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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHEN IT COMES TO SAVING PUBLIC WATER AND THE CHESTER WATER AUTHORITY: DELTAS ARE THERE!

CHESTER, PA—February 29, 2024: With the new appointment of Leola Williams to the Chester Water Authority (CWA) board, history was made. For the first time, three Delta Sigma Theta (Delta) sisters have garnered the spotlight as leaders and champions for public water in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., an organization that has played a major role in Black History, was founded on January 13, 1913, by 22 collegiate women at Howard University. These women aimed to promote academic excellence and provide assistance to those in need. The founders participated in the Women's Suffrage March in Washington, D.C. in March of 1913. Today, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is a private, not-for-profit organization with over 350,000 predominantly Black, college-educated women as members. Deltas are dedicated to public service with an emphasis on programs that assist the African American community. This includes the fight for public water as water privatization has a disproportionate financial impact on the poor and particularly on Black households. Notable Deltas include singer Roberta Flack, civil rights leader and congresswomen Barbara Jordan, and former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorors and CWA board members Livia Smith (left), Leola Williams (middle) and Nicole Whitaker (right) clad in the Delta signature red color.

"From the White House, to the State House, to the Chester City community, Deltas are in there," notes Leola Williams, charter member of the Chester Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta and newly appointed CWA board member representing Pennsylvania's City of Chester. "Deltas are the community's guardians, watching to ensure things go right. We won't sit back. Whatever needs to be done. Wherever things need to be done. Deltas are there."

All three women became proud Deltas as undergraduates. Leola Williams became a Delta at Cheyney University. Livia Smith became a Delta at Millersville University. Both women studied education. Nicole Whitaker majored in criminal justice with a minor in political science at Savannah State University where she became a Delta.

Delta's community service, social, and philanthropic projects revolve around their "Five-Point Thrust." The five points include: economic development, educational development, international awareness and involvement, physical and mental health, and political awareness and involvement.

"From the time I heard about Delta Sigma Theta as an undergraduate, I felt very connected to Delta's five-point thrust; the Deltas and their philosophy shaped me into who I am today. I have been a teacher, the Director of Municipal Health Services for the city of Chester, and the Chair of the Chester Democratic Committee," shares Livia Smith, another charter member of the Chester Alumnae Chapter and long-time CWA board member from the City of Chester.

Livia Smith, CWA board member since 2011 and current Treasurer.

Founded in 1994 with 20 members, the Delta's Chester Alumnae Chapter marks its 30-year anniversary this year. Today, they have approximately 170 active members. One of the initiatives that makes them proud is their dedication to educational scholarships for area youth. The chapter started small by distributing $500 to a graduating senior, and today, the chapter distributes $25,000 a year in educational scholarships.

Nicole Whitaker, CWA board member since 2022.

"We are proud to be celebrating our thirtieth year of service to residents across Delaware County," exclaims Nicole Whitaker, Delta Chester Alumnae Chapter and CWA board member representing Delaware County, PA. "For many years, we were considered a small chapter. We are now considered a medium-size chapter since our membership growth in 2020."

In the case of Ms. Whitaker, her background and experience with the Deltas led to her passion for local

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government. In 2008, she ran and won the seat for 2nd Ward Commissioner of Upper Chichester Township, becoming the first African American woman to be elected to that position. In January of 2012, she became the first woman to become President of the Board of Commissioners in Upper Chichester Township.

Ms. Williams was a public school teacher for 40 years and was proud to be named Teacher of The Year and Who's Who Among America's Teachers. "Deltas encourage our fellow members. Better yourself, better your businesses, and better your block. Look at what is happening in your community, your neighborhood, and what you can do to uplift yourself and those around you. That might be buying real estate in your community if a building needs repair and maintenance, and for senior members like me, we are called Delta Dears, it includes watching out for scams and taking care of our health. We are always looking out for each other—other Deltas, and our community at large. It's a real family," explains Ms. Williams. "It's hard for members of the public to get involved sometimes. Therefore, you need community members who are dedicated. This is where the Deltas step in. So, even when some of my friends left the City, I never wanted to leave Chester. It's always been my goal to make things better right here," notes Ms. Williams.

Leola Williams was appointed to the CWA board in 2024.

Making things better right here is exactly what the trio plans to do as board members for the Chester Water Authority (CWA) which has been fighting a hostile takeover attempt by Aqua since 2017. CWA is a well-maintained, fiscally-sound, award-winning municipal water authority that serves over 200,000 people and businesses in Chester County, Delaware County and the City of Chester. CWA was awarded the Best Tasting Water in Pennsylvania in 2023 by the American Water Works Association.

Ms. Smith notes, "As a Delta, I've learned that nothing grows when you keep it to yourself. You can't put something under the rock and say, 'Oh, it's mine, I'm not willing to share.' Nothing progresses when you do that. When you share and spread the message, it's not only a benefit to you, but also your community and the next generation. In that way, we must spread the message about our public water. Letting people know why it's important to save our public water including preserving affordable rates, especially in communities of people who have limited income, such as Chester."

Ms. Whitaker adds, "Social Justice is in my DNA. Water is a natural resource that should not be privatized. I would state, without a doubt, that our public water and the hostile attempt to take over our public water through various means is at a critical point. A purchase by a for-profit water company would ultimately lead to a more impoverished community in Delaware County and beyond. The result of privatization would be that the cost of our water would in fact triple and continue to rapidly increase over time. Ratepayers across the entire service area, Chester County, Delaware County, would be negatively impacted and many would no longer be able to

afford their water service. The rate of poverty in the communities that CWA serves will rise."

It is of particular note that if CWA were sold to a for-profit water company, 49% of Black households in the service area would face affordability challenges. Therefore, these Deltas' dedication to social action doesn't stop with being members of the CWA Board. They see their advocacy work as direct one-on-one with community members. "Pay attention to bills and laws that are being proposed by our elected officials," encourages Ms. Whitaker. "Attend lobby days in the State Capital. Hold your elected officials accountable for what they say and what they do. If they are doing the right things, then support them during their tenures. As board members, we need to get out into the community and let folks know what's going on in hopes of getting them involved in advocacy. If we sit idly by, these for-profit water companies will take our water. Control over our water could be gone forever before you even know what happened."

"It's not just a matter of you turning on the faucet and there your water is," adds Ms. Smith. "A lot of dedicated, talented and experienced people, hard work, and knowledge go into the water you drink. Our public water, watershed, and waterways must be protected. As a board member, I am proud to be part of CWA's history, successful operation, management, and its sustainable future."

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To learn more about the fight to save CWA, go to savecwa.org. To learn more about the Chester Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., go to dstchesterpaac.org

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