April 4, 2017

Chairman, Representative Joseph Pickett
Vice Chairman, Representative Ed Thompson
Representative John Cyrier
Representative Tony Dale
Representative Kyle J. Kacal
Representative Brooks Landgraf
Representative J. M. Lozano
Representative Ron Reynolds
Representative Eddie Rodriguez

Honorable Chairman Pickett and Members of the House Environmental Regulations Committee,

On behalf of the fifty-two member groups of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, I present these comments in support of H.B. 3036, authored by Tracy O. King. This bill specifically addresses concerns of those charged with protecting our drinking water by prohibiting the discharge of sewage effluent into waterways that recharge the Edwards Aquifer.

During the past several years I have had to learn way more about sewage than I ever wanted to know. Still, I am not an expert on this topic. I rely on the testimony of experts such as John Dupnik, who is here testifying before you today.

I stress that passage of this bill will not prohibit development within the region. Of all the development that has been built within the region, only two have applied for permits to discharge effluent directly into streams that recharge the Edwards Aquifer.

In Hays County, the Belterra subdivision’s application to discharge wastewater into Bear Creek was opposed by the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District, by Hays and Travis counties, and by 95% of the municipalities within that District. Belterra’s permit was recently granted. In their ruling, TCEQ Commissioners cited their reluctance to effect a rule change that should, in their opinion, be taken up by the State Legislature.

In 2008, The Hills of Castle Rock in Medina County applied for a permit to discharge wastewater into the San Geronimo Creek. This application was being contested by San Antonio Water Systems and the San Geronimo Valley Alliance on the basis that it would harm the quality of the water of the Edwards Aquifer. Additionally, both the SAWS Board of Directors and the City of San Antonio cited concerns about Hills of Castle Rocks plans to discharge into the San Geronimo as among their reasons for denying water service to this subdivision.

The more common practice, recommended by experts in this field, is that of applying the treated effluent to land. Treated effluent could also be used to advantage by installation of gray water systems for non-potable use such as watering lawns. We realize that our region is growing, and that there will be additional development within these environmentally sensitive areas. We are asking you to ensure that new
development does not compromise or degrade the quality of water in the Edwards Aquifer by voting in support of H.B. 3036.

Thank you for hearing testimony on this bill today. Please rely on GEAA as a resource regarding this and other bills related to protection of the Edwards Aquifer.

Respectfully,

Annalisa Peace
Executive Director