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OPINION

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No exit plan

Chester has lived under state financial oversight since 1995. The current receivership began in 2020. Six years later, it still has no end date.

Responding to a request from the Chester Water Authority, the state Department of Community and Economic Development offered a list of accomplishments but no end date and no exit plan. Its letter conceded "the City's fiscal emergency is ongoing" without committing to benchmarks or a process for ending it.

If this were a country, they would call it an occupation.

The receiver's occupation of the city sidelines Chester's elected officials and the voters who chose them. Taxpayers fund it, and the water authority's ratepayers bear the cost of defending their system against it.

At a minimum, the Department of Community and Economic Development should set measurable exit criteria and a public timeline to end the receivership when the current receiver's term expires, or sooner. That is the same accountability the department demands of everyone else.

Noel Brandon, *chair, Chester Water Authority*