

State Water Resources & Control Board meeting
Monday, August 14, 2017
Brooke Lopez

Hello! My name is Brooke Lopez and I'm a San Diego native and a graduate student in the social work program at San Diego State University. I'm here to speak on the behalf of children and families and endorse San Diego Workers Benefit Council's demands against water-shutoffs across the state. Last summer, as a requirement for my undergraduate degree in social work, I traveled to Guatemala. In the indigenous Mayan village where we stayed, we were diligently warned about the sparse and substandard quality of water. This was hardly a problem for me in this gorgeous country, seeing that I would be back home soon. It was the children in the village school that raised my concerns. Their conditions, as they related to water, were much grimmer. School children were pushed to practice water conservation to preserve the supply for their village.

Fast forward to 2017. I could still be found working in a school. This time, one in America, where the problems of many children in Guatemala were quite similar. Although many people are opposed to accepting it, many children and families very visibly have difficulties accessing water in San Diego. According to a study conducted in San Diego, in collaboration between the Center for Disease Control and Kaiser-Permanente, experiencing economic hardship is considered an adverse childhood experience (ACE). Having at least one ACE increases a child's likelihood of poor health into adulthood, increases their chances of having low school engagement and behavior problems at school, increases their risk of developing a substance abuse disorder as they mature, along with a plethora of other consequences.

Being forced to choose between water and other living essentials is a traumatic experience. Traumatic childhood experiences have well-documented and enduring effects on individuals and repercussions on the overall health of communities. I demand that the state water board defend children and families of California by barring water shut-offs statewide! Thank you.