



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f
163 West 125th Street, 5th floor, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f
www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Statement for the New York State Public Service Commission
Public Hearing on Charter Communications, Inc. and Time Warner Cable Inc. Approval
of Reorganization & Finance Arrangements
October, 2015

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. I want to thank the New York State Public Service Commission and ALJ Ben Wiles for soliciting public input on the proposed merger of Time Warner Cable and Charter Communications. I testified before the Public Service Commission last year regarding the proposed merger of Time Warner Cable and Comcast, and here we are again with another merger before us.

As I have expressed previously, I am generally skeptical of any proposed consolidation in the telecommunications marketplace, where we have seen de facto monopolies arise in many parts of the country. It is the role of the Public Service Commission to determine whether this proposed merger is in the public interest of New Yorkers, and I urge you to focus on the consumer impact of this proposal.

At the outset, I believe it is important to highlight some notable differences between this proposal and the Comcast merger. First, I want to thank Charter for making a number of important commitments, such as a commitment to sustained net neutrality, no matter the outcome of the pending FCC litigation on this matter. Second, Charter has indicated a commitment to providing faster broadband speeds (at a minimum tier of 60 Mbps) than those currently offered by Time Warner, allegedly at lower costs. I urge the PSC to focus on these price and speed tiers in its review of the deal to ensure that quality broadband is offered at reasonable prices. Charter also does not have the scope of independent programming that Comcast controls. This is important, as it is essential not to harm content producers or broadcasters with any perceived conflict of interest in negotiations around broadcasting deals. Charter has indicated a strong commitment to maintaining valued local programming in the NY area, such as New York 1 and our local public access channels like MNN. I would hope that the new company takes seriously its commitment to support these local entities, which provide an important source of neighborhood news and information that is sorely needed in the media.

I have met with Charter, and indicated my strong belief that low-cost internet options must also be provided to low-income consumers, similar to the Connect2Compete program offered by Bright House. As we know, the number of New Yorkers who lack home broadband access remains far too high, and price is a leading reason for the lack of adoption. Another important factor is the lack of training available to show New Yorkers who lack home broadband the benefits of its use. Despite the tremendous importance of broadband in connecting to employment, entertainment, and social connections, too many New Yorkers believe that they do

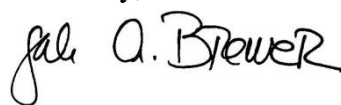
not need home internet. I believe that the lack of training and support is a primary reason for this, and a small amount of assistance could lead thousands of New Yorkers to adopt home connections. I would urge the PSC to focus on the need for training as an onramp to the internet for the disconnected, and would hope that New Charter would make strong commitments to work with local CBOs doing technology assistance to accomplish this important goal. This would serve the dual purpose of expanding Charter's customer base while bringing more New Yorkers online. At minimum, an affordable rate of \$9.95 must be offered for low-income New Yorkers, accompanied by meaningful commitments to offer technology assistance for those curious about broadband use. I would urge that this program be as expansive as possible to include not just families with students in the free or reduced-lunch program, but all low-income individuals.

Moving beyond home connections, we also know that New York has a rich history of anchor institutions that provide job training, community connections, and more. Our libraries, senior centers, NYCHA community centers and more have been serving New Yorkers for hundreds of years. New Charter must work with these entities to help provide affordable internet via a combination of hardline and Wi-Fi connections. The company should also seek to leverage existing public-private partnerships such as the LinkNYC kiosk program to build a robust network of public Wi-Fi hotspots across the city. New York should lead the way as a connected city, and our public hotspots are an important part of this mission. I hope we can work with industry to accomplish this, which means expanding on Time Warner's existing network of hotspots, while hopefully increasing speeds and bandwidth capabilities.

Finally, one of the most common complaints I receive from constituents regarding their telecom provider is related to repairs and customer service. Telecom companies consistently rank near the bottom of all major companies in terms of their customer service response. Many point to the lack of effective competition for this failure, as many customers simply have nowhere else to go. As a condition of any merger, I would urge the PSC to hold New Charter to a high standard when it comes to providing adequate customer service and making timely repairs. This means ensuring that there are sufficient local workers in New York to make repairs and handle customer service calls. We must prohibit coercive upselling of products and services, and provide clear and transparent information on any charges associated with service calls or system repairs.

To ensure all of these goals are met, it is essential that New Charter commit to significant capital investment in upgrading and maintaining cable and broadband infrastructure, including upgrading coaxial cable to fiber wherever possible. If and only if all these areas are addressed will I feel comfortable deeming this merger in the public interest of New Yorkers. Thank you for your attention to these issues, and I look forward to working with you throughout this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gale" and last name "Brewer" clearly legible.

Gale A. Brewer