



SB-317 Wastewater surveillance. (2025-2026)

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Date Published: 09/13/2025 09:00 PM

ENROLLED SEPTEMBER 13, 2025

PASSED IN SENATE SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

PASSED IN ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 08, 2025

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 02, 2025

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 18, 2025

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 28, 2025

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 10, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE BILL

NO. 317

Introduced by Senator Hurtado
(Coauthor: Senator McNerney)
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Arambula)

February 11, 2025

An act to add Chapter 6.63 (commencing with Section 25249.20) to Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to wastewater.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 317, Hurtado. Wastewater surveillance.

Existing law establishes the State Department of Public Health to implement various programs throughout the state relating to public health. The department administers the California Wastewater Surveillance Dashboard that provides an overview of data from testing wastewater for SARS-CoV-2 virus in California. The data in the dashboard is generated by those participating in the department's California Surveillance of Wastewaters (Cal-SuWers) network, including the Cal-SuWers program, WastewaterSCAN, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Wastewater Surveillance System, wastewater utilities, and academic, laboratory, and other state and federal partners.

This bill would require the department, in consultation with participating wastewater treatment facilities, local health departments, and other subject matter experts, to maintain the Cal-SuWers network to test, as appropriate for public health use, for pathogens, toxins, or other public health indicators in wastewater. The bill would require participation in the Cal-SuWers network from local

health departments and wastewater treatment facilities to be voluntary. The bill would authorize the department to coordinate with health care providers, local health departments, and emergency response agencies to ensure wastewater surveillance data is used for early intervention, outbreak response, epidemiological investigations, and public health planning. The bill would authorize the department to communicate to the general public, through a publicly accessible internet website, as specified, to provide transparency and public awareness of wastewater-based disease monitoring. The bill would authorize the department to utilize external funding sources, in addition to the department's existing, noncontinuously appropriated funding sources, to implement these provisions. The bill would make related findings and declarations.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Wastewater surveillance is a proven and cost-effective tool for public health monitoring, allowing for the early detection of infectious diseases, including COVID-19, influenza, mpox, norovirus, and antimicrobial-resistant pathogens.

(b) Wastewater monitoring played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing early warnings of infection trends, guiding public health responses, and reducing the burden on hospitals and testing systems.

(c) The State Department of Public Health has demonstrated leadership in disease monitoring and response by establishing a wastewater-based epidemiology program in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Wastewater Surveillance System, academic institutions, local health departments, and wastewater treatment agencies. This program is critical for ongoing disease tracking and the infrastructure must remain in place and at the ready in anticipation of future outbreaks of infectious diseases.

(d) Despite its effectiveness, wastewater surveillance infrastructure remains inconsistent across California, with significant gaps in rural, underserved, and high-risk areas, including counties reliant on septic systems, tribal lands, and regions with vulnerable populations.

(e) California's agricultural economy and food supply chain depend on proactive disease monitoring, particularly in the face of outbreaks, including avian influenza, which has already infected over two-thirds of California's dairy herds and 90 percent of commercial and backyard poultry flocks.

SEC. 2. Chapter 6.63 (commencing with Section 25249.20) is added to Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code, to read:

CHAPTER 6.63. Wastewater Surveillance

25249.20. For purposes of this chapter, the following definitions apply:

(a) "California Surveillance of Wastewaters program" or "Cal-SuWers program" means the wastewater surveillance program administered by the State Department of Public Health, in coordination with local health departments and wastewater utilities, for the purpose of monitoring pathogens and other public health indicators. Laboratory analysis is performed at the department or through contracts with qualified laboratories.

(b) "Cal-SuWers network" means the statewide wastewater surveillance program administered by the department that includes both of the following:

(1) Data from the Cal-SuWers program.

(2) Data generated by and received from participating wastewater programs not administered by the department.

(c) "Department" means the State Department of Public Health.

(d) "Wastewater surveillance" means the collection and analysis of wastewater samples to detect pathogens, toxins, and other public health indicators to provide early warning for infectious disease outbreaks and environmental health threats.

25249.21. (a) The department, in consultation with participating wastewater treatment facilities, local health departments, and other subject matter experts, shall maintain the Cal-SuWers network to test, as appropriate for public health use, for pathogens, toxins, or other public health indicators in wastewater. Testing shall be conducted by the department or other monitoring programs in the Cal-SuWers network.

(b) Participation in the Cal-SuWers network from local health departments and wastewater treatment facilities shall be voluntary.

(c) Subject to subdivision (b), the department shall work with the local health departments and wastewater treatment facilities participating in the Cal-SuWers program to collect samples. The department shall arrange for those samples to be tested by qualified laboratories.

(d) The department may consult with, or contract with, other wastewater epidemiology projects or public health programs being conducted or previously completed by nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, and other governmental entities to maintain the mission of the Cal-SuWers network.

25249.22. (a) The department may coordinate with health care providers, local health departments, and emergency response agencies to ensure wastewater surveillance data is used for early intervention, outbreak response, epidemiological investigations, and public health planning.

(b) The department may communicate to the general public, through a publicly accessible internet website, to provide transparency and public awareness of wastewater-based disease monitoring. For purposes of this paragraph, a publicly accessible internet website may be maintained by an entity other than the department and shall do all of the following:

(1) Provide real-time data visualization of wastewater surveillance results, including regional trends and pathogen detection patterns.

(2) Include educational materials and resources to help the public understand how wastewater surveillance supports public health.

(3) Be updated to ensure current information is available to residents, public health officials, and policymakers.

25249.23. In addition to the department's existing, noncontinuously appropriated funding sources, the department may utilize external funding sources to implement this chapter. The department may solicit private donations or grants and may accept moneys donated by other wastewater epidemiology or federal programs.