



**Testimony of Staten Island Chamber of Commerce President & CEO – Linda M. Baran  
Before the New York City Water Board Concerning Water Rate Hikes in Fiscal Year 2012  
May 2, 2011, 7:00 p.m.**

Good evening, my name is Linda Baran, President of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce. On behalf of the Chamber and our 800 small businesses that employ over 20,000 people, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the New York City Water Board regarding the proposed water and sewer rate increase for fiscal year 2012.

I am here today to voice our strong opposition to yet **another** increase in water and sewer rates! Although I appreciate the vitally important function the Water Board performs, I must object to the actions that have resulted in such a dramatic increase in water rates over the last decade. In ten years water rates have skyrocketed over 93 percent.

I understand that the rate increases are at least in part due to infrastructure upgrades that are mandated, but not paid for, by the federal government. It is time the Water Board work with the federal and state governments to come up with a comprehensive, long term plan that will solve New York City's water budget.

Businesses are operating with the slimmest profit margins in years. A 7.5% increase in their water bill can be enough to push a business into the red. Businesses cannot forecast these drastic rate increases, and therefore are unable to create a financial plan to deal with them. The only way for businesses to survive these constant and unpredictable increases is to pass the cost down to the consumer. It is a vicious cycle that is adversely affecting both businesses and residents.

On a personal note, this is now the fourth year in a row I have appeared before you on behalf of the Staten Island business community to oppose what has become an annual rate increase. To my knowledge, the public hearings have had absolutely zero influence on the final decision and I hold out very little hope that this year will be different. For too long the Water Board has

assumed that New York City businesses and residents can shoulder the significant burden these increases place on them. However, in such a fragile economy the impact of these increases will be severe. I strongly urge you to reconsider this increase.

Thank you once again for allowing me the time to testify.