



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and
Agriculture in Support of H.897/S.529
An Act protecting water systems through the labeling of flushable wipes
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October 27, 2021

This newly-filed legislation is one step in statewide protection of our septic and sewage systems from added costs and system damage that is totally avoidable. Currently, all types of wipes, whether for infants or other uses, are not held to any standards of what is actually safe for a septic system or will dissolve or break down sufficiently to not clog sewer systems. Most wipes are not safely flushable, but are either labeled as flushable or unlabeled. Especially with the added concerns from the pandemic and some shortages of toilet paper, many more wipes have been used and flushed. This has resulted in at least \$10 million dollars of extra costs for Massachusetts sewer system operators and untallied damage to residential septic systems.

The manufacturers of wipes labeled as flushable insist that they break down fast enough to be safe, but there is ample anecdotal evidence that this is not the case, and that all types of wipes are very hard on septic systems. This legislation will likely benefit not just sewer operators, but residents on septic systems as well by making everyone more aware of the potential issues.

These bills mandate that all wipes be labeled, and that non-flushable wipes have labeling big enough to actually read noting this fact. The requirements observe the standards set by the International Water Services Flushability Group (IWSFG). This legislation requires manufacturers to test products and verify that they meet performance standards; it sets penalties for violations and allows the Attorney General to enforce the law. Since this is only a labeling requirement, it does not prevent any sales, and thus is outside of ICC rules and fully within the rights of Massachusetts to legislate.

The League supports this legislation as part of our positions supporting the publicizing of impacts on solid waste systems and recycling or environmentally sound land disposal and hazardous waste management.

Since 1983, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has supported means to protect our critical water resources and to repair and rehabilitate water systems. That is exactly what these two bills do.

The LWVMA, with over 3,000 members and 47 local Leagues from Capes Cod and Ann to the Berkshires, supports these bills and asks that you favorably report them out of committee. Thank you for your consideration.