

**Testimony of Karina Ricks
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**PA Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee
Public Hearing Examining Flooding, Landslides & SB 1131
September 18, 2018
Pittsburgh, PA**

Chairman Vulakovich, Chairman Costa, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the impact that recent flooding and landslides has had on the City of Pittsburgh and its residents.

- A deep winter cold followed by historic rains, in a steeply sloped area with a legacy of mining creates some challenging hydrologic issues with water coming down from above, percolating up from below (as the mine shafts fill up) and filling our creeks and rivers as we sit at the downstream confluence. When 100 year floods occur multiple times a year, we may need to prepare for this as the new normal.
- In a built urban center, land movement almost inevitably has economic consequences. We have seen multiple homes needing to be evacuated or condemned and one literally crushed by the load. Even where there is not a loss of personal property, economic consequences persist as roads or transit lines are closed and commuters experience longer, more congested and more unreliable commutes. Freight movement is impacted as well -- both trucks and trains.
- The slopes of Pittsburgh have helped to build the Commonwealth and the Nation. The unique geology of our area produced the Pittsburgh coal seams but also the redbeds above and below that, when combined with persistent rains, can no longer hold the heavy saturated soils above them and let loose down the steep slopes in a landslide. The city alone cannot absorb the cost of these slides much less afford strategies to attempt to mitigate or intervene in advance.
- We have done what we can do as a municipality. We have zoning limitations on our steep slopes. We have acquired properties and established greenways in our slide prone areas.
- Unlike other programs for maintenance of our bridges or construction of new facilities, there is no established program for state cost sharing in slide remediation or other assistance. To maintain and support the economic vitality of southwestern Pennsylvania, this is desperately needed.

- Regarding flooding, watersheds do not respect political or jurisdictional boundaries. Development upstream leads to debris and runoff downstream. We want to see growth throughout the region and the watershed, but this means we must work as a region, across jurisdictions, to make sure we are maintaining the capacity of our waterways to support this growth.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee may have.