

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: June 28, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso 
Chief Legislative Analyst Council File No: 19-0002-S84
Assignment No.: 19-05-0502

SUBJECT: Resolution (Martinez - Blumenfield) to SUPPORT AB 1672 (Bloom) relative to Wipe Product Labeling

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution (Martinez - Blumenfield) to include in the City's 2019-2020 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for AB 1672 (Bloom) which seeks to prohibit manufacturers from labeling wipe products as "safe to flush", "safe for sewer system", or "safe for septic systems" unless the products meet certain performance standards ensuring they breakdown after being flushed; thereby protecting the operation of sewer collection systems and the environment.

SUMMARY:

Resolution (Martinez - Blumenfield), introduced on May 7, 2019, states that nonwoven wipes are increasingly being marketed by manufacturers as "flushable" and, as a result, are being flushed down the toilet more frequently by consumers. Despite marketing claims, "flushable" wipes do not breakdown after being flushed. In addition they contain microplastics which are known to be harmful to marine life. The Resolution further states that nonwoven wipes tend to accumulate in sewer collection systems, clogging up system pumps and causing backups and equipment failures.

The Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) and Heal the Bay conduct the "Don't Flush That" campaign to educate customers on what they can do to reduce or eliminate the amount of "flushable" wipes and other trash that gets into the sewer collection system.

The Resolution notes that AB 1672 (Bloom), introduced on February 22, 2019, seeks to prohibit manufacturers from labeling wipe products as "safe to flush", "safe for sewer system", or "safe for septic systems" unless the products meet certain performance standards ensuring they breakdown after being flushed.

The Resolution concludes that eliminating nonwoven wipes marketed as "flushable" from sewer collection systems would save ratepayers and sewer system collection agencies millions of dollars in costly repairs. Therefore, the Resolution requests that the City support AB 1672.

BACKGROUND:

The bill's author contends that when wipe products are flushed into the sewer system they can cause significant issues for private property owners, sewer collection systems, and wastewater treatment plants. The author states that AB 1672 presents a straightforward approach to help combat the problems caused by flushed wipe products.

Specifically, the bill seeks to prescribe clear and consistent product labeling that indicates to consumers whether a wipe is "flushable," or not. Under the bill's provisions, these products can be labeled as "flushable" if they do not cause harm to the sewer system. Therefore, product manufacturers must demonstrate that their products break down in the sewer system like dry toilet paper. For all other wipe products that are not intended to be flushed, they must be conspicuously marked with "Do Not Flush" labeling.

The measure is sponsored by the California Association of Sanitary Districts (CASA), an association of California's municipal wastewater management organizations. The City's Bureau of Sanitation is a member of CASA.

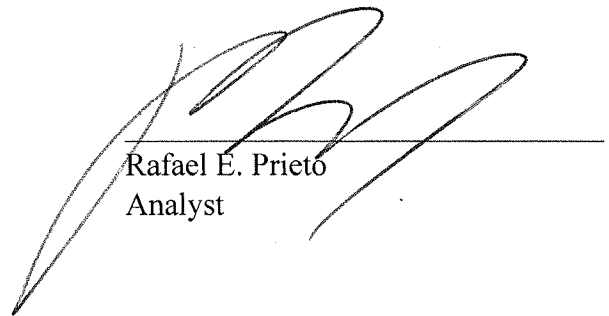
DEPARTMENTS NOTIFIED:

Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation

BILL STATUS:

4/29/19

Referred to Assembly Appropriations Committee



Rafael E. Prieto
Analyst

Attachment(s): Resolution (Martinez - Blumenfield)

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations, or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state, or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, nonwoven wipes are increasingly being marketed by manufacturers as “flushable” and, as a result, are being flushed down the toilet more frequently by consumers; and

WHEREAS, despite marketing claims, “flushable” wipes do not breakdown after being flushed; and they contain microplastics which are known to be harmful to marine life; and

WHEREAS, nonwoven wipes tend to accumulate in sewer collection systems, clogging up system pumps and causing backups and equipment failures; and

WHEREAS, a sewer collection system clog in South Carolina was caused by thousands of pounds of “flushable” wipes and took 3 days to clear; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) and Heal the Bay conduct the “Don’t Flush That” campaign to educate customers on what they can do to reduce or eliminate the amount of “flushable” wipes and other trash that gets into the sewer collection system; and

WHEREAS, the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) has also started an awareness campaign called “Wipes Clog Pipes”; and

WHEREAS, AB 1672 (Bloom), introduced on February 22, 2019, seeks to prohibit manufacturers from labeling wipe products as “safe to flush”, “safe for sewer system”, or “safe for septic systems” unless the products meet certain performance standards ensuring they breakdown after being flushed; and

WHEREAS, eliminating nonwoven wipes marketed as “flushable” from sewer collection systems would save ratepayers and sewer system collection agencies millions of dollars in costly repairs; and would reduce microplastics from entering the natural environment and harming marine life;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles, hereby, includes in its 2019-2020 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for AB 1672 (Bloom) which seeks to prohibit manufacturers from labeling wipe products as “safe to flush”, “safe for sewer system”, or “safe for septic systems” unless the products meet certain performance standards ensuring they breakdown after being flushed; thereby protecting the operation of sewer collection systems and the environment.

19-0002-584

PRESENTED BY: _____
NURY MARTINEZ
Councilwoman, 6th District

MAY 07 2019

SECONDED BY: _____