Patrick B. Burke
Assemblyman 142nd
Erie County

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Dear Friends,

When I first introduced the Great Lakes Bill of Rights in 2019, then known as the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, I was proud to bring a growing global movement to the New York State Legislature. The idea that our lakes, rivers and ecosystems should have legal rights isn't new, but it has been largely absent from Western legal and political thinking.

With your support and help from the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF), we've reintroduced an expanded version of the bill this year: A5156a, *The Great Lakes and State Waters Bill of Rights*. This legislation would recognize legal rights for all waterways in New York and empower communities and local governments to create enforceable protections for their ecosystems.

The Great Lakes are filled with plastic, polluted by industry, overrun by invasive species and increasingly threatened by climate change. This bill gives us a way to act. It shifts power back to people and ecosystems, and away from polluters. If passed, New York will be the first state in the country to legally recognize the rights of nature.

Here's how you can help:

- Ask your Assemblymember to co-sponsor A5156a. Find them here: nyassembly.gov/mem/search
- Share our efforts with environmental groups and community leaders.
- Let my office know if your organization wants to endorse the bill, add a memo of support, or stay informed on the legislation as it travels through the Assembly.

Protecting our water means protecting our health, our communities, and our future. Let's get it done.

Sincerely,

Patrick B. Burke

Patrick B. Burke
Chair, Cities Committee
Chair, Great Lakes Taskforce
NYSA District 142

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