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NEWS RELEASE

New Castle County's AAA Credit Rating Reaffirmed by Fitch

Fitch Ratings in New York has affirmed its AAA credit rating for New Castle County Government's \$402.7 million in general obligation bonds, citing a ratings outlook that is stable.

"Strong financial management and prudent budgeting practices have led to the maintenance of ample reserves, providing the county with a high degree of financial flexibility," Fitch said in a press release.

Fitch described the County's unrestricted fund balance of \$98.6 million as "a strong 44% of spending at the close of the 2013 fiscal year." This included rainy day and tax stabilization funds. The agency expects the County's overall debt burden to remain low, and it describes pension and other-post employment benefits as manageable.

"This prestigious AAA bond rating is welcome news as we continue to think of how to prudently manage our finances into the future," County Executive Gordon said. "It's truly humbling, as we live in an age in which we hear of municipalities going broke."

Fitch cited a strong financial profile, a stable tax base, a favorable socioeconomic profile, a better-than-average unemployment rate, a diverse economy and a stable tax base for the County. The ratings agency noted that the County benefits from the presence of major chemical facilities, technology and research centers, a sizable government sector, the University of Delaware, and a large financial services industry. Fitch recognized that while AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals announced a reduction in its workforce in New Castle County, this was offset by the sale of company property to JP Morgan Chase and Applied Bank.

"Socioeconomic indicators are above-average, with median household income 108% and 122% of the state and national levels, respectively," Fitch said. "The county's May 2014 unemployment rate of 5.9% compares favorably to the national average of 6.1% and is just slightly higher than the state's rate of 5.8%."