



Testimony on S1557/A2641... Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee

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Vote Yes on S1557 to Give Cities an Important Tool to Manage Flooding and Spur Economic Development

New Jersey Future urges your support for S1557/A2641, which would allow New Jersey's 21 cities and counties with combined sewer systems to create stormwater utilities.

This bill is permissive and would only apply in 21 cities that have combined sewer systems. Those cities are: Bayonne, Camden, East Newark, Elizabeth, Fort Lee, Gloucester City, Guttenberg, Hackensack, Harrison, Hoboken, Jersey City, Kearny, Newark, North Bergen, Paterson, Perth Amboy, Ridgefield Park, Trenton, Union City, Weehawken, and West New York.

Stormwater utilities do not represent a new tax. Because the stormwater and sewer systems are combined, stormwater is treated as sewage so residents and businesses in these cities pay for stormwater management today, through their sewer fees. However, stormwater utilities would allow cities to charge for stormwater more fairly, based on the amount of runoff from a property, rather than a simple rate per property, which often penalizes residents.

New Jersey cities need more tools to prevent flooding and meet increased regulatory requirements. Cities like Hoboken, Camden, Paterson and Jersey City, among others, face a flooding crisis that stalls commuters and causes backups of raw sewage into basements, parks and streets. Cities also face heightened regulatory pressure, as the NJDEP is issuing new Long Term Control Plans that require action to reduce combined sewer overflows (CSOs). Rutgers University is preparing an estimate for us of the cost of fixing the CSOs in New Jersey, which we will publish later this spring, but preliminary cost estimates from the USEPA are \$8 billion. Clearly stormwater utilities will be just one part of the solution.

New Jersey cities are handicapped compared to those in other states that use investment in stormwater management and green infrastructure to spur economic development. Philadelphia and Lancaster, Pennsylvania use stormwater utilities, as do over 1,400 communities in 39 states.¹ These utilities facilitate, often in concert with private developers, such green infrastructure as parks, sidewalk plantings and green roofs, which capture stormwater where it falls before it can lead to flooding, overflows and back-ups. Green-infrastructure projects have other important benefits: they make surrounding areas more attractive and healthier and enhance the value of private property. Stormwater utilities will give New Jersey cities some of the same tools as those available in neighboring states.

Please support S1557/A2641 because it will help New Jersey cities attract new private investment while they improve conditions for existing residents and businesses.

¹ See <http://www.wku.edu/engineering/civil/fpm/swsurvey/>