



## Testimony on S1742, S1768, and S1774 Senate Environment and Energy Committee

March 7, 2019

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### New Jersey Future Supports S1742, S1768, and S1774

Chairman Smith and members of the committee,

New Jersey Future, a nonpartisan nonprofit that promotes land use policies and infrastructure investments for sustainable growth and development in New Jersey, supports S1742, S1768, and S1774. These bills will advance sustainable drinking water and stormwater systems that protect the environment, strengthen the economy, and lower costs for everyone. Together, they represent an important step to implement the recommendations of the Joint Legislative Task Force on Drinking Water Infrastructure.

S1742 Requires water purveyors to conduct, and report to DEP, water loss audits.

Water loss audits are a commonsense first step to modernizing leaky water pipes and protecting **water, our state's most precious natural resource.**

The impacts of population growth and climate change have placed considerable strain on our water supply, one that will likely increase over time. Yet each day our state's aging water systems lose significant amounts of valuable, treated water through leaky pipes and water main breaks. In addition, millions of gallons per day go unbilled, largely through faulty measurement and billing practices, which can lead utilities to overcharge customers to make up the shortfall.

Annual water loss audits are cost-effective. By following the directives of this legislation, water service providers can recover money for themselves and their communities while conserving our most essential resource. Water loss is also an environmental issue. Every gallon of water lost through a leaky pipe is a gallon that should not have been withdrawn from streams or underground aquifers.

These low-cost audits can be conducted easily by any water utility and should not overly burden small municipal water systems. Planning for how best to improve water systems and conserve our resources must first be based on accurate data. Nationally, a growing bipartisan movement to track and reduce leakage from drinking water systems has led a number of states and cities toward best practices for estimating, locating, and repairing leaks. Georgia, California, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and Indiana all require water utilities to prepare and submit to the state a

standardized water loss audit report using American Water Works Association's methodology. It is time for New Jersey to join their ranks.

S1768 Requires DOT to prioritize green stormwater infrastructure in design, construction, reconstruction, and repair of public highways.

The use of green stormwater infrastructure in roads and highways is called "green streets." Green street features include stormwater planters with street trees, permeable pavement for sidewalks and parking lanes and rain gardens located in curb bump-outs near intersections. Green streets not only manage stormwater to reduce flooding in a cost-effective manner, but also improve water quality, contribute to pedestrian safety, beautify neighborhoods and increase property values.

State highways take different forms. In addition to freeways, state highways include two-lane main streets and rural roads. Green stormwater infrastructure is especially valuable for these types of state highways.

Counties and towns across New Jersey are also beginning to plan and build green streets using funding from the DOT Local Aid program. They seek support from the DOT including design standards and a clear signal that green infrastructure features are considered integral to a complete streets approach. For this reason, we recommend the bill be amended to not only require the DOT to prioritize green stormwater infrastructure for public highways but also for its Local Aid program for municipal and county roads.

S1774 Specifies minimum 20-year planning duration for NJ Statewide Water Supply Plan and adds new requirements for plan.

This bill would ensure that future Statewide Water Supply Plans are done in such a way that they **effectively protect the state's water supply.**

Thank you for recognizing the importance of managing our water systems in sustainable, cost-effective ways. New Jersey Future would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the foregoing recommendations and are happy to work with you on this and other critical legislation.