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Kevin W. Dahill, President and CEO

#### Member Hospitals

Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical  
Center, *Patchogue*

Catholic Health Services of Long Island

- Good Samaritan Hospital Medical  
Center, *West Islip*
- New Island Hospital, *Bethpage*
- Mercy Medical Center, *Rockville  
Centre*
- St. Catherine of Siena Medical  
Center, *Smithtown*
- St. Charles Hospital, *Port Jefferson*
- St. Francis Hospital – The Heart  
Center, *Roslyn*

East End Health Alliance

- Eastern Long Island Hospital,  
*Greenport*
- Peconic Bay Medical Center,  
*Riverhead*
- Southampton Hospital,  
*Southampton*

Long Beach Medical Center, *Long Beach*

John T. Mather Memorial Hospital, *Port  
Jefferson*

Nassau University Medical Center, *East  
Meadow*

North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health  
System

- Franklin Hospital, *Valley Stream*
- Glen Cove Hospital, *Glen Cove*
- Huntington Hospital, *Huntington*
- North Shore University Hospital,  
*Manhasset*
- Plainview Hospital, *Plainview*
- Southside Hospital, *Bay Shore*
- Syosset Hospital, *Syosset*

Stony Brook University Hospital, *Stony  
Brook*

Veterans Affairs Medical Center,  
*Northport*

Winthrop South Nassau University  
Health System

- South Nassau Communities Hospital,  
*Oceanside*
- Winthrop-University Hospital,  
*Mineola*

## **Testimony before the Nassau County Legislature In opposition to the Proposed County Sewer and Storm Water Resources District Fee on Non-Profit Institutions October 29, 2010**

Presiding Officer Schmitt, Minority Leader Yatauro and Members of the Legislature, I thank you for the opportunity to speak in opposition to the proposed fee on sewer usage by non-for-profit and exempt institutions.

My name is Wendy Darwell. I am the chief operating officer for the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, the regional association representing the public and not-for-profit hospitals on Long Island, including the 12 hospitals in Nassau County. The Hospital Council's mission is to advocate for the interests of hospitals and their patients, and to work for the betterment of health care in our communities.

Hospitals, particularly the smaller institutions in the county, are already in financial distress. In just the last two years, Nassau County hospitals have endured more than \$103 million in state budget cuts and taxes, an amount that is proportionately larger than even those cuts sustained by public education. Federal health care reform will result in another \$870 million in cuts to these same institutions over the next decade. These staggering cuts come at the same time that hospitals are struggling to invest in the advanced technology and infrastructure upgrades that are necessary to meet the needs of our communities' aging population.

The proposed levy on hospitals' water consumption only adds to the burden. At the rate of one penny per gallon on their total water usage, hospitals would incur an annual levy of approximately \$6 million. This is not an inconsiderable amount.

Furthermore, the proposed means of calculating this fee is not appropriate. Taxing the water consumption of these institutions is not an accurate gauge of the institutions' impact on the county sewer system. For some hospitals, as much as one-third of water consumption is attributed to irrigation and cooling systems, neither of which contributes to the county's sewer volume. At minimum, the Legislature should consider exempting these systems from the usage fee.

Finally, we oppose the proposed levy because it is inherently wrong to apply a tax to not-for-profit institutions that are, by their definition, intended to be exempt from taxes in exchange for their greater contributions to the community. The twelve hospitals more than fulfill this obligation, providing charity care valued in the tens of millions of dollars and dozens of community service programs. Among these contributions to the community are multiple partnerships with the Nassau County government, including flu vaccine distribution and tobacco cessation programs, as well as emergency preparedness efforts.

Simply put, it sets a dangerous precedent. Our institutions have every reason to fear that, once that line has been crossed, they will be opened up to repeated increases of this tax and the application of other levies.

For all of these reasons, the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council opposes the application of a water usage fee on non-profit institutions and urges the Legislature to amend this provision of the Executive Budget.

Wendy D. Darwell,  
Vice President and Chief Operating Officer