



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources in
Support of H.805/S.480

An Act protecting wastewater and sewerage systems through the labeling of non-flushable
wipes

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October 25, 2023

This rewritten and resubmitted legislation is one necessary step to achieve 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. What is actually safe for a septic system or will dissolve or break down sufficiently to not clog sewer systems is not regulated. Most wipes are not safely flushable, but are either labeled as flushable or unlabeled. Especially with the added concerns from the contagious illnesses, many more wipes have been used and flushed. This has resulted in more than \$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. Colorado has already passed similar legislation, and other states are working on it.

These bills mandate that all wipes be labeled, and that non-flushable wipes have labeling that makes their status readily apparent. It prohibits making false claims about flushability. 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 44 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.