

# Wipes Labeling can Save Ratepayers \$ Keep Waters Clean



**S.480/H.805 - An Act protecting wastewater and sewerage systems through the labeling of non-flushable wipes - Sponsors: Senator James B. Eldridge, Rep. Sean Garballey, Rep. Steven Owens - Referred to Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**

## ISSUE

Massachusetts sewers face roughly **\$10 million in annual** avoidable costs for clogs, fouled pumps and resulting sanitary sewer overflows. As the popularity of various wipes increases and users flush them, these costs will increase. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of wipes increased greatly, causing dangerous clogs and public health issues for sewer systems and workers.

Since the early 2000s, wipes have been aggressively marketed as a replacement for toilet paper, mops, cleaning brushes and rags. This multi-billion-dollar industry has had disastrous impacts on local sewer systems.

## KEY POINTS

This legislation targets only wipes and other products that are **NOT** flushable **according to industry**.

- Unlike toilet paper, wipes are not “dispersible” in normal sewer conditions.
- There is lack of consistency in labeling, and some wipes product labels have no information about disposal at all. This creates consumer confusion about the proper disposal of these products.
- Wipes Contain Plastic: Nearly all baby wipes, household cleaning wipes and cosmetic wipes have a significant amount of plastic in them. Plastic fibers are engineered for strength, and these wipes don’t break down, they rope together and create massive clogs that catch other debris.
- Wipes should be properly and clearly labeled.
- Similar bills are now law in California, Illinois, Oregon, and Washington.

## ACTION REQUESTED — Clear Consumer Messaging

- We respectfully ask that the Legislature pass these bills to classify wipes, using wipes-industry standards as “non-flushable.”
- We ask that those wipes that do not meet industry standards for dispersibility have prominent, mandatory “Do Not Flush” labelling, following NACWA labeling guidelines.

*In addition to the associations listed above, these associations and organizations support these bills:*

*MWRA Advisory Board*

*WAC, Wastewater Advisory Committee to the MWRA*

*WSCAC, Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee to the MWRA*

*Yankee Onsite Wastewater Association*