



Testimony of the  
Huron River Watershed Council

To The

Michigan State Senate  
Committee on Local Government  
On Senate Bill 660

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Klinefelt and Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 660. The Huron River Watershed Council was founded in 1965 and is Michigan's oldest regional river protection organization. HRWC is a coalition of residents, businesses, and member governments working to protect and restore the Huron River, its tributary streams, lakes, wetlands, groundwater, and surrounding landscape.

I am here today to express our support for SB 660. This bill provides local governments across Michigan with the authority to establish stormwater utilities, which are critical avenues for funding needed water infrastructure improvements and mitigating flooding and pollution.

Stormwater is one of the largest sources of pollutants going into our state's freshwater resources, in part because many stormwater systems have aged beyond their design lifetimes and are now in various states of disrepair. Michigan communities must be much more deliberate in managing stormwater, especially in the face of increasing precipitation and severe storms. HRWC works with over 25 county and local governments in Livingston, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties to collaboratively address stormwater regulations, maintain and upgrade stormwater infrastructure, and measure the impact of best management practices through water quality monitoring. Our municipal partners want to maintain and improve their stormwater systems to minimize their impact on water quality and mitigate flooding, but most struggle to fund these expensive yet needed infrastructure projects using traditional revenue streams.

For decades, communities have funded stormwater systems through water and sewer utilities, general funds, and state and federal grants. Cash-strapped general funds cannot sufficiently support the maintenance of aging stormwater systems, and the use of drinking water and sewer utilities to fund stormwater systems is neither appropriate nor legal in most cases. A few local governments in Michigan successfully established stormwater utilities to cover these necessary investments, but others have faced legal challenges. This creates confusion among local governments as to whether stormwater systems can be funded through utility fees. Other municipalities are hesitant to implement utility fees despite the persistent need for stormwater funding due to a fear of litigation.

SB 660 authorizes local governments to create stormwater utilities and provides a clear legal roadmap for their adoption. This bill empowers local governments to develop their own funding mechanism for repairing or replacing outdated stormwater infrastructure and constructing new stormwater systems. The straightforward guidance outlined in SB 660 will reduce the existing legal and financial risks of forming a stormwater utility and allow for broader adoption of utilities across Michigan. More stormwater utilities in Michigan would improve water quality and reduce flooding by increasing local capacity to handle and treat storm events. In our experience, communities with successful stormwater utilities can more readily repair and upgrade their stormwater systems, and we have measured improvements in the quality of the Huron River and flood frequency reduction in these communities. This legislation is critical to improving the health of all Michigan's rivers and bolstering local resilience to flooding.

I appreciate this opportunity to support Senate Bill 660 on behalf of the Huron River Watershed Council and urge the committee to support this legislation. By voting in support of this bill, the committee will enable Michigan municipalities to better manage their stormwater systems and improve the quality of Michigan waters.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available to answer any questions.

