



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and
Agriculture**

**In Support of S.527, S.505 and H.920 An Act improving municipal water infrastructure
and An Act relative to funding water infrastructure and addressing economic target areas**

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October 13, 2021

Massachusetts is, in some regions, a densely populated state. While we have an overall abundance of water, sometimes water isn't always readily available to a local municipality. Development can and has stretched municipal water resources beyond their capabilities. New developments can strain infrastructure and add substantially to municipal costs in ways that are borne by those communities long after the developer has completed a project. Adoption of this bill will provide much-needed added resources for municipalities to help them comply with environmental regulations and maintain or upgrade their infrastructure to meet the increasing needs caused by development. The addition of the ability to target funds to economically underserved areas supports Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives. Currently, the only way to do this assesses all property in the water authority equally. That method doesn't require any new development to shoulder its fair share of the added burden which it has created on water resources.

Water authorities already have the authority, if they opt in, to collect fees into a "Municipal Water infrastructure investment fund," a surcharge on existing real property for maintenance of water infrastructure assets. This existing law applies uniformly to all property within a locale when it opts in. Rep. Sean Garballey and Sen. Crighton's bill addresses this issue by adding a carefully crafted section to MGL Chapter 40, Section 29.

This bill allows for a municipality to also opt into a "water-banking fee" system, allowing the municipal water authority to collect a fee up front for new developments. That fee can be used exclusively for all water infrastructure-related projects. These funds would, therefore, be available to cope with the effects of development. Since the bill also allows the fees to be based on the net impairment to the water system caused by the development, its adoption will encourage developers to use best methods to minimize water consumption, waste water release and storm water mitigation.

Last session, similar bills were split in committee referral and one got all the way to a third reading and then died at the end of the session. Let's get this passed this session, so that all municipalities know they can protect their water infrastructure when development occurs.

Please make certain that this year this legislation is enacted. We note that the Massachusetts Municipal Association is supporting this bill, and we applaud the MMA's efforts to enable cities and towns to cope in an environmentally responsible way with the added burdens on water infrastructure caused by new developments.

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 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, supports this bill and asks that you favorably report this bill out of committee. Thank you for your consideration.