



June 20, 2025

The Honorable Assemblymember Connolly, Chair
 Assembly Environmental Safety & Toxic Materials Committee
 1021 O Street, Room 1200
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: SB 561 (Blakespear): Emergency Distress Flare Safe Disposal Act – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Connolly,

We, the undersigned, write to express our **strong support for SB 561 (Blakespear)**, as amended April 7, 2025, which will ensure manufacturers of emergency distress flares help to fund and operate a more cost-effective and convenient collection system to manage expired or unwanted flares. SB 561 will provide boaters with more convenient, legal disposal options, eliminating the stockpiling or improper disposal of expired flares.

Federal law requires open water recreational boats to carry U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) approved visual distress signals in case of emergencies to help pinpoint the boater's exact location. Pyrotechnic marine flares are one of two options boaters use to meet this requirement, the other being electronic reusable signals. But, flares contain toxic metals and pollutants that render them hazardous, reactive, and an explosive waste at end-of-life (EOL). **Boating and Waterways estimates 174,000 outdated flares are generated each year by recreational vessels in the state.**

Only Alameda County offers disposal options for marine flares on an ongoing basis because they are the only county that have invested in the purchase of an explosives locker called a "magazine" to allow them to store them onsite. Due to the lack of collection locations on the California coast, it has caused significant stress for boaters and become an EOL management problem. Most of the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facilities are unable to accept marine flares due to lack of the ability to obtain permits to handle explosives and the exorbitant costs necessary to properly manage them. **Some local governments have had to pay up to \$185 to properly manage each flare.** By ensuring manufacturers bear partial responsibility for end-of-life costs, SB 561 will

finally create a shared responsibility model as local governments and fire departments will always be needed in part to collect the flares.

SB 561 maintains full consumer choice for boaters while creating a more equitable system. Orion, the manufacturer of these products, already offers USCG approved electronic signal in addition to the flares. This legislation simply ensures that disposal costs are fairly borne by those who use these products, rather than socializing the costs among all ratepayers regardless of whether they own a boat.

When improperly disposed of in waste and recycling systems, flares can be dangerous for workers and further increases the risk of bodily harm from explosions, fires, and dangerous chemicals.

For these reasons, we **strongly support SB 561** and respectfully urge your Aye vote.

Sincerely,



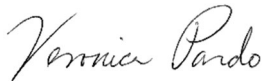
Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director
National Stewardship Action Council



Leslie Lukacs, Executive Director
Zero Waste Sonoma



Tony Hackett, Policy Associate
Californians Against Waste



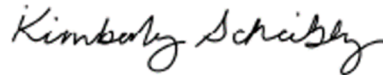
Veronica Pardo, Executive Director
Resource Recovery Coalition of CA



Shira Lane, CEO
Atrium 916



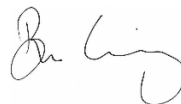
Tracie Onstad Bills, Executive Director
California Resource Recovery Association
(CRRA)



Kimberly Scheibly, Executive Director
Zero Waste Marin



Christine Wolfe, Director of Government
Affairs
Waste Management



Ben Eichenberg, Staff Attorney
San Francisco Bay Keeper



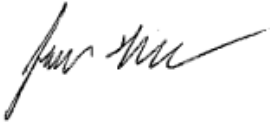
Dianna Cohen, Co-Founder & CEO
Plastic Pollution Coalition



Leslie Tamminen, Earth Sciences Director
7th Generation Advisors



Joe LaMariana, Executive Director
ReThink Waste



James Moore, Director
Merced County Regional Waste
Management Authority



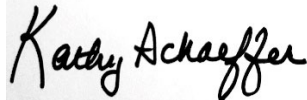
Timothy Burroughs, Executive Director
StopWaste



Jim Lindburg, Legislative Consultant
Friends Committee on Legislation of
California



Emily Parker, Marine Scientist
Heal the Bay



Kathy Schaeffer, Legislative Coordinator
Climate Reality Project, San Fernando
Valley



Suzanne Hume, Educational Director &
Founder
CleanEarth4Kids.org



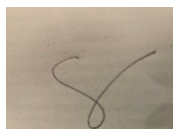
Gabriela Facio, Senior Policy Strategist
Sierra Club California



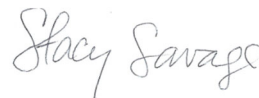
Jackie Nunez, Founder
The Last Plastic Straw



Freddy Coronado, President
Northern California Recycling Association



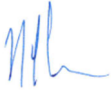
Cheryl Auger, President
Ban SUP (Single Use Plastics)



Stacy Savage, Founder & CEO
Zero Waste Strategies



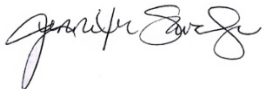
Marco Gonzalez, Executive Director
Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation
(CERF)



Curtis Larkin, Chair
SWANA California Chapters Legislative
Task Force



Mackenzie Wieser, CEO
Sacramento Splash



Jennifer Savage, California Policy Associate
Director
Surfrider Foundation



Marie Powers, Executive Assistant
Marin Sanitary Service



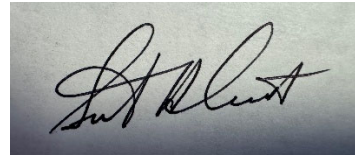
Mike Caprio, Director of Government
Affairs
Republic Services



Tedd Ward, Director
Del Norte Solid Waste Management
Authority



Leslie Robinson, Program Manager
County of Santa Barbara Resource Recovery
& Waste Management Division



Stephen Short, President/ CEO
Lakeport Tire & Auto Service



Jenn Engstrom, State Director
California Public Interest Group
(CALPIRG)



Mallika Sen, Environmental Solutions
Director
Solana Center for Environmental Innovation



Shira Lane, CEO
Atrium 916