

February 5, 2019

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

DRAFT

RE: Statewide Commission on Recycling Markets

Alameda County respectfully requests that you establish a statewide commission on recycling markets in light of the significant and complex challenges facing local governments in implementing existing and upcoming mandates related to recycling targets and waste diversion.

Alameda County has a long history of implementing robust recycling programs and leading the way towards zero waste in California. We were one of the first regions in the State to adopt a Mandatory Recycling Ordinance (ACWMA Ordinance 2012-01) requiring separation of organic materials and recyclable materials from the waste stream. We are committed to providing our community with the environmental, economic, and public health benefits of recycling and source reduction, and respectfully request your support to sustain this commitment.

Local recycling programs rely on foreign countries' willingness to import recyclable materials. Our recycling export channels have recently and suddenly been restricted by China's "National Sword" policy, which enacts tougher import contamination standards for plastics, paper, and other materials. China has indicated an intent to ban all recyclable material imports by 2020. Other Southeast Asian countries are beginning to enact similar bans and inspection standards. These changes increase the cost of sorting materials to meet market standards and decrease revenues from the sale of materials. Taken together, these have the potential to significantly increase the cost of providing recycling services, undermining participation by households and businesses.

At the same time, the State of California is moving forward with implementation of SB 1383 (Chapters 395, Statutes of 2016), which established targets to achieve a 50 percent reduction in the level of the statewide disposal of organic waste from 2014 levels by 2020 and a 75 percent reduction by 2025. To achieve these targets, local government resource recovery and waste management operations that are already grappling with difficulty moving materials to recycling markets will also face significant and costly new infrastructure and service demands to collect and process organic materials.

Alameda County respectfully requests that a statewide commission be established comprised of State, local, and industry representatives, and that it be tasked with providing recommendations to the legislature which address our declining markets for recyclable materials, while continuing to support the need to divert materials from our landfills. The commission should examine a range of potential solutions including the development of international and domestic recycling markets, updated compliance standards

in this new economic environment, and ways to increase source reduction so that less material needs to be disposed of.

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Such a commission, especially with State leadership, could identify solutions involving political and economic levers that are not available to local government.

We look forward to working with your administration and stakeholders to develop solutions to this significant issue. If you have any questions, please contact our offices or Willie A. Hopkins, Jr., Director Alameda County General Services Agency at willie.hopkins@acgov.org or (510) 208-9700.

Sincerely,

Keith Carson
Supervisor, District 5
Chair, Board of Supervisors'
Personnel, Administration, Legislation Committee

Wilma Chan
Supervisor, District 3

c: Each Member, Board of Supervisors
Ana Matosantos, Cabinet Secretary
Christine Hironaka, Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Willie A. Hopkins, Director, Alameda County General Services Agency
Cara Martinson, Senior Legislative Representative & Federal Affairs Manager, CSAC