVWD assures me that they continue to pursue consolidation into their system, due to California law, they cannot use rate-payer funds to connect non-ratepayers. CVWD's need to use grant programs to pursue these projects only increases the urgency of the EPA's involvement.

Several programs administered by the EPA should be used to help communities in my district, such as the Small and Disadvantaged Communities Risk and Resilience Grants Program and the Drinking Water Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Program. I therefore urge the EPA to ensure that the communities in my district have access to these programs and to share with me how these communities are receiving support.

I further ask that the EPA work with my office to identify long-term, sustainable solutions to this problem. I am therefore urgently requesting a discussion with your team at the EPA about the following topics:

1. What Congressional authorizations or funding is needed at EPA to improve your ability to investigate and assess the naturally occurring hazards in the area;
2. What point of treatment authorities, repair, and maintenance authorities does the EPA currently possess or need; and
3. What are the steps necessary to expedite consolidation programs to protect communities whose drinking water is contaminated?

Following a meeting with your team, I would like to bring together a roundtable of stakeholders at all levels to put together a joint plan of consolidation and together advance environmental justice in Eastern Coachella Valley.

Water is life, and access to it is a human right. It is outrageous that children in America are drinking contaminated water with arsenic that affects their development and ability to learn. Please let me know at your earliest convenience when you or a member of your team is available to meet.

Sincerely,



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress