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ELDRIDGE, DYKEMA DISCUSS STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STATE'S AGING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AT ENVIRONMENTAL SEMINAR

Upgrades, Greater Investment in Water Infrastructure Needed

BOSTON— State Senator Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton) and State Representative Carolyn Dykema (D-Holliston) today discussed the critical need for modernization and greater investments in water pipes and treatments systems across the state at the first in a series of environmental seminars for legislators.

"Water plays a vital role in our lives and the need for reliable and updated water infrastructure throughout the Commonwealth is strong," said Senator Eldridge. "Our water pipes and treatment systems hidden underground have been deteriorating unnoticed for years and it is critical that we help cities and towns finance and preserve our precious water resources. Upgrading our aging water infrastructure will protect our state's water supply for generations of residents and promote stronger economic development across the Commonwealth."

Senator Eldridge and Representative Dykema were joined by leading state advocates for water conservation, including Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Assistant Commissioner Bethany Card, Director of Government Relations for The Nature Conservancy Steve Long and Massachusetts Rivers Alliance Executive Director Julia Blatt.

"Water is one of our most basic needs, yet we often take the infrastructure that delivers it to our homes and businesses for granted," said Representative Carolyn Dykema. "This seminar provided an opportunity to share the work of the Water Infrastructure Finance Commission with fellow legislators and highlights the work we need to do to fund and maintain this important public asset and lays out a road map for creating a 21st-century water infrastructure system to meet the needs of our Commonwealth. By making investment in our water system a priority, we are also prioritizing economic growth, job creation, and the sustainability of our communities."

MassDEP Assistant Commissioner Card presented the Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) Framework, which is intended to guide management of the water in the Commonwealth so that there is enough for the many and sometimes competing long-term water needs of our communities and our aquatic ecosystems. SWMI establishes a Safe Yield, the term used to express the amount of water an aquifer or well can yield for consumption without depleting the source, which will be implemented in each of the Massachusetts' 27 watersheds, and stream flow criteria, which will be applied by MassDEP when issuing Water Management Act permits.

Massachusetts cities and towns are responsible for maintaining more than 125,000 miles of sewer pipes and more than 100 municipal wastewater treatment plants, many of which are aging. Cities and towns are tasked with maintaining thousands of drinking water wells and more than 200 surface water supplies.

Senator Eldridge introduced two bills this session that address water infrastructure needs in the Commonwealth. "An Act Relative To Best Management Practices in Water" would encourage the adoption of best management practices for both the clean water state revolving fund (SRF) and the drinking water state revolving fund. "An Act To Mitigate Water Resource Impacts" would authorize adoption of an opt-in "water-banking" fund by communities.

The legislation was filed after final recommendations were submitted last year by the Water Infrastructure Finance Commission (WIFC) Chaired by Senator Eldridge and Representative Dykema. WIFC was charged with developing a comprehensive, long-range water infrastructure finance plan for the commonwealth and its municipalities following two years of research, public hearings and meetings. Senator Eldridge and Representative Dykema visited Israel last year as part of the Massachusetts Water Innovation Mission to Israel to learn best practices in water innovation to implement at home.

Final recommendations submitted by WIFC included sustaining current investments in Water and Sewer State Revolving Funds, establishing a Trust Fund to be funded annually at \$200 million, promoting best management practices to reduce costs and find efficiencies and retiring the existing debt through a newly structured debt assistance program. The final report is available online [here](#).