



Protecting Florida's Clean Water Environment

Ph: (850) 425-3428

www.fweauc.org

June 17, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor, State of Florida
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: Support for Senate Bill 712

Dear Governor DeSantis,

On behalf of Florida's domestic wastewater utility community, the Florida Water Environment Association (FWEA) Utility Council respectfully submits this letter in strong support of Senate Bill 712. This science-based legislation incorporates the transformative policy recommendations of your Blue Green Algae Task Force and is a direct result of the collaborative leadership of Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary, Noah Valenstein.

Senate Bill 712 is sweeping in scope, addressing septic tank regulation, agricultural best management practices, stormwater treatment design, and – critical to FWEA Utility Council members – domestic wastewater collection and treatment. As owners and operators of community domestic wastewater collection, treatment, discharge and reuse systems, protecting the environment and public health is our core business. We are proud of our nation-leading reuse of reclaimed water, substantial investments in nutrient discharge reductions, and track record in hurricane response. We also recognize, however, that some Florida utilities face environmental challenges, particularly with respect to sanitary sewer overflow prevention.

Natural disasters, flooding, and third-party actions make many sanitary sewer overflows unavoidable, however, collection system management and rehabilitation is key to proactively minimizing sanitary sewer overflows. This legislation will help ensure that utilities across the state make sound investments in their collection and treatment systems and meet the environmental performance goals that Floridians expect and that our utility members demand of themselves. Simply stated, Senate Bill 712 sets the bar for utility asset management, promotes storm resiliency, and will reduce sanitary sewer overflows. We support the achievement of those objectives.

In addition to addressing utility asset management programs, Senate Bill 712 also requires environmentally sustainable biosolids application practices. As you know, biosolids are a byproduct of domestic wastewater treatment. This material has high organic content and contains nutrients that plants need to grow. For years, communities, ranchers, and agricultural producers have beneficially reused biosolids as a fertilizer and soil amendment. Biosolids land application reduces the need for chemical fertilizers and increases crop production; however, over application can cause water quality impacts. This legislation includes preventative measures that will ensure biosolids are beneficially used in the right amounts and in the right locations, thereby protecting state waters from nutrient pollution.

The FWEA Utility Council supports your administration's efforts to strengthen Florida's environmental laws in a science-based manner and improve the quality of our state's waters. We view Senate Bill 712 as a major step towards achieving those goals. For these reasons, the FWEA Utility Council asks for your approval of Senate Bill 712.

Sincerely,

/s/ Rick Hutton

Rick Hutton, P.E.
FWEA Utility Council President

CC: David Childs, FWEA Utility Council Legal Counsel