



Written Testimony Submitted to the Charter Revision Commission

May 30, 2025

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Fair Share

From: Barbara Blair [REDACTED]

To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Date: Wed, 30 Apr 2025 17:57:27 +0000

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Again I am testifying urging the City Charter Committee to do what the New York City Council cannot, codify FAIR SHARE as part of the planning process. There are certain neighborhoods that are overwhelmed by social services, including the garment district in midtown Manhattan. The city and state were able to dump services that other neighborhoods did not want in this location because there were no residential tenants to push back. Now, as we look to fill our empty buildings with residential, we must be assured that this practice will not continue. Neighborhoods that do not have LULUs (locally unwanted land uses) in their districts will never vote to require a more equitable distribution. Only the City Charter can do this. Fair Share was in the 1991 City Charter but there is no process or enforcement of the concept and it pertained to city owned properties. Fair Share must include services that are contracted by the city or state or in other ways negatively impact a neighborhood.

Please do not ignore this recommendation a second time.

Barbara Blair

BARBARA A. BLAIR

President

Garment District Alliance
[REDACTED]

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-8899866 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agencymail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Thu, 01 May 2025 14:37:58 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Thursday, May 1, 2025, at 10:37:35 AM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Pedro Rodriguez

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Hello Charter Commission, I am writing to you because I just learned from a news article that you are considering putting out a charter change for Open Primaries. While I understand why this idea seems attractive, it is misguided and does not fix the problem it is trying to fix. The argument for it is that it will give independents a vote in primaries, but at the end of the day, it is free to register with a party, so an independent not being a member of a party isn't what's keeping them away from it. In fact, Open Primaries cheapens the point of being part of a party. People join parties to be part of a group of people who share their vision; opening them up to non-members calls into question the point of having parties. Instead of Open Primaries, the Charter Commission should ask the following question: why don't independents have a voice *right now*? The answer is that smaller parties don't have a chance in our current Winner-Takes-All election system. The Charter Commission should focus on fixing that issue instead, as having Open Primaries does not solve that issue. We currently have Ranked Choice Voting, but only on primaries; maybe such a system should also be expanded to the general. On the same topic, I also learned from the article above that the Commission is looking to change

ULURP. I agree with this, but to tie it back to voting, one of the most significant issues with ULURP, member deference, arises from our district-based representation and elections for the council. While great in theory, district-based representation leads to fragmentation in small municipalities like cities: every member will care about their district and not the city as a whole. I recommend changing how the NYC Council is elected and run from a district-based to a proportional representation system where all New Yorkers will vote for a party or group of politicians to represent them citywide. Based on the proportion of votes each party gets, they will get that many seats on the council. This system would not only lead to more citywide politics, which would lead to better solutions to citywide problems like transportation, housing, and the environment, but it would also give smaller parties and independents a chance to have their voices heard



Philip Habib & Associates, an AKRF Division

Engineers and Planners •

April 30, 2025

Mr. Robert Holbrook
Charter Revision Commission

Re: Recommendations for Modernizing the City Map

Dear Mr. Holbrook:

The New York City mapping process is currently handled by the individual Boroughs with coordination and guidance provided by the Department of City Planning Technical Review Division. Each Borough's Topographical Bureau has had a department with mapping staff to create and review mapping applications and a licensed engineer to sign the maps prior to approval and signature of the Borough President. In recent years, many of the Boroughs have reduced staff levels, which has affected the map review process and in some cases created extensive delays in the ULURP certification.

Based on our experience preparing Alteration Maps over the past 30 plus years, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Create one central mapping office to handle mapping design and review for all Boroughs. All reference maps should be available at the central office.
2. Convert all maps to NAVD88 elevation datum. Maps now use individual Borough datums.
3. Develop digital base map of all existing record maps to be available for use/development of new alteration maps. Note that this would be very difficult to assemble to the accuracy of individual property deeds, which is required for alteration maps. However, a digital base map accurate to the level of current sectional maps would help streamline the process and save time.
4. All new maps should continue to be signed by the respective Borough President.

These changes should significantly expedite the process to create new City maps in the long-term future.

Sincerely,

Sue E. McCoy, P.E.

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Dan Marra [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Mon, 05 May 2025 13:19:47 +0000

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Having to update voter registration many months in advance of a primary in order to be able to participate in it disenfranchises many voters (especially young voters) who are unfamiliar with how primary elections work. There is no good reason to not allow independents to vote in primary elections, or even to register party same day.

The current system, in this day and age, is obtuse, and unnecessary unless the goal is to explicitly disenfranchise those who aren't aware of how it works (and of course are not taught this in school).

I have had to change my registration several times since I began voting at 18, and I have witnessed young voters eager to participate be turned away because they did not understand they needed to register for a party *months* in advance.

We need to change this if we are truly a progressive and inclusive city.

Dan Marra
[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Kristine Abrenica [REDACTED]

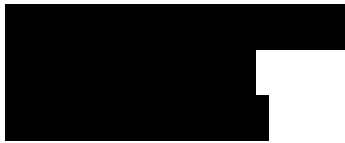
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Mon, 05 May 2025 13:20:07 +0000

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After being unable to vote in a primary because I wasn't registered as an independent, I begrudgingly switched to the Democratic Party. A lot of people don't know that the primaries are closed. It is too hard to vote in New York City, and voter turnout does not reflect the city as a whole. Open primaries address this by fixing one of the major impediments to voting.

Kristine Abrenica



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Rocco Sansone [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Mon, 05 May 2025 13:20:32 +0000

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I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, particularly immigrants, would be able to participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

Rocco Sansone



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Michelle Corporan [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Mon, 05 May 2025 13:21:54 +0000

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Non-partisan, special elections are nothing new and are a proven way to choose the best candidate from a field representing several different viewpoints. These elections have been one by candidates across the ideal spectrum. It is time that we applied this proven method to all citywide elections.

Special elections have been taking place in New York City for as long as I can remember. They are an effective way to let voters express their preference from a range of candidates and save the City the cost of running multiple different elections.

Michelle Corporan



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Brenda Ratliff [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Mon, 05 May 2025 13:22:23 +0000

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Special elections have been taking place in New York City for as long as I can remember. They are an effective way to let voters express their preference from a range of candidates and save the City the cost of running multiple different elections.

Brenda Ratliff
[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Emma Mendelson [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Mon, 05 May 2025 13:22:47 +0000

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I've had to go back and forth from independent to Democrat in order to vote in local elections throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Emma Mendelson



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Gayle Weintraub [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Mon, 05 May 2025 13:23:21 +0000

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Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Gayle Weintraub



Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-1103932 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Mon, 05 May 2025 21:18:21 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Monday, May 5, 2025, at 05:17:52 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Katherine O'Sullivan

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I understand that one thing the Commission may do is identify how to streamline the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), the process for major land use decisions in the city. Community boards are already advisory, so removing their thoughtful review would only dampen civic engagement in the city. The Borough President's role is similarly advisory and equally important. With their staff of land use experts and planners, Borough Presidents are well positioned to consider all aspects of a project and make thoughtful recommendations to improve a project. ULURP may be improved so that small-time developers and property owners can create projects and more housing. But the solution is not to stifle community participation. The Public is not the problem. I urge the Commission not to eliminate public participation in land use review processes. I support City Council member deference. More information prior to certification is needed. That is when and where delays happen. It is not with ULURP or City Council review.

Subject:

FW: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-8302852 CRC Contact
Form - General Inquiries

From: Charter Info <[REDACTED EMAIL]>

To: Charter Testimony <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Date: Tue, 06 May 2025 13:11:08 +0000

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, May 2, 2025 8:55 PM

To: Charter Info <CharterInfo@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-8302852 CRC Contact Form - General Inquiries

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by

[REDACTED] on Friday, May 2, 2025, at 08:54:31 PM

Topic: General Inquiries

Name: Joseph F Purcell

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: For nearly 15 years in the 1980s-1994, I worked at 1515 Broadway for Interiors Magazine, published by Billboard Publications. I would gladly walk from Penn Station to 1515, which is now occupied by CBS News. What I like about the area around Penn Station to 1515 Broadway is the diversity of buildings, not skyscrapers! Please keep mixed use for this section of the City Thank you. JF Purcell Oceanside, NY

Subject:

FW: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2171077 CRC Contact
Form - General Inquiries

From: Charter Info <[REDACTED EMAIL]>

To: Charter Testimony <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Date: Tue, 06 May 2025 13:11:48 +0000

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]

Sent: Sunday, May 4, 2025 8:22 AM

To: Charter Info <CharterInfo@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2171077 CRC Contact Form - General Inquiries

Topic: General Inquiries

Name: K. F.

Email:

Phone:

Comments: Title: Protecting Neuro Rights and Addressing the Legal Gaps in Neural Data Use Dear Janet A. Peguero, Deputy Borough President Essential Human Rights: Neuro rights Cognitive liberty Necessary Legal Frameworks: Neural Data Bill Regulation for companies, devices, technologies, and data Background: A growing number of individuals have reported that used medical devices and various types of wireless beacons are being repurposed for covert surveillance. These include DIY passive sensors, human flow detectors, and indoor positioning systems-often assembled without proper oversight or regulation. The Situation in the U.S.: The Targeted Individual (TI) community in the United States is not simply misled by conspiracy theories due to lack of information. Rather, they are people facing a serious issue: a regulatory

vacuum. Despite reporting harm, they have no effective system or institution that can respond appropriately. Why New York Matters: As neural data bills begin gaining traction across the United States, it is expected that New York will eventually adopt similar regulations. New York is an iconic and familiar city to many Americans. Highlighting the challenges faced by people there-especially those affected by unregulated neural technologies-may help the broader public better understand the urgency of this issue and feel empowered to support change. --- DensePose From WiFi hxxxs://arxiv[.]org/abs/2301.00250 Dina Katabi, PhD: Biosensors for Measuring Disease Activity in MS and Other Neurological Disorders Mar 13, 2019 By Dina Katabi, PhD

hxxxs://www[.]neurologylive[.]com/view/dina-katabi-phd-biosensors-measuring-disease-activity-ms-other-neurological-disorders More States Propose Privacy Laws Safeguarding Neural Data hxxxs://www[.]mofo[.]com/resources/insights/250317-more-states-propose-privacy-laws-safeguarding-neural-data --- In the wake of World War II, the United States-through the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt-helped establish a human rights foundation centered on the protection of each individual life. That legacy became a moral cornerstone of modern democracy. Today, as we face the rapid advancement of technology, we are entering an era where new human rights must be defined. These rights must not fall below the standards envisioned during that postwar period, because even in times of peace, technological transformations still bear the burden of human life-especially the lives of those suffering from serious or chronic illness. I happen to approach this issue from the perspective of someone identified as a "Targeted Individual" (TI), but I believe that these rights and the regulations to support them are not only for the TI community. They are also essential for hospital patients, individuals who depend on medical devices, and all those who may be vulnerable to misuses of emerging neurotechnologies. If human rights are truly to support life, they must not be reserved for a select few. Rights and regulations should be written in language that is accessible and clear, as present and breathable as the air in a healthy democracy. Especially with regulations around neurotechnology and AI, the language can often feel abstract and technical-understood only by a small number of experts or highly informed Americans. But medicine is for everyone. And so, the language of regulation and the explanation of technologies must also belong to everyone. As we move forward, I hope the frameworks we build will ensure that patients-not just policymakers or engineers-can access and benefit from these protections without confusion or exclusion. Sincerely, K.F. hxxxs://x[.]com/sirogoma12345?t=y_3OTXWTr6Np49C33C14wA&s=09

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7509277 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agencymail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Tue, 06 May 2025 17:38:45 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 01:38:00 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Kate Selden

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: See attached comments.

Solar One Testimony for the New York City Charter Revision Commission May 6, 2025

Thank you to the Chair and Commissioners for this opportunity to submit testimony to the Charter Revision Commission. Solar One is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to design and deliver innovative education, training, technical assistance, and advocacy that fosters sustainability and resiliency in diverse urban environments. We provide comprehensive solar technical assistance to building owners, affordable housing providers, and community organizations to facilitate high-impact solar projects, and we advocate for policy solutions that make solar affordable and accessible to low-income communities and affordable housing.

Expanding Solar in New York City is critical to our city and state climate goals and improving community health. Climate change is a direct threat to residents across the city, especially frontline communities that have been historically burdened by environmental injustices and continue to bear the brunt of climate impacts like storm surges and extreme heat. In the face of these threats, New York City has been a leader in setting ambitious climate goals: it has committed to carbon neutrality by 2050, deploying 1,000 MW of solar power by 2030 and 500 MW of energy storage by 2025. Solar and storage are critical to relieve a congested grid, mitigate increasing energy demand, and reduce our reliance on polluting Peaker plants. They also bring direct savings to New Yorkers through rooftop solar and bill credits from community solar. While the city has made great strides in the deployment of solar, continued progress is at risk in the face of federal attacks on clean energy programs, the Public Service Commission's recent order to end NYSERDA solar rebates, and increasing costs due to tariffs.

As the City Charter Revision Committee considers how to effectively utilize and dispose of city-owned land, we ask the Commission to seize the opportunity to continue our ambitious build-out of local and affordable renewable energy where feasible and beneficial to communities. We recommend that the commission make it easier to build community solar and storage on city-owned land, and specifically by utilizing Statewide Solar for All and NYPA's Renewable Energy Access and Community Help Program (REACH) for op-out community solar that benefits low-income ratepayers. Where community solar is not feasible, we recommend prioritizing sustainable, affordable housing developed by mission-driven developers and community land trusts that incorporate solar, storage, and other resiliency measures to benefit communities. In addition, though they may not be under the purview of the charter commission, we offer additional recommendations that would support development of these two recommendations.

Expanding community solar and storage on New York City-owned land is essential for equitable access to renewable energy.

Community Solar is one of the most important methods to ensure equitable access to the

benefits of solar. For renters and building owners with roofs not suitable for solar, subscribing to a community solar array provides reliable savings from fossil fuel-free electricity. With Con Edison's recently proposed rate hikes and the federal cuts to the LIHEAP program, energy costs are skyrocketing, and resources for low-income ratepayers are insufficient to address high energy burdens. Community solar can fill the void, but the lack of space for community solar projects in New York City is a major barrier.

One example of a successful community solar project utilizing public land is the Community Power project. Solar One, in collaboration with environmental justice, workforce, and energy cooperative organizations, the local utility and mission aligned solar developers and installers, facilitated 1.2 MW of community solar across 40 different NYCHA public housing buildings. The energy credits generated by the solar were distributed to 450 low-to-moderate-income households across New York City, with an average of \$12 in monthly savings. Community Power also incorporated a workforce training component in which 21 NYCHA residents participated and completed the solar training class, 12 students were offered a paid apprenticeship, and five students received full-time employment offers. Utilizing public resources in this manner is an effective way to scale renewable energy on our grid, generate savings for low-to-moderate income New Yorkers, and train future clean energy workers that are currently underrepresented in the field. New York City's land resources are well-suited for more projects of this scale and impact.

Leveraging City-owned land for Public Renewables and Solar Access. Two new statewide programs recognize the importance of community solar as a tool for equitable solar expansion: Statewide Solar for All and the New York Power Authority's REACH program. Both programs redistribute bill savings from community solar and storage projects to low-income New Yorkers enrolled in the Energy Affordability Program (EAP) and living in disadvantaged communities. But bill savings from such projects will only be meaningful if there is a massive build-out of projects within New York City. Once again, New York's lack of space is hindering beneficial savings from renewables for low-income residents. The City's real estate assets present an opportunity to leverage existing space for projects that can enroll in these affordable energy programs.

For example, Solar One recently conducted research into the potential of using Riker's Island for large-scale solar once the jail has been decommissioned. Solar One estimates that, depending on how the buildings are handled post-decommissioning, the 413-acre island could host a 6-megawatt (MW) solar array over the parking lot, or an 84-MW solar array over 60% of the land if the buildings are removed. A 6-MW solar project could deliver savings to over 1,800 families, and an 84-MW project could deliver savings to over 32,000 households. When paired with storage, projects of this scale could eliminate the need for the polluting Peaker plants in the city and reduce negative health impacts on environmental justice communities. Riker's Island presents a prime example of a large-scale solar project on city-owned land that NYPA could finance, incorporate into its renewable energy buildout, and utilize for the REACH program to deliver bill savings to low-income ratepayers.

However, in order to make this project and others feasible, we want to urge the charter revision process to streamline the feasibility for NYPA to work with the city on its build-out of publicly-owned renewables as part of the Build Public Renewables mandate. Partnering with NYPA will increase public ownership of energy resources, increase bill discounts for low-income residents, and increase high-paying jobs in the clean energy economy. Just as the City of Yes Zoning for Carbon Neutrality updated our zoning laws to allow for more streamlined and economic solar development, the city charter revision process allows for continued progress towards the city's climate goals by addressing another land-use constraints in renewable development.

Prioritizing sustainable, resilient, affordable housing by mission-driven developers on City-owned land.

Climate change is inextricable from economic disparities, and the Charter Revision process presents a unique opportunity to reflect today's climate and affordability crisis and the need to rapidly expand affordable and resilient infrastructure like solar paired with affordable housing and community resources. We urge the commission to consider a comprehensive approach to increasing the supply of affordable housing and streamlining development timelines in New York City for these projects. One way to increase affordable housing and renewable infrastructure that supports and protects low-income communities from climate harms is to prioritize non-profit developers and community land trusts when disposing of city-owned land. Not every lot may be suitable for a public renewable energy project, but it may be suitable for affordable housing with on-site renewables, or a small-scale solar array co-located with green space. Local communities, nonprofit and mission-driven partners should be given an equitable opportunity to develop land that prioritizes community needs.

Solar One has facilitated over 250 solar projects on affordable multifamily rental housing in New York City. Rooftop solar offers affordable housing developers a sustainable way to bring down operating costs at a time when public money for affordable housing is limited, and providers are facing increasing utility, insurance, and maintenance costs. When affordable housing is able to go all-electric, solar is a critical complement to ensure that electricity rates do not become unaffordable. Take for example, Solar One's partnership with NYC Department of Housing, Preservation, and Development (HPD) to administer the Solar Where Feasible program. Since 2020, HPD's Solar Where Feasible program has supported over 15 MW of cost-effective solar. The buildings will save approximately \$1.9 million on their annual electric bills and reduce 4,000 tons of CO2 emissions each year. As New York City disposes of city-owned land, we support using the process to foster more affordable housing paired with solar and storage. And mission-driven affordable housing developers and community land trusts that address community needs should be given priority to ensure equitable development.

Additional measures are needed to increase energy affordability and access to solar.

New York City's tax abatement for building owners who install solar and storage has been critical in bringing down costs. But nonprofits, affordable housing, and income-restricted co-ops do not benefit from this important incentive because they are often already exempt from property taxes. Making the tax abatement a "direct-pay" benefit would increase financial feasibility for affordable housing to go solar and reduce operating costs, making it easier to manage and sustain affordable housing. In addition, many affordable buildings require substantial "enabling upgrades" before going solar and undertaking other electrification and energy efficiency work. More resources are needed to help these buildings become solar- and electrification-ready. While these recommendations may be beyond the scope of the Charter Commission, we recommend using this process to connect resources and programs to further the city's goal of increasing renewable energy.

The federal attacks on climate progress are staggering, imperiling renewable energy development and putting frontline communities in danger as we backtrack on mitigating greenhouse gasses. Local action is imperative and possible if New York City uses all the tools at its disposal. **Using city-owned land for equitable solar development is a tremendous opportunity. We urge the charter commission to consider streamlining development processes to allow for renewable projects, particularly those that advance public renewables, affordable housing, and community-owned resilient infrastructure.**

Thank you for you for your time and consideration. Please contact Kate Selden, Senior Policy Manager Solar One at [REDACTED] with any questions.

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Margaret Smith [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Wed, 07 May 2025 22:28:10 +0000

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New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Margaret Smith
[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Jon Mitchell [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Wed, 07 May 2025 22:28:17 +0000

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Jon Mitchell



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Vanessa Rudin [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Fri, 09 May 2025 02:34:36 +0000

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I have lived in Park Slope, Brooklyn for over 25 years. In my career, I have founded a micro finance institution, worked for healthcare nonprofits, and worked in tech. I have always been an independent (unaffiliated) voter. It is galling that I really have no vote for the mayor, that all the focus is on democrats or republicans, as if I don't exist. Yet I pay taxes like others. I was shocked to find out that independents cannot be paid as poll voters.

Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Vanessa Rudin



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Steven Snachkus [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

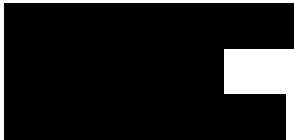
Date: Fri, 09 May 2025 02:34:56 +0000

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New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Steven Snachkus



Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-5828822 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Fri, 09 May 2025 18:44:30 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Friday, May 9, 2025, at 02:44:19 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Greg Blonder

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Elections are intended to choose representatives who mirror society to the greatest extent possible. But the two-party stranglehold over primaries leads to poor voter turnout, machine politics and restricted choices in the general election. While parties should be able to assemble and vote according to their own rules, in reality this right disenfranchises huge voting contingents, particularly independents and minority groups. A blanket primary (or at least an Open Primary) most effectively balances party with individual rights, and should be adopted. A fairer and more exciting open election will bring voters to the polls, while ensuring a more representative and legitimate outcome. But the devil is in the details. First-past-the-post, at-large and ranked-choice elections are easily gamed or distorted by collusion and big-money interests. This is known to be a hard and perennial problem, and the Charter Commission should directly consult historians and political scientists, for guidance. I recommend "Negotiated Consensus" as a practical and effective solution <https://gregblonder.medium.com/negotiated-consensus-bfde8bde5a20> and this article on the challenge of representation

democratic

hxxxs://gregblonder[.]medium[.]com/represent-379c1273f5f4

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2521012 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Fri, 09 May 2025 20:15:12 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Friday, May 9, 2025, at 04:15:00 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Tashawna Gregory

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: A testimony can help u learn a lot

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Hilary reyl [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Sun, 11 May 2025 13:05:40 +0000

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Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Hilary reyl
[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Cynthia You g [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Sun, 11 May 2025 13:06:00 +0000

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Please allow open primaries!

New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Cynthia You g



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: George Eberstadt [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Sun, 11 May 2025 13:06:42 +0000

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Please make open primaries a top priority of the Charter Review Commission. I am a life-long New Yorker, now 59, and because I am registered as an independent I've never been able to vote in the only elections that really matter here - the primaries. And there are over a million other New Yorkers in the same boat. It's not fair, and it's also not good for our city.

Further, while I really like rank choice voting, it works less well when there are too many candidates on the ballot. We should use open primaries to choose a pool of the top 5 candidates across all parties to go on to the general election, and use rank choice there.

These reforms would dramatically improve voter turnout which will make our politicians more responsive to the needs of all New Yorkers.

George Eberstadt



Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7642383 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agencymail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Wed, 14 May 2025 16:21:25 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 12:20:57 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Kilmar Gomez

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Hey

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SUSAN LERNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMON CAUSE NY

Submitted to the New York City Charter Revision Commission
May 19, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause NY and board chair of Rank the Vote NYC. I submit this written testimony to supplement my oral testimony and provide further information regarding Common Cause NY's research into the opinions and demographics of unaffiliated New York voters.

Successful Introduction of Ranked Choice Voting in New York City

By all measures, the 2021 introduction of Ranked Choice Voting for New York City's primaries and its subsequent use in 2023 was successful. That success was gained because of the and thorough consideration which RCV received by at least two Charter Revision commissions to craft a New York City-specific version before being put on the ballot in 2019 and the significant amount of education that both the New York City and advocates undertook to introduce the change to voters.

The 2018 Charter Revision Commission not only received public testimony about RCV but also convened a panel of experts on election reform, which included not only national and local advocates but election administrators and academics who represented a range of opinions about RCV. As a consequence, the 2018 Charter Revision Commission determined that it did not have sufficient time to answer all of the important issues that needed to be decided to correctly calibrate RCV for New York City. Accordingly, that Commission identified RCV as an issue that required further study and commended it to future Commissions. And the 2019 Commission took up RCV. In response to extensive testimony from academics and others, the 2019 Commission adopted an RCV system that is crafted specifically for New York City concerns, where voters rank up to 5 candidates rather than the more typical 3, run elimination rounds to the final 2 candidates, rather than stopping once 1 candidate receives a majority and use RCV in the primary only due to the peculiarities of New York's fusion voting requirements. In We note that the current discussion of primary reform has not addressed the issue of any interaction between the state law requirements regarding fusion voting and any form of open primary or how Candidates will appear on the general election ballot, and we have not yet thoroughly examined that issue. In short, the thorough examination of the pros and cons of the various forms of RCV before it was presented to the voters fostered a collaboration between advocates, candidates and City agencies that resulted in a form of RCV correctly calibrated for New York City's election landscape, that resulted in the widespread use of RCV and will support its successful use in elections to come. Changing New York City's primary system requires an equally detailed examination of the various options available and how they would function in New York City's election landscape and the requirements of New York State's detailed election law.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), “[t]he laws governing state primaries are complex and nuanced, and state primary laws have been a cause of confusion among voters and election administrators alike. The manner in which party primary elections are conducted varies widely by state.”¹ NCSL identifies 5 different types of “open” primaries, only 1 of which has been specifically identified in the staff report. The Bipartisan Policy Center² has identified **eight different primaries – ranging from closed through open to 4 variations of non-partisan**. At a minimum, the Commission should invite testimony from a range of viewpoints, based on experience with, and research into, the various forms of open and nonpartisan primaries.

In determining which form of open primary would be most desirable for New York City, a key question should be, what problem are we trying to solve for in changing New York City’s primary elections. If the issue is turnout and a desire to engage the 1.1 million New York City voters who are not registered to a particular political party rather than achieve a particular political result, then we should be examining the different types of primary with that goal in mind. To successfully accomplish that goal, we believe that the actual opinions of unaffiliated voters should be considered.

Unaffiliated Voters

In November, 2023, Common Cause/NY released a report on the more than 3.1 million politically unaffiliated (also known as “Blank”) voters in New York State – a group that is steadily growing as more Americans become disillusioned with the two party system. These voters, who represent 24% of New York’s electorate, are politically active but locked out of New York’s closed primary process because they are not registered to a political party. The [report](#) provides a deeper understanding of who New York’s unaffiliated voter population is and details their support for potential changes to the state’s primary laws as a starting point for future policy reform.

Our research indicates that New York’s unaffiliated voters are highly engaged/involved with politics but dissatisfied with the current environment, and most see their Unaffiliated status as a point of pride. Unaffiliated voters’ frustration with the party barrier does not seem to inhibit them from voting in other elections, and voters are likely to vote in primaries if barriers were removed.

More than three-in-four of the voters surveyed are aware they cannot vote in primaries. Just under a majority feel neutral about it, and just over a third feel frustrated. A strong majority would vote in primaries if they could. And of those who are likely, a majority indicated all elections as elections they would vote in.

Unaffiliated voters’ attitudes toward Open Primaries were illuminating:

- Few participants were aware of what an open primary means. Once given the definition, responses were varied.
- All groups were concerned that voters from one party could infiltrate the other party’s primary so that a weaker candidate advances to the general.
- Of all the policies discussed, temporary registration was the least popular. It was viewed as a hassle and unnecessary. There was also little desire to affiliate with a party.

¹ NCSL Brief, State Primary Election Types, Updated February 06, 2024. <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/state-primary-election-types>, Accessed May 17, 2025.

² The Bipartisan Policy Center by Ferrer, J., Thorning, M., and Rackey, J.D., The Effect of Open Primaries on Turnout and Representation, October 2024, Pg. 9. https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/BPC_Ferrer-Unite-America-Grant_R04.pdf, accessed May 18, 2025.



- **A semi-open primary was better received than other primary policies.** Participants felt it was a good balance of allowing unaffiliated voters to be better represented without the burden of having to temporarily register, and was viewed as potentially more secure than a fully open primary

We commend the staff report for its thoughtful, although abbreviated discussion of the issues posed by primary reform. However, a much more detailed examination must be undertaken of the various forms of primary which could be adopted, the specifics of New York City's election landscape as well as a detailed analysis of the interaction between the proposed change in New York City elections in relation to the requirements of state election law. We are particularly supportive of the staff's acknowledgement that "the Commission must carefully consider the impact of any proposed change on minority and marginalized communities".

Demographics of New York City's Unaffiliated Voters

Unaffiliated voters statewide and unaffiliated voters in New York City are somewhat different demographically. Our 2023 statewide research tapped an unaffiliated voter population that is older and whiter than our analysis of New York City's 2025 unaffiliated voters. Additionally, our analysis in 2023 indicated that NYC's unaffiliated voters were more likely to be mid to low propensity voters, with more high propensity voters found outside New York City. Detailed charts of our 2023 analysis can be found [on our website](#).

The current discussion has benefitted from the New York City Campaign Finance Board's analysis of the age demographics of New York City's unaffiliated voters. However, the Campaign Finance Board has not provided us with an analysis of the ethnicity of unaffiliated voters. The ethnic breakdown of New York City's unaffiliated voters is, as previously mentioned, somewhat different from the statewide 2023 profile and different from the demographics of the overall New York City electorate. Our analysis of the 2025 New York City registration indicates the differences between the general electorate and unaffiliated voters:

- **By Age:** Much younger. 35% under age 34 vs 26% all voters;
- **By Gender:** More male. 50-50 by gender vs 44% male citywide;
- **By Race:** More Asian (16% vs 10%) and less Black (15% vs 23%); just as Latino.
- **By County:** More Queens (29% vs 25%) but not much difference in other boroughs

The demographic breakdown of party registration is also interesting:

- **White voters** make up 39% of the general New York electorate and 40% of unaffiliated voters, but comprise 33% of those registered as Democrats and 68% of those registered as Republicans.
- **Asian voters** make up 11% of the general electorate and 16% of unaffiliated voters, but only 9 % of registered Democrats and 9% of registered Republicans.
- **Latino voters** make up practically equivalent percentages in the general electorate and as registered Democrats and unaffiliated voters (23% of the general electorate, 22% of unaffiliated voters, 24% of registered Democrats).



- **Black voters**, on the other hand, make up 23% of the general electorate, but comprise almost 30% of registered Democrats and only 15% of unaffiliated voters.

Improving Voter Turn-Out

The issue of how to improve voter turn out is a perennial topic of discussion and concern. There is no easy answer. Many different factors influence turn-out. Although we have not suggested that RCV results in higher turn-out, recent academic research shows that it can result in higher turn-out, although at a relatively modest rate.³ Vote by Mail helps, as does same day registration. But the biggest increase in voter turnout in primary elections comes from combining local elections with federal and statewide elections on even years. Recent analysis from Las Vegas shows that participation in municipal elections nearly doubled since moving the municipal elections to even years in 2019.⁴ We note that the staff report reports that introduction of a top 2 primary system in California has not resulted in increased voter turnout. Conversely, when Colorado adopted a semi-open primary, which allows unaffiliated voter to choose a party primary to vote in, “turnout disparities between primary and general election turnout decreased by 6.4 percentage points on average.”⁵ We also note that Colorado’s voters rejected a ballot measure to change Colorado’s semi-open primary to a top-4 non-partisan primary this past November, one of 6 states where voters rejected similar measures.

Charter Revision Commission Procedure

The CRC has an unusually short time in which to consider a wide variety of proposals. Making significant changes to the way in which we vote in City elections requires thorough examination and should not be rushed. While this Commission has heard testimony in favor of a particular primary reform, it has not engaged in the more balanced and thorough examination which both the 2018 and 2019 charter commissions performed before placing Ranked Choice Voting on the ballot.

We return to our original inquiry to the Commission. What is the problem that the proposed election reform seeks to address and are the proposed reforms the most efficient as well as efficacious way to address the problem?

³ Dowling, Tolbert, Micatka, & Donovan, Does Ranked Choice Voting Increase Voter Turnout and Mobilization?, Electoral Studies, Volume 90, August 2024. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S026137942400074X>.

⁴ KSNV, Participation in Las Vegas city elections has nearly doubled. <https://news3lv.com/news/local/participation-in-las-vegas-city-elections-has-nearly-doubled-since-2019-change>

⁵ The Bipartisan Policy Center by Ferrer, J., Thorning, M., and Rackey, J.D., The Effect of Open Primaries on Turnout and Representation, October 2024, Pg. 23. https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/BPC_Ferrer-Unite-America-Grant_R04.pdf, accessed May 18, 2025.



Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7444476 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Mon, 19 May 2025 16:14:00 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Monday, May 19, 2025, at 12:13:46 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Mark Natanawan

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Please don't be deterred by the small vocal minority of angry critics and fearmongerers who are opposed to housing development in this city. We need bold, ambitious action to end the housing crisis and easing existing constraints on the creation of new housing is 100% necessary to even begin accomplishing this. You are at the vanguard of this necessary change. There are many advocates cheering on these proposed reforms and history will look kindly upon you if you keep on pushing to make them happen.

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-5309644 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Mon, 19 May 2025 22:07:53 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Monday, May 19, 2025, at 06:06:54 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Dear NYC Charter Revision Commission, My name is Sachi and I live in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. I wanted to share my agreement with many of the values and proposals outlined in the Charter Revision Commission's Preliminary Report, especially those related to increasing housing production and increasing voter turnout in municipal elections. For housing: - I agree with the goal and proposal to reduce process costs, including fast-tracking modest and affordable housing projects and streamlining ULURP timelines. - I agree with the goal and proposal to elevate citywide needs, including strengthening fair housing frameworks, and empowering borough-wide and city-wide actors in land use decisions. For elections: - I agree with the goal and proposal to increase turnout by moving municipal elections to even years. - I agree with the goal and proposal to increase turnout and diversity of the electorate by opening NYC's closed party primary system. Thank you for your hard work and consideration. Sachi

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2255237 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agencymail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 05:20:58 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 01:20:40 AM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Corey Bearak

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I recommend removing term limits for community board members. Attached please find report to Queens community board 13 preceding my presentation of its nominating committee report May 19. 2025.

The Public Ought To Know

May 19, 2025

By Corey Bearak

Community Board membership matters; limiting members term non-sensical.

As part of the 2025 Queens Community Board 13 (“QCB13”) Nominating Committee deliberations, the committee members expressed concern about the advent of term limits for Community Board members. As chair of the committee, I committed to its members that I would raise this concern when I made the report at the May 19 full meeting of QCB13.

Effective January 1, 2019, a change to the New York City Charter imposed limits to the terms of service of New York City Community Board members: it limits appointment of community board members to four consecutive two-year terms, starting with terms for which appointments or reappointments are made on or after April 1, 2019. However, members appointed or reappointed for a term commencing on April 1, 2020, could be reappointed for up to five consecutive two-year terms, in order to prevent a heavy turnover of community board membership in 2027 and 2028.

Most Charter recommendations, once put on the ballot, absent any strong, well-financed opposition, routinely pass. This ill-informed and mis-guided and UNNECESSARY change requires rescindment. Our elected Borough President and City Council Member(s) simply can deny re-appointment to any current community board member for any reason, including merit, a need for new fresh point of view, diversity, etc. The current Charter denies them the ability to retain qualified member who represent their community and provide useful, often needed experience and expertise.

Community Boards provide an advisory role and input on land use and budget matters. In some cases, elected officials will follow the land use recommendations of community boards. On significant local development, a community board can help shape the project.

Council Members (in proportion to their district overlapping with the board) and Borough Presidents appoint Board members. Each year they appoint and re-appoint members to two-year terms.

As a member of Queens Community Board 13, and as a former aide to a council member and borough president, I developed my own standards for what qualifies someone to serve on a community board. Require prospective and existing community board members to certify involvement in a community group to gain appointment or reappointment. This means community board members must maintain a relationship with one of the following: their civic (or tenant or block association), senior, youth, faith-based or business organization. This change will ensure community boards include not just people with knowledge and expertise but ongoing communal involvement that ensures each community in the district a seat at the table.

I never contemplated nor would advocate limiting terms. Quite frankly, some community boards and their members, perhaps because of the matters the boards consider, get more attention from their electeds when it comes to placing, replacing and re-appointing members.

The qualifications and work of board members and prospective members should matter more than mere

longevity.

If electeds find a community board member wanting, they can simply impose term limits by not re-appointing a member. This makes more sense than this current mandate to automatically remove dedicated community members.

As a result, since the Mayor and City Council currently established Charter Revision Commissions, I recommend Queens Community Board 13, as well as every one of the other 59 Community Boards throughout the City recommend that each commission recommend removing the existing term limits mandate. Further, I recommend all voters to press all candidates for city office this year to commit to seeking the removal of community board member term limits, which can also be achieved by the City Council passing a local law.

****Corey Bearak can be reached at StrategicPublicPolicy.com. Find his ebook, The Public Ought To Know, at Kindle, Nook and Apple iBooks. This commentary was presented to Queens Community Board 13 May 19, 2025 as part of Mr. Bearak's report as chair of the QCB13 Nominating Committee.***

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Testimony to the NYC Charter Revision Commission

From: Tong (Xiang) Galaxy [REDACTED]

To: chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 11:14:06 -0400

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Re: Laying Groundwork for Intelligent Crisis Response

Date: 20 May 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Tong Galaxy. I live in Brooklyn with my wife and kids, and I work in technology and finance. I'm here not just as a resident, but as someone deeply concerned about how this city will respond when the next true crisis hits—whether it's from AI, climate change, or economic collapse.

The Charter won't stop those shocks. But it can determine how intelligently, how quickly, and how justly we respond.

I want to offer three reforms that won't make headlines today—but will be the difference between paralysis and resilience tomorrow.

First, create a Citywide Data and Systems Inventory. We can't coordinate fast in crisis if agencies don't even know what systems they rely on or what tools they use. This is the baseline for responsive government.

Second, mandate Cross-Agency Emergency Task Forces with real authority. In a major event—heat grid failure, mass layoffs from AI—we can't have a dozen siloed agencies pointing fingers. The Charter should empower a rapid, coordinated response.

Third, establish an Office of Strategic Foresight and Crisis Planning. Other governments have this. NYC doesn't. Even underfunded at first, this office becomes the seedbed for effective leadership when the window for change opens.

These won't solve everything today. But they're the kind of reforms that future leaders will be grateful you passed—when the time to act finally comes.

Thank you.

- Tong

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-8555346 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agencymail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 17:59:45 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 01:58:48 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Kilmar Gomez

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Hi

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Donna Gill [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:50:35 +0000

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I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, particularly immigrants, would be able to participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

Donna Gill



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Jennifer Ng [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:50:55 +0000

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Hi- This means a lot to me as a native new yorker and something I truly believe would benefit the people of our city!

New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Jennifer Ng



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Nicolas Seunarine [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:51:38 +0000

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New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Nicolas Seunarine
[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: John Richardson [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:52:18 +0000

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I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, particularly immigrants, would be able to participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

John Richardson

[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Samanta Honigman [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:52:54 +0000

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Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Samanta Honigman
[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Jonathan Judge [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:53:09 +0000

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I am writing to express my support for an open primary proposal on this November's ballot.

In 2003, the last time non-partisan elections and open primaries were seriously considered in New York City, I was in high school. I opposed the idea back then because I felt it would limit the diversity of political views represented on the general election ballot.

In my years of political and civic activism since high school, I now see exactly how wrong I was about this issue.

Forcing voters to join only one private political organization at the exclusion of all the others and still only have a vote on a subset of candidates to nominate for the general, if the nomination is even contested, is definitely worse. I believe closed primaries do far less to ensure diverse and meaningfully supported political viewpoints are represented on the general election ballot. Low primary participation rates, party leadership gatekeeping, and the elimination of candidates at the primary who might have been more viable for nomination if the whole electorate could have weighed in all contribute to my views on this matter.

Building majority support from the entire electorate every step of the way from the primary to the general is more representative and ensures, along with ranked choice voting, that a true majority actually chooses that candidate and their platform. And that's a very good thing for democracy.

That's why I strongly urge the Charter Revision Commission to get us closer to making the most viable version of an open primary reform available on the ballot this coming November. Thank you.

Jonathan Judge
[REDACTED]



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Irene Bunnell [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:53:29 +0000

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Irene Bunnell
[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Stephanie Unwin [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:53:54 +0000

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I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Stephanie Unwin



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Kelly Schaffer [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:54:17 +0000

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One year I spent the whole day at work convincing my disengaged coworker that there was a race that was really worth voting in. Educated him about the candidates, showed him the polling that it was really close, helped him look up his polling site, everything. I convinced him and after work he went all the way to his polling site by his childhood home, only to discover that he had registered as an independent rather than a democrat and couldn't vote.

Closed primaries only create a paperwork hurdle that disenfranchises all but the most engaged voters. In a city where the primaries decide the election there is no justification for this.

Kelly Schaffer
[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Sophia Zahariou [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Tue, 20 May 2025 18:54:53 +0000

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Non-partisan, special elections are nothing new and are a proven way to choose the best candidate from a field representing several different viewpoints. These elections have been won by candidates across the ideal spectrum. It is time that we applied this proven method to all citywide elections.

Special elections have been taking place in New York City for as long as I can remember. They are an effective way to let voters express their preference from a range of candidates and save the City the cost of running multiple different elections.

Opening our “closed primary” election system to all registered voters will result in a more representative government. A government that’s more responsive to and held accountable by the true majority of voters.

With open primaries, we can build a New York City that works better for all of us.

Sophia Zahariou



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psanchez@council.nyc.gov



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
PIERINA ANA SANCHEZ
COUNCIL MEMBER, 14TH DISTRICT, BRONX

CHAIR
HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

COMMITTEES
EDUCATION
FINANCE
LAND USE
PUBLIC HOUSING
RULES, PRIVILEGES, AND ELECTIONS

May 19, 2025

Chair Buery and Members of the Commission,

My name is Pierina Sanchez, the City Council Member representing the 14th District in the Bronx — home to the neighborhoods of Kingsbridge, Fordham, University Heights, and Mount Hope — and Chair of the Council's Committee on Housing and Buildings.

I was born and raised in the community that I now represent — a community that faces significant housing challenges on nearly every level. From my childhood in the West Bronx to now serving as a City Council Member, I have held several roles that have given me the perspective I hold today on matters of housing and land use.

I served for four years as New York Director of the Regional Plan Association (RPA), where I co-authored the *Inclusive City* report — focused on equitable planning and land use strategies — as well as *Pushed Out*, a regional analysis of housing displacement risk and residential segregation.

In my own community of the West Bronx, I co-founded the Jerome Avenue Revitalization Collaborative (JARC) in response to the Jerome Ave Rezoning (during which I served on Bronx Community Board 5). In its seven years of existence, JARC's task has been twofold: to ensure implementation of the rezoning's Points of Agreement, and to advance inclusive growth along the Jerome corridor.

In my time at City Hall during the De Blasio Administration, I negotiated several rezonings, including the Bay Street Corridor Neighborhood Plan in Staten Island and a number of smaller projects throughout the five boroughs.

And in my first four years as Council Member, I have championed the bold steps we must take to confront the housing crisis — including supporting the City of Yes zoning text amendment in tandem with \$5 billion in City for All investments the Council secured and is working with the Administration to implement.

I mention all of this to ground my testimony in experience that has spanned many sides of the land use process: as a community advocate, a planner, a City Hall negotiator, and now as an elected official.

Tonight, I would like to offer my perspective on land use reforms to the City Charter that will bring us closer to a just city: where all New Yorkers, regardless of background, have the opportunity to put down roots and call this place home. I sincerely hope this Commission will think big as it considers structural reform, and that you do so with a faith in New Yorkers — faith that, when

equipped with the right tools, when treated with respect by their city government, our neighbors can be invaluable partners in planning for our collective future.

First, the Commission should consider charter reforms that build upon the Speaker’s Fair Housing Framework, passed in December of 2023. This legislation is an important first step toward addressing a striking inequity: in the past decade, just 10 Council Districts (including mine) have built more than the other 41 *combined*.

That is unacceptable. For far too long, the same neighborhoods have been asked to bear the entire city’s burden. While citywide text amendments are an important step, we should pursue system changes that ensure every community does its part.

The Framework requires, starting next year, that the City set five-year housing targets for each of our 59 community districts. These targets are to be incorporated into the City’s Fair Housing Plan, and are accompanied by a “Strategic Equity Framework” that will identify the barriers to ensuring that every community contributes their fair share of housing and affordable housing.

Setting targets is a good baseline — but what comes next? What happens if a community district consistently does not reach its targets? What happens to those that do? What combination of carrots and sticks can the City establish to incentivize compliance? How can we empower communities to chart their own path to reaching their housing targets?

To allow the Fair Housing Framework to reach its full potential, the Commission should consider Charter mechanisms that give the framework “teeth” — some kind of enforceability or expedited review for districts that fall far short of meeting their fair share. If very little new housing is being built in an area *not* because of market conditions, but because of a refusal to approve even a modest number of new homes, our land use process must be able to solve for that scenario. Similarly, the Commission should consider whether existing community planning tools in the Charter can be better integrated with the Fair Housing Framework, so that districts who want to meet their targets are empowered to do through *planning* — not just zoning.

Second, the Commission should consider charter reforms that allow for accelerated review process for projects that **A)** are 100% affordable and target *neighborhood*-level incomes, **B)** fall below a certain density threshold and are disincentivized under ULURP today, or **C)** align with an adopted community plan, borough plan, or comprehensive plan.

What I am suggesting here is that there are certain kinds of housing that are badly needed in this moment of crisis. Whether they are meeting the needs of low-income New Yorkers, adding “gentle density,” or aligned with strategic planning — ULURP should not treat these projects the same way they treat a market-rate development that needs a zoning change. An accelerated review for this limited universe of projects would of course need to preserve robust opportunities for public engagement, including a role for the Council. But it would recognize that our land use process can and should reflect the urgency with which we must act to house our neighbors.

Third, the Commission should consider charter reforms that strengthen accountability for City commitments — or “Points of Agreement” — made as part of large-scale rezonings.

(The potential of neighborhood rezonings to build large chunks of housing, integrated with community needs, unfortunately received very little mention in the Commission’s Preliminary Report, which focused almost entirely on private applications.)

When the Council adopts a neighborhood rezoning, it often comes after weeks of intense negotiation that culminate in “Points of Agreement.” These documents state the Administration’s commitment to make significant investment, usually on the capital side, in the neighborhood that it seeks to rezone. This can range from park improvements to sewer upgrades, small business support to public housing renovations. It is one of the *only* ways these neighborhoods receive the investments they deserve.

But here’s the problem: these commitments are often massively delayed, or outright disregarded. As mentioned earlier, I co-founded JARC after the Jerome Avenue Rezoning, and now represent a large section of the area that was rezoned. Some of the City’s commitments are way behind schedule; others have been unfulfilled because the Administration claims they “expired.”

For instance, 7 years after the rezoning, there is *still* no design (let alone construction) for the promised renovation of the Davidson Community Center — and a funding gap remains without a clear proposal from the Administration on how they will close it.

Small businesses along the Jerome corridor were also supposed to receive robust, targeted support. But those commitments were disregarded. A promised “Jerome Avenue Business Grant Program?” In its latest report in the Commitments Tracker, the Administration explains that the funding was “repurposed by OMB” and then “expired in FY22.” That is unacceptable and I expect the commitment to be fully funded as promised.

I will say this: my community is not the only one on the receiving end of broken promises. As the Commission considers reforms, I urge you to create some kind of recourse — either for the Council or the community itself — when an Administration makes commitments but fails to keep them.

Finally, our city often engages in piecemeal planning across agencies. The Commission should revisit the idea of implementing a comprehensive planning framework — like the one considered by the 2019 Charter Revision Commission — that aligns existing plans and centers fair housing, racial, economic, health, and climate justice, all grounded in robust community engagement. A comprehensive plan with enforceable, district-level targets would also help ease the burden on the ULURP process and reduce the outsized influence of NIMBYism in blocking projects that benefit the broader city. Although it is not codified in law, the practice of member deference has been raised as a barrier to fair housing, and for giving undue weight to local voices in decisions that ultimately affect the entire city. By taking a holistic view of land use decisions, a comprehensive planning approach would ease pressure on individual members, reduce project-by-project conflict, and result in more equitable planning outcomes citywide.

Thank you, Commissioners, for your attention to these critical issues.

Sincerely,

Pierina Ana Sanchez
New York City Council Member – District 14



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Vandana Mathrani [REDACTED]

To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov

Date: Wed, 21 May 2025 12:16:07 +0000

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New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Vandana Mathrani

[REDACTED]

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

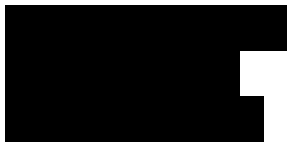
From: Raj Mathrani [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Wed, 21 May 2025 12:16:27 +0000

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Raj Mathrani



Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

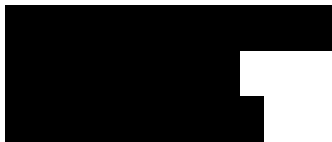
From: Varsha Mathrani [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Wed, 21 May 2025 12:17:05 +0000

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This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Varsha Mathrani



Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2006268 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agencymail <[REDACTED EMAIL]>

To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Date: Wed, 21 May 2025 21:46:53 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, at 05:46:37 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Dash Yeatts-Lonske

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Dear New York City Charter Revision Commission, Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following testimony. My name is Dash Yeatts-Lonske. I currently work for the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as a Senior Policy Analyst. Previously, I worked for a supportive housing and homelessness services organization called Urban Pathways. However, the views expressed in this testimony do not necessarily reflect those of my employer — I speak only on behalf of myself as a private citizen and resident who loves NYC. City Elections: I support moving city elections to even years to align with state and federal elections. It is unacceptable that the turnout in the most recent city primary election was a mere 7.19% of eligible voters. Moving city elections to align with the standard election cycle would greatly increase democratic participation and reduce election costs. Housing Affordability Crisis: I support acting on the housing affordability crisis – underscored by the decades-low rental apartment vacancy rate in the city of 1.41% – by limiting the practice of member deference through revisions to the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). Our low vacancy rate is the legally-declared cause of the city's ongoing rental housing emergency and is a significant driver of both homelessness and rent burden. Contract Delays: I support incorporating the Mayor's Office of Contract Services into the city charter, with a larger charge to promote transparency and accountability in city contract registration and payments. In FY24, a staggering 90.7% of human service contracts were registered late. These delays disrupt the essential provision of human services and it is crucial the city address this issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Subject:

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From: Lisa Dombrow [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Date: Thu, 22 May 2025 15:42:34 +0000

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Lisa Dombrow



Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-8764791 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Fri, 23 May 2025 12:04:15 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Friday, May 23, 2025, at 08:01:54 AM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Michael Rozentsvayg

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Dear Commission, The NYC Charter need a makeover! Firstly, I respectfully propose to codify the timelines for all government obligations, such as permits, inspections, applications, etc. There should be a defined fee for failure to meet the obligation's timeline payable to the applicant and the clear language allowing legal actions and damages recovery. There should be fines to civil service employees for being responsible for such violations. Secondly, there should be a clear path for citizens to sue the law enforcement for not acting upon crimes they could stop or prevent. The higher the crime that was ignored, the higher liability is. Thirdly, the Chapter is very difficult to read for a regular person living this day and age. The language needs review and straightening. One example is to make all numerical names written in Arabic numbers and not in words. For example, if a paragraph starts with number "35", no reference should read "thirty five", but "35" or, if necessary, "35 (thirty five)". Thank you for considering my proposals. Sincerely, Michael Rozentsvayg.

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-8366176 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Sun, 25 May 2025 16:54:51 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Sunday, May 25, 2025, at 12:53:43 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: David Briggs

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: The suggestions in the draft are strong, but one critical element is missing: an elected City Architect. Currently, the physical future of our city is being shaped by a fragmented constellation of agencies, planners, designers, community advocates, consultants, elected officials, historians, transportation experts, etc. For engaged residents, navigating this complex web in search of clear answers to pressing local issues is often confusing and discouraging. An elected City Architect would bring much-needed clarity and coordination to this process. Tasked with aligning city and community interests, the City Architect would work closely with agency leaders, the City Council, and the Mayor's Office to develop and maintain a robust, adaptive Vision Plan for the city's physical evolution. This position would also include representatives in each borough—apportioned either equally or based on population—to ensure citywide responsiveness. The City Architect would serve as a key liaison for community boards and local organizations, acting as a consistent point of contact for all city-related infrastructure projects, incentives for responsible private development, and sustainability initiatives. Regular updates to the Vision Plan would ensure transparency, accountability, and long-term alignment with the evolving needs of New Yorkers and the urban environment. Respectfully submitted, David Briggs AIA LEED AP CPHD

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7204731 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Tue, 27 May 2025 00:55:30 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Monday, May 26, 2025, at 08:55:20 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Seth Silverman

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: I strongly urge the Commission to maximize the opportunity to strengthen NYC through proposed updates to our City Charter, especially consolidating city elections to even years, preferably in line with Presidential elections to maximize turnout. I also support the potential proposals to combine open primaries with ranked choice voting and to upgrade zoning rules to encourage the development of significantly greater housing across the City. And/but please do not lose the even year elections proposal. Thank you!

Valerie S. Mason
Chair

Will Brightbill
District Manager



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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan**

May 23, 2025

Richard R. Buery Jr., Chair
New York City Charter Revision Commission
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

RE: The ULURP Community Board 60 Day Review and other Review Clocks Should Not Start In July and August But Should Pause or Not Start Until September

Dear Chair Buery Jr.,

At the Full Board meeting of Community Board 8 Manhattan held on May 21, 2025, the Board approved the following resolution by a vote of 24 in favor, 13 opposed, 2 abstentions, and 0 not voting for cause.

WHEREAS as Community Boards do not meet in July and August, if the review period starts in July or August it undermines public participation because boards are inactive and many community members are away; and

WHEREAS initiating a review during July and August would be equivalent to sidelining the boards entirely from the process; and

WHEREAS ULURP is designed to ensure transparency and public input. Starting the review clock when the public and boards are not active defeats its purpose, and it creates an impression that the process is being rushed or can be conducted in bad faith; and

WHEREAS developers or city agencies could potentially exploit the summer break to minimize scrutiny by timing submissions for July or August. Furthermore, this creates an inequity, especially in communities with fewer resources to monitor or challenge projects during the off-season; and

WHEREAS the City Planning Commission and other bodies have historically recognized holidays and summer recesses as valid reasons for pausing clocks, or extending deadlines;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M recommends that the City Charter Revision Commission recommend that the ULURP 60 Community Board review and any other review clock should not start in July or August but pause or not start until September.

Please advise us of any action taken on this matter.

Sincerely,

Valerie S. Mason

Valerie S. Mason
Chair

Edward Hartzog and Sharon Weiner

Edward Hartzog and Sharon Weiner
Co-Chairs, Voting Reform and Charter Revision Task Force

cc: Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of New York
Honorable Eric Adams, Mayor of the City of New York

Honorable Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Honorable Jerry Nadler, 12th Congressional District Representative
Honorable Liz Krueger, NYS Senator, 28th Senatorial District
Honorable José M. Serrano, NYS Senator, 29th Senatorial District
Honorable Edward Gibbs, NYS Assembly Member 68th Assembly District
Honorable Alex Bores, NYS Assembly Member, 73rd Assembly District
Honorable Rebecca Seawright, NYS Assembly Member 76th Assembly District
Honorable Keith Powers, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District
Honorable Julie Menin, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District
Honorable Diana Ayala, NYC Council Member, 8th Council District

Valerie S. Mason
Chair

Will Brightbill
District Manager



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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan**

May 23, 2025

Richard R. Buery Jr., Chair
New York City Charter Revision Commission
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

RE: Even if ULURP is revised, the Community Board's role in the ULURP process should not be diminished

Dear Chair Buery Jr.,

At the Full Board meeting of Community Board 8 Manhattan held on May 21, 2025, the Board approved the following resolution by a vote of 27 in favor, 4 opposed, 8 abstentions, and 0 not voting for cause.

WHEREAS Community Boards are the only city entity composed entirely of local volunteers who live and work in the neighborhood and thus are the front line of local democracy, bringing in deep local knowledge of neighborhood conditions, history, and needs that a centralized agency may overlook; and

WHEREAS Community Boards host public hearings where residents can voice support, concerns, or opposition to land use proposals. Weakening the role of Community Boards would cut out a major avenue for community voices, especially for lower income or marginalized groups; and

WHEREAS Community Boards understand how proposals might affect traffic, school capacity, housing affordability, open space, small businesses, and neighborhood character. Their recommendations help share projects to reduce harm and increase community benefit; and

WHEREAS Even if the votes of Community Boards are advisory, Community Boards often succeed in negotiating changes to development plans, such as more affordable housing or stronger tenant protection. Diminishing their role could lead to less responsive or balanced projects;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That CB8M recommends to the City Charter Revision Commission that even if the ULURP process is revised, Community Board's role in the ULURP process should not be diminished.

Please advise us of any action taken on this matter.

Sincerely,

Valerie S. Mason

Valerie S. Mason
Chair

Edward Hartzog and Sharon Weiner

Edward Hartzog and Sharon Weiner
Co-Chairs, Voting Reform and Charter Revision Task Force

cc: Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of New York
Honorable Eric Adams, Mayor of the City of New York
Honorable Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Honorable Jerry Nadler, 12th Congressional District Representative

Honorable Liz Krueger, NYS Senator, 28th Senatorial District
Honorable José M. Serrano, NYS Senator, 29th Senatorial District
Honorable Edward Gibbs, NYS Assembly Member 68th Assembly District
Honorable Alex Bores, NYS Assembly Member, 73rd Assembly District
Honorable Rebecca Seawright, NYS Assembly Member 76th Assembly District
Honorable Keith Powers, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District
Honorable Julie Menin, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District
Honorable Diana Ayala, NYC Council Member, 8th Council District

Valerie S. Mason
Chair

Will Brightbill
District Manager



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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan**

May 23, 2025

Richard R. Buery Jr., Chair
New York City Charter Revision Commission
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

RE: NYC Elections Should Continue to be Held on Odd Numbered Years

Dear Chair Buery Jr.,

At the Full Board meeting of Community Board 8 Manhattan held on May 21, 2025, the Board approved the following resolution by a vote of 37 in favor, 3 opposed, 0 abstentions, and 0 not voting for cause.

WHEREAS with NYC elections being held on odd numbered years, they are not overshadowed by state wide or national races, which gives local candidates and issues more visibility, allowing voters to better focus on city-specific concerns like housing, policing, schools, and transit; and

WHEREAS even numbered years already have crowded ballots with Federal and State contests so adding NYC elections could lead to voter fatigue where overwhelmed voters might skip local races or make less informed choices; and

WHEREAS with fewer elections happening simultaneously, candidates for city office may have more opportunities to engage with voters, participate in debates, and be covered by local media; and

WHEREAS all candidates for multiple positions on multiple ballot lines will be vying for advertising time in all media, that advertising will become more expensive, thereby inhibiting most campaigns financially and resulting in less information about each candidate reaching the voters;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M recommends that the City Charter Revision Commission NOT recommend that New York City elections be moved to even numbered years.

Please advise us of any action taken on this matter.

Sincerely,

Valerie S. Mason

Valerie S. Mason
Chair

Edward Hartzog and Sharon Weiner

Edward Hartzog and Sharon Weiner
Co-Chairs, Voting Reform and Charter Revision Task Force

cc: Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of New York
Honorable Eric Adams, Mayor of the City of New York
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Honorable Alex Bores, NYS Assembly Member, 73rd Assembly District

Honorable Rebecca Seawright, NYS Assembly Member 76th Assembly District
Honorable Keith Powers, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District
Honorable Julie Menin, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District
Honorable Diana Ayala, NYC Council Member, 8th Council District

Subject:

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Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Tuesday, May 27, 2025, at 04:48:29 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Sean M. Walsh, President, Douglaston Civic Association

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Please see attached written testimony of Sean M. Walsh, President, Douglaston Civic Association.



SEAN M. WALSH President
GAR JUNG First Vice President
DENNIS SAFFRAN Second Vice President
CRIS BRIGUGLIO Secretary
MARIE MARSINA Treasurer

Douglaston Civic Association Written Testimony before the 2025 City Charter Revision
Commission Queens Public Input Session on Housing and Land Use May 28, 2025

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CECILIA VENOSTA

Dear Members of the Charter Review Commission:

I am the President of the Douglaston Civic Association (DCA) which was founded in 1910 and incorporated in 1931.¹ It is a membership organization comprised of neighbors and business owners who work together for changes and improvements in the Douglaston/Little Neck neighborhood. Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to write on the Housing and Land Use Portion of proposed Charter Reform. Given that the CRC recently issued a preliminary staff report many of my comments will provide feedback on it (page numbers refer to the preliminary report).

- Need for affordable housing- DCA supports the creation of affordable housing throughout the City. Nonetheless, affordable housing should conform with the residential character of a neighborhood. It should reflect the cohesiveness of existing neighborhoods which have a distinct character, with regard to the size, height and lot lines of existing homes. The City of New York is a geographically large entity which reflects a diversity of residential, industrial and commercial uses. New York City is not one size that fits all its communities and cookie cutter solutions will not work here. Many residents of the City from different cultures share the American dream of living in a single family house on a quiet tree-lined residential street with a well-tended green lawn. This is reflected in Queens by the large percentage of Asian and South Asian single family homeowners, as well whites, in Northeast Queens (Bayside, Douglaston, Little Neck and Bellerose) and in Southeast Queens (Cambria Heights, Laurelton, Rosedale) with a large percentage of African American homeowners. Please note that the majority race in Douglaston-Little Neck overall is Asian, making up 45.8% of residents. The next most-common racial group in this area is white at 39.7%.² The desire to preserve the beauty and history of a residential neighborhood is something which should be cherished and not disregarded. Any addition of affordable housing should protect the nature and character of our residential communities.

¹ [CIVIC ASSOC. HISTORY | Douglaston Civic](#)

² [Race, Diversity, and Ethnicity in Douglaston-Little Neck, Queens, NY | BestNeighborhood.org](#)

My community, Douglaston, is adjacent to Nassau County. Any revisions to ULURP which adversely affect the quality of life of our residents as single family home owners may lead to their moving out of the City. If they relocated just over the county line, they would still be able to take the same public transportation to work, attend the same religious institutions, send their children to the same parochial school and even shop in the same stores. The single greatest asset for people of color in New York City is their home, e.g., Southeast Queens, and is now under threat of being destroyed.

Moreover, any large scale development of affordable housing must ensure that existing infrastructure would support it, such as the capacity of the local schools, water, sewerage, utilities and public transportation. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) performed for the City of Yes is now in litigation and grossly fails to provide an honest and professional review.

- Reducing Process Costs- The preliminary report states that “The Commission may explore reforms to enable modest zoning changes, which are virtually never proposed let alone approved under today’s system, as well as ways to streamline review of categorically beneficial projects, like 100% affordable housing. Approaches to accomplish this goal could include a “fast track” land use review process for certain kinds of projects, a “zoning administrator” office with the power to review certain defined categories of applications, or other smaller adjustments to streamline ULURP consistent with local input and democratic accountability.” P.15.

If you are a single family home owner, living near a project which some would deem to be a “modest zoning change” with their life savings invested in their home, who enjoys the standard of living in their home such a change to them would be anything but modest to their way of life.

DCA opposes a “fast track “ land use review. DCA believes that the existing Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP) provides a rational process for community input through the community boards and borough presidents offices. Any shortening of the time frames afforded in this deliberative process would make it more difficult for local civic associations to review the proposal and marshal forces to support or oppose it. The current ULURP procedures that permit Community Board and Borough President opportunity to review and comment on the application are not the cause of delay or expense as the real estate industry and builders would have you believe. In fact, we all know that the longest delays are the time in which the NY City Buildings Department is processing the application. Both the Borough President and the Community Board have a limited fixed time limit to review and respond.

DCA opposes the creation of a “zoning administrator” office with the power to review certain defined categories of applications, or other smaller adjustments to streamline ULURP. This smacks of a return to the discredited top-down central planning in the Urban Renewal era of master planner Robert Moses, as exemplified in the book by Robert Caro, the Power Broker. Pp. 30, 52. The Moses era spanned a 40 year period, from the 1920s to the 1960s. Although well-intentioned, the central planning of that era in some cases resulted in the displacement of entire communities, such as in the construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway in the Bronx, along with other negative unintended consequences (e.g., increased air pollution, flight of residents to the suburbs). As noted in the preliminary report, when ULURP was enacted it was intended to move away from this central planning philosophy towards formal community participation. P.30.

Given the preliminary report's discussion of the complexity and cost that small developers may find in submitting a ULURP application, which may deter them from proceeding, DCA recommends that a ULURP Assistance Unit be established. This new unit would assist small applicants who may lack the knowledge and economic resources to develop and submit an application for a small project under ULURP. Pp. 39, 40.

- Elevating Citywide Needs- The preliminary report states that "The Commission has heard considerable testimony arguing that the underproduction of housing, and the uneven nature of that production, is largely due to an institutional structure that gives parochial interests greater weight than citywide needs. In turn, the Commission has heard proposals to elevate the role of boroughwide and citywide perspectives. Suggestions include amending the Charter to require more comprehensive approaches to planning, as well as to enhance the role of officials like Borough Presidents and the Speaker of the City Council in the land use process." P.15. Much discussion is given in the preliminary report to doing away with the informal practice of member deference where the entire City Council as a body will not overrule a Council Member's decision to oppose a matter in their area. Pp. 31-34. DCA strongly opposes elevating citywide needs and ending member deference. DCA agrees with Council Member Robert Holden that "Any effort to end member deference would override the will of the people by stripping their elected representative's voice on zoning is nothing more than a blatant power grab and a gift to developers...The council must oppose this at all costs to preserve local control and protect our neighborhoods."³ The attempt to restrict how a council person votes or advocates on behalf of their constituents is unconstitutional and a denial of one person one vote. This issue was settled in the 1970s when the Supreme Court rejected the Board of Estimate.

Please note that recently two members of the City Council did not abide by member deference in a matter of citywide concern, and voted against modifications to zoning regulations to permit the planned [\\$8 billion Metropolitan Park casino development](#) adjacent to Citi Field in [Flushing](#). Nonetheless, the City Council voted 41-2 in favor of the proposal.⁴

DCA recommends that where a Council Member opposes a project that they be required to state on the record their position on the matter. The informal practice of member deference reflects the nature of politics. Moreover, a strong Mayor and Speaker of the City Council may be able to

³ [Exclusive | NYC Charter Revision Commission to recommend overhaul to primaries, target City Council's zoning power: sources](#)

⁴ [City Council votes overwhelmingly in favor of \\$8B Metropolitan Park casino zoning changes – QNS](#)

influence a Council Member on a matter where there is a matter of citywide concern, as the report indicates has occurred in the past. P.34.

- Leveraging Public Land- The preliminary report says that “The Commission may explore ways to streamline review for actions that activate public land and develop income-restricted affordable housing.” Pp. 15-16. Regardless of whether a project involves public land or not, the same provisions of ULURP should apply, since to the residents of the affected area, City ownership of the property is not dispositive. The same degree of community participation should be permitted in each matter under ULURP.
- Now is not the time to curtail transparency and the citizens and their representatives the right to review government actions and their right to comment thereon. In the 1970s, The City Charter was written to expand not contract open government and to put the spotlight on the corruption of special interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

S/ by A.M.

Sean M. Walsh
President

Subject:

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Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Tuesday, May 27, 2025, at 08:00:36 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Richard Fox

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Dear NYC Charter Revision Commission, Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Richard Fox. I am an Open Primaries volunteer and Brooklyn resident testifying to suggest that NYC adopt non-partisan primary elections to the city charter through a ballot proposal vote in November. Currently voters not registered with a party have no say in the choice of candidates that go to the general election. They are entirely blocked out of the primary election. A nonpartisan primary system allows all voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting the candidates who will best represent their interests. This change would increase voter turnout and ensure a more representative and inclusive process. Why Non-Partisan primaries are necessary: Majority Support for Winning Candidates: Nonpartisan primaries allow candidates to reflect the preferences of the broader electorate, rather than appealing solely to party members, ultimately leading to more diverse and well-rounded candidates. It also combats the issue of a "spoiler" candidate and ensures that no vote is wasted. Encouraging Positive Campaigning: Candidates will be incentivized to appeal to a broader range of voters, fostering a more civil and constructive electoral environment. Increased Voter

Participation: Nonpartisan primaries would allow all voters (including voters not registered with a party) to have a say in the selection of candidates, leading to greater voter engagement and a broader electorate. Reduction of Polarization: Holding nonpartisan primaries would force candidates to appeal to a wider range of voters. This can help reduce partisan divisions and foster more collaboration, civility, and bipartisan cooperation. By adopting nonpartisan primaries, New York City can build on the success of ranked choice voting and ensure that our primaries are more representative of the will of the people. In addition, by adopting nonpartisan primaries, we can foster a political environment where voters' voices are heard and the election process becomes more reflective of our collective values. This legislation represents a crucial step toward enhancing democracy, fostering voter engagement, and promoting fairer, more representative elections. Best Regards, Richard Fox



New York City Charter Revision Commission 2025
May 2025
Testimony by the Human Services Council of New York

On behalf of the Human Services Council of New York (HSC), I would like to thank the Commission for this opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Michelle Jackson, and I am the Executive Director of HSC. HSC is a membership organization representing over 180 human services providers in New York. HSC serves our membership as a coordinating body, advocate, and intermediary between the human services sector and government. We take on this work so that our members can focus on running their organizations and providing critical direct support to New Yorkers. These are the nonprofits that support our city's children, seniors, those experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, individuals who are incarcerated or otherwise involved in the justice system, immigrants, and individuals coping with substance abuse and other mental health and behavioral challenges. We strive to help our members better serve their clients by addressing matters such as government procurement practices, disaster preparedness and recovery, government funding, and public policies that impact the sector.

Charter Commission Preliminary Report

I was thrilled to see Nonprofit Procurement and Payment as part of the Commission's Preliminary Report. Payment delays- and the structure that perpetuates them- have been a longstanding issue in New York City. While systems changes like HHS Accelerator and now PASSPort have improved certain structures, payment delays persist, despite changes in Administrations and engagement of the nonprofit sector.

The procurement process, substantially defined in the New York City Charter, is the prime mechanism for creating, funding, and awarding contracts to human services providers. The City of New York contracts \$7.8 billion annually to nonprofit organizations employing about 80,000 workers, with human services contract spending growing 60 percent faster than the overall City budget over the past decade.¹ The contracting system is complex, and a lack of collaboration and transparency in the development of request for proposals, coupled with this complex process creates an inadequately funded set of programs and extensive delays in contract registration and payment.

Although the City procures over \$12 billion in human services, more than 91% of total contract value for human service and nonprofit contractors were registered late in Fiscal Year 2024.² Registration delays can be financially ruinous, as services are expected to begin on the first day of a contract, even if the contract has not yet been registered by the relevant agency. Providers

¹ (Parrott, Moving Beyond COLAs to Salary Parity for New York City's Nonprofit Human Services Workers, 2025)

² (New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, 2025)

cannot wait to begin services, like other contractors. A construction project could be delayed until documents are in order, but a summer youth program must start in the summer, and parents rely on a particular start date. For contract renewals, which are also delayed, providers cannot close a program while waiting for renewal documents; closing a domestic violence shelter for 2-3 months each year would be extremely problematic, and the fabric of social services would fall apart. Even if the City provides quarterly advances, providers do not have access to the money until the contract is registered. Thus, the City puts human services organizations in a position where they continue to provide services before they are paid.

There are real consequences for late payments, not just administrative burdens. Providers take enormous fiscal and legal risks by signing leases, hiring staff, and starting programs without a contract, or continuing to operate services on the verbal agreement that things will get sorted out. Retroactivity also creates cash flow issues for providers, who have to put off paying vendors, take out lines of credit that they must pay interest on or utilize the loan fund, because providers cannot get paid until the contract is registered. The City and its residents ultimately bear the brunt of these problems, when highly qualified providers cannot afford to take on City contracts, or when those providers must close programs or go out of business altogether because of the financial strains imposed by the City's late payments. The result is that communities lose access to cherished neighborhood institutions and essential services, and the City is unable to carry out its human services programs. For instance, Sheltering Arms, a 200-year-old nonprofit, closed its doors because of challenges from the pandemic, chronic underfunding, and late government contract payments.³

Over multiple Administrations, taskforces, convenings, and initiatives, this problem persists. The Charter Revision Commission has a unique opportunity at a critical point in time to address this problem in a new way through the Charter. We support the summary of issues and recommendations in the Preliminary Report.

The Charter Recommendations

While there are many pathways that could lead to reform, I want to focus my testimony on two areas where I think the Charter aligns very much with key changes. Empowering the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) by establishing it as an agency in the Charter and requiring the Procurement Policy Board (PPB) to have established, public meetings, would give more direct control for MOCS to establish system-wide changes, and ensure the PPB was addressing procurement issues.

The Charter should establish a mandate describing the specific responsibilities for MOCS. It is crucial for MOCS to have charter authority to ensure City agencies meet contracting deadlines and be able to improve procurement processes across programmatic agencies. MOCS should have charter authority not just over procurement, but invoicing and payment, to ensure consistent policies across agencies. Many of the payment issues nonprofit providers face are not just from registration, but payment issues throughout the span of the contract, and payment practices vary and change from agency to agency. This could be accomplished by establishing an office in the executive office of the mayor and the director of contract services appointed by the mayor, that

³ (Madison Hunt, 2023)

has the authority to take actions needed to ensure that agencies comply with contract laws and regulations, invoicing, and payment. The Office should also have the power to survey each agency and furnish data and information and to answer inquiries pertinent to the exercise of any of the director's duties regarding procurement-related matters.

The Procurement Policy Board (PPB) is a critical regulatory body for contracting and ensuring that regulations are relevant and effective. Yet there is no guidance on how often the PPB must meet, or any mechanism for transparency of PPB decision making. Some of the issues HSC presents to the City could be appropriately addressed by the PPB, but the Board does not regularly meet in a way that the public can engage and address critical issues. Therefore, we recommend amending Section 311 to include a requirement that the PPB meet four times per year and hold public hearings. This creates a better mechanism for the PPB to take action, for the public to weigh in on issues, and creates a public oversight mechanism of MOCS, if that agency were not taking appropriate actions.

Since I last testified, new data has been released that demonstrates the problem of late payments has only worsened. The New York City Comptroller reported at the end of April that there were 4,000 unpaid invoices, worth over \$865 million, associated with nonprofits. Their review of eight agencies showed that seven of those eight in FY 2025 issued *first* payments to human services providers 200 days after the start date, and at five, it was over a year. The report also notes that budget modifications contribute significantly to payment delays, and often completely stops the flow of money. 85% of approved FY 2025 budgets have been modified at least once.

Those agencies vary and may not fall under the same Deputy Mayor- now or in the future- and this data also highlights all the ways in which a lack of standardization and authority creates delays. Having one agency- MOCS- responsible for all the pieces of contract registration, invoicing, and payment, creates better continuity. Some City agencies are clearing up budget modifications, paying providers in a more timely fashion, and have clear invoicing policies across contracts. Some do not. MOCS could ensure that agencies follow similar policies and correct actions when delays happen and should have the authority to do so directly. The PPB would then have the power to correct if MOCS was not acting or acting in a way that created other issues for the public.

Current Initiatives that Complement or Overlap

Right as the Charter Commission Preliminary Report was released, the City Council announced key legislation to address late payments, and the Mayor also announced an increase in payment advances for FY 2026. These various efforts could be helpful, but I do not think change the Charter Revision Commission's areas of focus.

The new advances for FY 2026 will be helpful, but are not standard policy for years going forward, and only help providers once their contracts have been registered. The legislation announced by the City Council on advances (Int. 1247) would standardize the advance policy but again would only be helpful for registered contracts. Legislation on reporting (Int. 1249) is additionally helpful and does not overlap to other proposed changes. The third piece in establishing a Department of Contract Services (Int. 1248) does overlap with Charter

recommendations/areas of interest, but the legislation has not passed, we do not know if the Mayor will sign it into law, and it can be undone in future legislation. The Charter is the better approach to ensure MOCS has the appropriate authority.

Conclusion

Human services providers play the essential role in the City's complex human services delivery system, and they face many challenges in the contracting process. They operate in the context of a broken contracting system. Only if we address the underlying causes of contractor instability—problems at the government level—will we be able to ensure a robust nonprofit community that can continue to deliver quality services to our community. The Charter Revision Commission is an important opportunity for the City to correct issues with procurement, and to standardize good practices undertaken by some agencies.

Thank you for your work and for providing us with this opportunity to share our recommendations with you.

Michelle Jackson
Executive Director
Human Services Council of NY



Subject:

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[REDACTED] on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 03:16:37 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Richard Suarez

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: A major issue with the length of the pre-certification timeline is staffing issues at the Department of City Planning and their ability to timely complete their technical and environmental reviews. Paragraph (c) of Section 197-c of the Charter outlines a procedure for applicants to appeal to the CPC if an application has not been certified within six months after filing, but that appeal has rarely, if ever, been used. The Department often misses the deadlines outlined in the Rules for the pre-application/pre-certification process. The appeal provision in the Charter should be overhauled to establish statutory timelines for the Department to perform their pre-certification reviews and issue a comment letter to the applicant. And since the eligibility for certification is made by the Department, and not the CPC, appeals should be made to the director of the Department requesting that the application be certified or a comment letter be issued if the review timeline was missed by the Department.

Subject:

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Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 04:43:48 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Frank Morano

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Chairperson, members of the Commission, and fellow New Yorkers: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Frank Morano. I've testified before this Commission twice already in favor of nonpartisan elections with ranked choice voting — just as I've done before every Charter Revision Commission that has existed in New York City since 2002. This is an issue I care deeply about — because it's about making our city's democracy actually work for the people who live here. On April 29th of this year, I was elected to the New York City Council in a nonpartisan special election using ranked choice voting. No party labels. No backroom deals. Just a group of candidates competing on ideas, character, and a record of public service. The result? An election that was clean, fair, efficient — and, imagine this — actually representative of the voters, not the parties. And that's exactly how all of our municipal elections should be conducted. New York City is long overdue for a full embrace of nonpartisan elections with ranked choice voting — not just for special elections or temporary pilot programs, but across the board. This system is already working for us. We shouldn't stop halfway; we should finish the job. Let me be absolutely clear: nonpartisan elections with ranked choice voting — the very

method by which I was elected — are not radical. They're the gold standard for local democracy. And I'm not alone in thinking that. In fact, nearly every major city in the United States that uses ranked choice voting uses it in nonpartisan elections. San Francisco. Minneapolis. Oakland. Salt Lake City. The list goes on. And let's zoom out a bit more: every city in America with more than one million residents — Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, San Diego — uses nonpartisan elections. The only exception? Philadelphia. And honestly... have you looked at how that's going? Nonpartisan elections are the norm. Not the exception. They allow voters to focus on the person, not the party. They empower independents. They reduce toxic partisanship and restore the focus of local government to what it should be: competence, leadership, and public trust. And yet, in your preliminary report, you've floated a dangerously confused alternative: so-called "open primaries," as a counterproposal to true nonpartisan ranked-choice elections. Let me channel my inner George Carlin here: Words matter. An "open primary" has a clear, well-established definition. Political parties still nominate their own candidates — but any voter can choose which party's primary to vote in. That's how it works in states like Texas, Georgia, and Alabama. And you know what those states tend to have in common? Some of the least representative, most gerrymandered, and ideologically extreme governments in the country. So when I see this Commission use the term "open primary" to describe California's top two jungle primary, that's not just wrong — it's Orwellian. What you're describing is not an open primary. It's a nonpartisan primary with a top-two runoff. These are not the same thing. Not even close. And California's "top two" system? It's been a disaster. In at least four documented cases, vote-splitting led to deep-blue districts ending up with two Republicans on the final ballot — or vice versa — completely disenfranchising the majority of voters. It also shuts out minor parties and independent voices. Why should a Libertarian, Green, or Conservative have to outpoll two Democrats or two Republicans just to make the November ballot? That's not democracy — that's electoral Darwinism. Let's talk about cost and clarity. Ranked choice voting lets us settle elections — primaries and general — in one round. One. No runoffs. No second bites at the apple. No months-long campaign extensions or extra expenses. Just one clean, decisive vote. That's good government. And contrary to what the doomsayers claim, voters can handle it. In fact, they already do. Cities like San Francisco, Oakland, and Minneapolis have been using ranked choice voting for years in nonpartisan local elections. The sky hasn't fallen. In fact, voter participation has improved. And elections are more competitive and more civil. But above all, I beg you: be precise with the language of democracy. Stop calling a horse a cow just because they both eat grass. Using "open primary" to mean "top two" is a bait-and-switch — and voters deserve better. So here's my bottom line: Put real nonpartisan ranked-choice elections on the ballot this November. Don't water it down. Don't confuse voters. Don't distort what works. Let's give New Yorkers a system where every vote counts, where no party has a monopoly, and where candidates rise on merit — not machinery. If we can trust New Yorkers to rank their choices for mayor in a special election, we can trust them to do it in every other election, too. And let's be honest — if New Yorkers can navigate alternate side parking and the subway schedule, they can definitely handle ranked choice voting. Thank you.



Testimony to NYC Charter Commission on Government Reform
Queens Public Input Session

***Support for Even-Year Elections and a “Vote Once” General Election With
No Primary that Harnesses the Logic of Ranked Choice Voting***

May 28, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to comment remotely and compliments to the Commission and staff on your excellent preliminary report.

Reinvent Albany advocates for more transparent and accountable New York government. Our staff of policy experts have drafted and passed dozens of city and state bills, and we are frequently called upon by journalists and elected officials.

The [preliminary staff report](#) correctly emphasized long-standing concerns about poor voter turnout and identified even-year elections and some form of open primaries as possible solutions. The Commission also noted that 1 million NYC voters are unaffiliated and cannot vote in party primaries.

Research suggests that the two biggest factors driving local election turnout is [whether the election is in an even year](#) and [how competitive a race is](#). New York City rarely has both a competitive Democratic Party primary and general election for citywide offices, and typically has very low turnout for one or both elections.

Today we are here to urge you to place two charter changes to the election process on the ballot.

First, ***Even-Year Elections*** are a great idea and should be on the ballot.

Second, we urge you to consider a ***Vote Once*** process that holds a single election using ranked choice voting (RCV). RCV has changed everything, and the overwhelming logic to best take advantage of this voting process is to hold one election and eliminate primaries. Turning eligible voters out once is far easier than turning them out twice, and holding an RCV election guarantees the highest level of competitiveness without splitting the vote. San Francisco uses a general election RCV process with no primary

and has extremely high voter turnout: 79% in the 2024 San Francisco mayoral election vs. NYC's 23% turnout in the 2021 general election for mayor.

Another potential advantage of Vote Once is that it could dilute the ability of a single issue independent expenditure (IE) to sway an election in a general election with only two candidates. Vote Once does not have to be non-partisan; candidates could list their political party or parties to provide voters with more information, but candidates should be listed once.

Vote Once would save taxpayers tens of millions of dollars: the June 2023 City Council primary [cost the Board of Elections \\$31 million](#). Some of the savings from eliminating primaries could go into encouraging the public to vote in the general election.

Can NYC adopt Vote Once via charter change alone?

New York State Election Law Section 8-100 requires New York City to hold primaries. This would have to be changed to allow for Vote Once.

Support for Semi-Open Primaries

We think the Commission should also consider the more politically palatable alternative of “semi-open” primaries, which allow unaffiliated voters to participate in party primaries of their choosing. This system is currently in use in Massachusetts for state elections. This change would have the benefit of providing unaffiliated voters – of which there are 1 million in New York City – a more meaningful choice at the polls, while minimizing the size of the change and, unfortunately, also the benefits.

Support for Empowering MOCS as a Mayoral Agency

Lastly, on other issues you are considering, Reinvent Albany strongly supports making the Mayor's Office of Contract Services a full mayoral agency. We support giving it the power to mandate other agencies standardize procurement procedures, vendor evaluations, and data collection.

Thank you for your consideration.

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-928699 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agencymail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Wed, 28 May 2025 21:58:24 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 05:58:13 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Diane Rose

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: DianeRose4CityCouncil[.]com Calls for an increase in affordable available accessible Senior housing. That there should be a push to set aside up 20% of new housing development and to protect seniors from predatory housing practices within regulated or otherwise types of housing and that engaging in same be recognized as a crime of extortion.

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-1997858 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Wed, 28 May 2025 22:25:10 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 06:24:09 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Diane Rose

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Diane Rose 4 City Council As an Independent Candidate, I can also envision reforms made to create a fairer system of running for office as a candidate. First all parties should be engaged in the same activities at the same time and have the same requirements. Independents are forced to require more and does so at a time apart from party elections. Finally, the onerous process of collecting signatures would be better spent campaigning on the issues vs just getting a persons signature. Requiring a fee to get on the ballot instead both generates revenue for the city and decreases albeit eliminate the onerous process of ensuring signatures authenticity and eliminates waste and threaten of airborne diseases passed on through handling paper between so many people. Finally, as a candidate getting on the ballot instead the primary rank choice voting enables voters to vote their hearts rather than just party alignment that get away from real needs and replaced it with ill equipped popularized voting

Subject:

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-1900399 CRC Contact Form -
Submit Written Testimony

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
To: "CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov"
<CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Date: Wed, 28 May 2025 22:25:12 +0000

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 06:24:00 PM

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Diane Rose

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Diane Rose 4 City Council As an Independent Candidate, I can also envision reforms made to create a fairer system of running for office as a candidate. First all parties should be engaged in the same activities at the same time and have the same requirements. Independents are forced to require more and does so at a time apart from party elections. Finally, the onerous process of collecting signatures would be better spent campaigning on the issues vs just getting a persons signature. Requiring a fee to get on the ballot instead both generates revenue for the city and decreases albeit eliminate the onerous process of ensuring signatures authenticity and eliminates waste and threaten of airborne diseases passed on through handling paper between so many people. Finally, as a candidate getting on the ballot instead the primary rank choice voting enables voters to vote their hearts rather than just party alignment that get away from real needs and replaced it with ill equipped popularized voting

Testimony of Dr. Jessie Fields

Charter Revision Commission Monday May 19, 2025

I am very happy to see in your Charter Revision Preliminary Report that you are considering reforming our closed primary system that disenfranchises independent voters and allowing independents like me to participate.

I am a medical doctor in Harlem and I serve on the New York City Maternal Mortality Review Committee. I have been an independent voter for most of my adult life and I have been involved in campaigns to open the primaries to independent voters here in New York City. I served on the Board of Independent Voting and I am on the Board of Open Primaries and I have run as an independent candidate for congress and for Manhattan Borough President.

In New York City there are 1.1 million independent voters, a majority of whom are people of color: Black,

Latinx, and Asian. Nearly half (49 per cent) of New York City independent voters, are under age 40.

Overall according to the PEW Research Center 49 per cent of veterans identify as independents.

Independents are the second largest voting bloc in New York City, (21.1 per cent of registered voters), after Democrats. While 11 per cent of New York City voters are registered Republicans. (Footnote 1)

Democrats are the first largest voting bloc in New York City. Independents are the second largest voting bloc in New York City. Yet we are disenfranchised from voting in primaries elections in our city.

The primary substantially impacts on who will ultimately be elected to public office.

The fact that we independents, are barred from voting in primary elections disenfranchises independents from having a voice in choosing the elected officials who govern at the local level.

We are required to pay taxes but we are not allowed to vote in primary elections.

I am a doctor of the community and I am very concerned about the health of New York City communities. Those communities that are disenfranchised and segregated have been found to have poorer health for decades and decades and decades. (Footnote 2)

Let's end the political segregation and exclusion of certain voters who happen to choose not to register with any political party and who want to remain unaffiliated and be able to vote in primaries.

If we really want to increase voter participation and have a more healthy democracy we should open our primary elections to all voters.

I am certain where Medgar Evers would have stood on this matter.

Thank you.

Footnotes

- 1) Campaign Finance Board Report, released 4/29/2025 <https://www.nyccfb.info/media/press-releases/1-in-5-registered-nyc-voters-are-unaffiliated-new-report-from-campaign-finance-board-shows/>
- 2) Health Consequences of Segregation and Disenfranchisement. Kalra, Girish and Watson, Karol Journal of the American Heart Association. 2022.

City Charter Commission Testimony of Randy Peers

March 19th, 2025 – Medgar Evers College

Good afternoon, my name is Randy Peers, and I am President & CEO of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, the largest Chamber of Commerce in NYS. In my current role I am fortunate to interact with all levels of government on a regular basis, and I have had the pleasure of getting to know personally, many elected officials over the course of my thirty years as a professional in the workforce and economic development space. I have seen many good public servants during my time, and I have also witnessed many others fall from grace for various reasons.

I am also the face of a disenfranchised voter, having been registered “unaffiliated” since 2017. Given my intimate knowledge of, and interactions with the political system in NYC, you may be wondering why I would deliberately choose to disenfranchise myself by not registering in a party, and particularly the Democratic party. Simply put, I am registered unaffiliated because that’s truly where my politics lie, personally holding opinions that span the ideological spectrum.

So, when I say I support open primaries, it’s very much because I care about democracy itself, and I truly believe the enfranchising the over 1MM unaffiliated voters in NYC will produce better results. Open primaries also strengthen democracy by helping elect leaders that truly reflect the majority opinions in the City. In fact, we already have open primaries, they are called “special elections”. Open primaries will not only lead to greater voter participation overall, but general elections will also now actually matter.

It’s worth noting that 24 of the 30 largest cities in America have open primaries. And the results have been exceptional, increasing voter participation and expanding choices. Over time, open primaries will also lead to encouraging more people to step up and run for office, given that the playing field will be more equal. In fact, combined with ranked choice voting and public financing of campaigns, NYC has the potential to once again lead the nation in expanding democracy and voter rights.

As we see an unraveling of democratic institutions on a national level, now is the time to act decisively in defense of more democracy, not less. I urge the Charter Commission to include open primaries recommendation on the ballot this year.