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THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK



**MICHELLE HINCHEY**  
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Hon. Michelle L. Phillips  
Secretary to the Commission  
New York State Public Service Commission  
Empire State Plaza - Agency Building 3  
Albany, NY 12223-1350

November 7, 2023

**RE: Case 23-W-0467**

Dear Commissioners,

I represent nearly 300 residents and 40 businesses in the Town of Dover who rely on the Dover Plains Water Company for their water service. I submit this letter out of great urgency and strong opposition to the Company's proposed 68% rate increase coupled with a \$30 quarterly surcharge on residents' water bills to finance a replenishable escrow account. It is worth noting that the Commission had previously denied the request for an escrow account surcharge in the Company's last rate case, No. 14-W-0378, and I stand with the people of Dover in supporting its denial once more.

More than doubling the water bill for any rural New York household or business is a severe financial burden, but in Dover, an economically disadvantaged community where 17.9%<sup>1</sup> of residents live below the poverty line, a twofold rate increase compounded by an additional \$30 surcharge would subject people to immediate financial harm. A rate increase this extreme is not proportional to the fixed and moderate incomes of Dover residents, many of whom are already forced to make impossible choices between paying their rent or mortgage, heating their home this winter, putting food on the table, or paying a medical bill. Adding water service to that list is unconscionable.

Access to clean, safe, and reliable water service is a fundamental necessity, and every water utility – no matter their size or who they serve – has a responsibility to provide service at fair rates. The proposed 68% rate increase, along with a \$30 surcharge, by the Dover Plains Water Company is neither fair nor just.

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<sup>1</sup> "Dover town, Dutchess County, New York." n.d. Census Bureau.  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/dovertowndutchesscountynynewyork>

I also strongly encourage the Commission to hold public hearings in the Town of Dover. Hearings would provide an invaluable opportunity to hear the concerns of local residents and business owners who stand to be the most impacted by the proposed rate hike. By doing so, the Commission can gain a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the far-reaching implications that a rate increase would bear on the community.

I appreciate the Commission's attention to this critical issue and its commitment to protecting customers across New York State. I will continue to advocate for the residents of Dover and work towards a fair and equitable solution.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Hinchey". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michelle Hinchey  
New York State Senator, District 41