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May 11, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), I am writing in support of [H.R. 1321](#), *Microbead-Free Waters Act*. NACWA represents nearly 300 public wastewater utilities throughout the nation that work to protect our critical water resources and they are increasingly concerned about the impacts of consumer products on treatment processes and on the water environment.

While utilities can regulate the discharges from industries and businesses to the sewer system through their industrial pretreatment programs, they have no authority to control discharges of pollutants from residential sources. Preventing pollution from consumer products must therefore be accomplished through state or federal laws or regulations addressing their use. NACWA believes that H.R. 1321 will improve the nation's water quality by banning the use of synthetic plastic microbeads in cosmetic products. Microbeads that are labeled as "biodegradable plastic" should also be prohibited in cosmetic products, since these microbeads could potentially still harm aquatic life before breaking down and the byproducts produced when the microbeads degrade could still be detrimental to the water environment.

Microbeads are difficult to remove during typical wastewater treatment processes and as such, they often pass through the treatment plant and are discharged into the nation's waterways. Some utilities use tertiary or other advanced levels of wastewater treatment to meet stringent discharge requirements, and these processes may filter out plastic microbeads. However, implementing these treatment systems at all utilities would be extremely costly and unnecessary, increasing the burden on local ratepayers. Because plastic microbeads can be easily removed from products and natural alternatives substituted, eliminating plastic microbead pollution at its source, rather than relying on wastewater utilities to remove microbeads, is the best way to protect the water environment.

NACWA Support Letter for the Microbead-Free Waters Act

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Thank you for your leadership on this important water quality issue and we look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this legislative proposal. Please contact Patricia Sinicropi, NACWA's Legislative Director at psinicropi@nacwa.org, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Kirk". The "K" is large and stylized, followed by "Kirk" in a cursive script.

Ken Kirk
Executive Director