



2141 N Howard St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19122  
[www.myneighborhoodproject.org](http://www.myneighborhoodproject.org)

Good morning Water Commissioner, members of the Water Rate Board and public. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to testify before you all this morning in support of storm water fees being discounted 100% for community gardens. My name is Justin Trezza, and for the last four years I have been the Executive Director of Norris Square Neighborhood Project, a grassroots arts, culture and gardening organization that for the last forty years has served residents, primarily youth identifying as Latinx in the 19122, 19133 and 19140 zip codes.

Since the 1980s, Norris Square Neighborhood Project (NSNP) has been collaborating with community residents to advance the neighborhood through the revitalization of vacant spaces and their transformation to culturally relevant communal garden spaces. Beginning in 1983 and thanks to the valiant efforts of the women of Grupo Motivos, a collective of neighborhood women, NSNP was able to establish its first urban garden, Raíces, which quickly grew into 5 additional gardens over the years – Las Parcelas, El Batey, Jardín de la Paz, Butterfly Garden and Villa Africana Colobo. Each of these gardens is fundamental to the community – providing culturally relevant and affordable produce to the community, sharing the story and history of the neighborhood, and most importantly preserving the Boricua and Latinx cultures.

NSNP strongly supports stormwater fees being discounted by 100% for community gardens and farms here in Philadelphia. The elimination of stormwater fees will not only reduce the financial burdens posed by stormwater billing on gardens such as Las Parcelas (financial burdens that cannot be easily covered by grant applications or traditional funding sources), but also benefit the Philadelphia community as a whole (i.e. further incentive stormwater mitigation, beautification of neighborhoods, and access to organic produce). In the case of NSNP, an organization with a budget of half a million and a staff of eight, this bill will relieve us of several thousands of dollars in stormwater fees, a sum of money that can easily be reinvested in programs like our Raíces de Cambio – a youth garden apprenticeship program aimed to employ high school youth while developing their leadership skills and critical thinking.

Beyond the benefits to nonprofits like Norris Square Neighborhood Project and the hundreds of urban gardens throughout the city, this action demonstrates Philadelphia's dedication, as a city, to modeling sustainability. By eliminating stormwater fees for gardens, you are acknowledging their ecological and social benefits, including increasing habitat for beneficial insects and birds, reducing run off, creating more just food systems, and most importantly preserving the sustainability of sacred spaces such as Las Parcelas.

Once again, thank you.