



## **BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT VANESSA L. GIBSON**

Good evening, and thank you to Chair Shaw and members of the New York City Water Board for convening this hearing tonight at Mercy College in the East Bronx. This hearing will give the residents of The Bronx the opportunity to make their voices heard regarding the proposed rate increase for the water and sewer system that will take effect on July 1, 2026.

The work of the Department of Environmental Protection to oversee the continued resiliency and viability of the city's water and sewer systems is critical to the health and well-being of all of our residents. The delivery of over one billion gallons of clean water to the city each day, while maintaining 7,000 miles of water mains, 7,500 miles of sewer mains, 150,000 catch basins, 14 Wastewater Resource Recovery Facilities, and other infrastructure, is an immense task that DEP undertakes with unparalleled competence and professionalism.

Operating, maintaining, and improving such a vast infrastructure necessitates significant outlays of funding, resulting in a nearly \$5 billion budget for operating expenses and debt service for Fiscal Year 2027. Additionally, the capital improvement program over the next ten years will see a total investment of over \$33 billion in sewers, water pollution control, water distribution, and water supply and transmission. We look forward to seeing the results of projects affecting The Bronx, such as the completion of the digester facility at the Hunts Point Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility, which will make our wastewater treatment system more efficient and reliable, while also increasing capacity.

This budget increase and significant capital project outlay has resulted in a proposed rate increase of 6%, which is the second-highest annual rate increase over the past 14 years. This will mean an average water bill increase of \$73 per year for single-family homes and \$55-80 per year for multi-family homes, depending on their billing type. While a \$5-7 monthly increase may not seem like a large amount, many of our residents are struggling amidst the ongoing affordability crisis, and this will be a burden to their financial well-being.

Programs such as the Home Water Assistance Program, Multi-family Water Assistance Program, and Leak Forgiveness Program help mitigate these costs, but the City should do more to ensure that our residents are able to afford their water bills. All residents of our city deserve affordable access to the clean water that DEP provides, and we must ensure that these rate increases are manageable for working families.

As you consider your vote to approve these rate increases, I hope you will keep these families in mind. I urge you to work with DEP to find efficiencies and new ways of supporting low-income residents that can help mitigate the impact of these increases.

Thank you for your continued efforts along with DEP to ensure the integrity and vitality of our water and sewer systems. Your work has helped bring some of the cleanest and highest-quality water in the country to the residents of New York City at affordable rates, and I know that this goal will continue to be met in the future.