



TESTIMONY

**Testimony on A1583  
Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee  
Sept. 11, 2014**

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**Vote Yes on A1583 to Give Cities an Important Tool  
To Manage Flooding and Spur Economic Development**

New Jersey Future urges your support for A1583, 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. These 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 rates. 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 household, which often penalizes residents.

**New Jersey cities need more tools to prevent flooding and meet mounting regulatory requirements.** Many of our cities, including Hoboken, Camden, Paterson and Jersey City, face a flooding crisis that stalls commuters and leads to backups of raw sewage into basements, parks and streets. These cities also face heightened regulatory pressure in anticipation of the NJDEP's issuance of new Long Term Control Plans that will require action to reduce combined sewer overflows (CSOs). Fixing the combined sewer systems in New Jersey is likely to cost between \$4 billion and \$6 billion, with some estimates reaching \$9 billion. Clearly, stormwater utilities will be just one part of the solution. In May 2014, New Jersey Future helped convene a diverse group of New Jersey leaders from the public, private and non-profit sectors to explore how to address the combined-sewer issue in a way that transforms this looming regulatory mandate into an opportunity to strengthen our cities, enable economic growth, leverage modern practices, reduce energy use and flooding, and draw upon multiple funding sources to maintain affordability.<sup>1</sup>

**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.<sup>2</sup> These utilities facilitate, often in concert with private developers, the establishment of "green infrastructure" like parks, sidewalk plantings and green roofs, all of which capture stormwater where it falls before it leads to flooding, overflows and backups. The green-infrastructure projects have other important benefits, including making surrounding areas

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<sup>1</sup> See [njfuture.org/water](http://njfuture.org/water)

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.wku.edu/engineering/civil/fpm/swsurvey/>

more attractive and healthier and enhancing the value of private property. Stormwater utilities will give New Jersey cities some of the same tools as those of neighboring states.

Please support A1583 because it will help New Jersey cities attract new private investment at the same time that they improve conditions for existing residents and business. Please feel free to contact Chris Sturm, senior director of state policy, at 609-393-0008, x114 or [csturm@njfuture.org](mailto:csturm@njfuture.org) to discuss this further.