

February 21, 2014

The Honorable Kevin Mullin
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1437 – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Mullin,

On behalf of CALPIRG we are proud to support AB 1437, which would help stop the overuse of antibiotics.

Since they were developed in the 1940s, antibiotics have been one of the most important tools in modern medicine to protect our health. These drugs can mean the difference between life and death when humans contract a bacterial infection—such as staph, salmonella, and pneumonia. Doctors agree that antibiotics should be used at precise dose amounts to treat bacterial infections, because failure to follow these rules increases the likelihood that some of the bacteria will survive and mutate to become drug resistant. We need to protect their effectiveness so that they can continue saving lives.

Unfortunately, the widespread use of antibiotics is rendering them less effective, and the problem is growing. According to the Interagency Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance, co-chaired by the CDC, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health, antibiotic-resistant bacteria could make previously treatable diseases like pneumonia, meningitis and tuberculosis again untreatable. Additionally, resistance is increasing the cost of health care by drawing out treatments longer than they would otherwise be.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, more than two million Americans are sickened every year with antibiotic-resistant infections, with at least 23,000 dying as a result.¹ Many more die from other conditions that were complicated by an antibiotic resistant infection.

Despite the serious consequences of the overuse of antibiotics, many large farms give antibiotics to their livestock and poultry in daily doses in their animal feed. According to FDA data, nearly 80 percent of antibiotics, 29.9 million pounds each year, are sold to be given to livestock and poultry.²

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/threat-report-2013/pdf/ar-threats-2013-508.pdf>

² <http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/11/health/fda-antibiotics-farms/> (29.9 million pounds reported to the FDA)

The Center for Disease Control's most recent report on antibiotic resistance states, "Much of antibiotic use in animals is unnecessary and inappropriate and makes everyone less safe."³ The U.S. Department of Agriculture acknowledged in a January 2009 report that the presumed economic and production benefits of antibiotics in animal feed can be largely achieved by improved cleanliness of animal houses and improved testing for diseases.⁴

Given the serious health consequences of antibiotic resistance, action is needed to stop the overuse of antibiotics on animals that are not sick, or not in immediate danger of becoming sick.

AB 1437 would take a strong, effective step forward to protecting public health, by requiring that meat sold into California only be given antibiotics as needed to treat illness.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



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³ <http://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/threat-report-2013/pdf/ar-threats-2013-508.pdf>

⁴ http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Fact_Sheets/HHIF/Pew_HHIF_TheSolution.pdf?n=3175