



The New York Water Environment Association, Inc.
The Water Quality Management Professionals

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Open Letter to the Members of the NYS Legislature

Re: Required Water Infrastructure Investments
Property Tax Cap

The New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) is a professional organization of over 2,500 members dedicated to improving New York's water resources. Many NYWEA members work at or support water resource recovery facilities – formerly referred to as wastewater treatment facilities – that protect water quality and public health 24-hours a day, 7-days a week.

We respectfully request that you consider exempting charges needed for the provision of water and sewer services from the tax cap calculations. In short, the tax cap adversely impacts the implementation of needed investments for water infrastructure.

Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature have taken unprecedented steps to support investment in clean water infrastructure through the enacted Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, along with proposals such as the proposed “Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017” in the State Budget and proposed Senate Bill S3772A (the “Clean Water Bond Act of 2017”). Municipalities, advocacy groups, and the public across New York have commended the State Government's leadership on this issue. New York has identified investment in protection of its precious water resources as a critical need.

Even if the above mentioned funding proposals for water infrastructure are enacted, the monies available will cover only a small fraction of the capital investments required across the state. The American Society of Civil Engineers reports \$75 billion in water and wastewater needs¹. Recent data collected for the Federal Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds identified needed investment levels of a similar magnitude. The funding gap will need to

¹ “2015 Report Card”, The American Society of Civil Engineers indicates a “D” Grade for wastewater with an estimated cost of \$36.2 billion over 20 years, and a “C” Grade for water with an estimated cost of \$38.7 billion over the same period.

be filled by local governments, which already shoulder over 95% of infrastructure costs².

NYWEA agrees in principal with the need for property tax relief, but this relief cannot be detrimental to the protection of public health, the protection of the environment, and the significant support of New York's economy that our utilities provide. Without additional funding wastewater treatment facilities will not be able to meet regulatory requirements in the future. The only sources of revenue most local municipalities have to fund the 95+% of infrastructure costs are water and sewer charges. Several NYWEA members have commented that because their charges are included in their municipality's tax cap calculation, they are handcuffed in their ability to address infrastructure needs. In the interest of New York's vital water resources, NYWEA asks that you consider exempting water and sewer charges from tax cap calculations to remove a key barrier to proper funding of these critical infrastructure services.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact NYWEA's Executive Director, Patricia Cerro-Reehil, at (315) 422-7811 or pcr@nywea.org if you would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul J. McGarvey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul J. McGarvey, P.E.
NYWEA President

² "Local Government Investment in Municipal Water and Sewer Infrastructure: Adding Value to the National Economy", United States Conference of Mayors, Mayors Water Council, R. Krop et al., 2008.