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2		REVISION COMMISSION HEARING				
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5	New York, N	Jew York 10018				
6	May	9, 2018				
7	6:13 P.M.					
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10	APPEARANCES:					
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13	COMMISSIONERS:					
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15	RACHEL GODSIL, Vice Chair	LARIAN ANGELO				
16	KYLE BRAGG	DEBORAH ARCHER				
17	DALE HO	MENDY MIROCZNIK				
18	ANNETTA SEECHARRAN	JOHN SIEGAL				
19	WENDY WEISER					
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1	VICE CHAIR GODSIL: Welcome, everyone. We
2	are happy to call this meeting to order, the 2018
3	Charter Revision Commission Manhattan meeting on
4	May 9, 2018, at 6:00, slightly after, P.M. Thank
5	you all so much for being here. This is the last
6	of five public hearings that we are holding in
7	each of the five boroughs. If you wish to
8	testify or you have already signed up at the
9	table if you haven't, please sign up at the
10	welcome table right outside.
11	My name is Rachel Godsil. I'm the Vice
12	Chair of the Charter Revision Commission. I'm a
13	law professor and I focus on environmental law
14	and the intersection of land use, property and
15	housing. My focus as well is at the intersection
16	which looks at the role of social science in
17	helping to address issues of racial bias, gender,
18	ethnicity, and bias based upon religion. My
19	former role was as the Chair of the Rent
20	Guidelines Board of which I am very proud. I
21	also spent time at the Legal Defense Fund
22	focusing on environmental justice. My work in
23	the city specifically was challenging an

incinerator that was sited for Williamsburg which

incinerator in New York as well as the

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1	I think we are all happy was never built. We did
2	work to develop public hospitals. So it's really
3	an honor to be part of this commission. I am
4	delighted to invite our co-commissioner, Larian
5	Angelo, to this meeting.
6	MS. ANGELO: Good evening. I'm Larian
7	Angelo. I am currently a researcher at CUNY's
8	Institute of State and Local Government. I spent
9	a long time, most of my life working in city
10	government in a variety of positions, mostly
11	about budget. I would like to thank the New York
12	Public Library for inviting us in to use this
13	beautiful room in a beautiful building dedicated
14	to equal access to knowledge for all people. So
15	it's a very fitting setting for the Commission.
16	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much. And would
17	the other commissioners like to introduce
18	themselves? We could start at the end of the
19	table to my right. Please pass the mic.
20	MR. BRAGG: Good evening, I'm Kyle Bragg,
21	secretary/treasurer of SEIU 32BJ.
22	MR. SIEGAL: John Siegal. I'm a lawyer
23	practicing here in Manhattan.
24	MS. SEECHARRAN: Good evening, my name is
25	Annetta Seecharran and I'm the executive director

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1	of Chhaya Community Development Corporation.
2	MS. MIROCZNIK: Good evening, my name is
3	Mendy Mirocznik. I'm president of the Staten
4	Island College.
5	MS. WEISER: Hello, my name is Wendy Weiser.
6	I direct a democracy program at the Brennan
7	Center for Justice at NYU School of Law. And I
8	want to thank all of you for coming this evening.
9	MR. HO: Good evening, my name is Dale Ho
LO	and I'm the director of the ACLU's Voting Rights
L1	Project. Our work is dedicated to making voting
L2	systems and elections more open, accessible, and
L3	fair. And I look forward to hearing ideas from
L4	folks in this room about how we can do that in
L5	New York City.
L6	MS. ARCHER: Good evening, my name is
L7	Deborah Archer and I'm a law professor at
L8	New York Law School.
L9	MS. GODSIL: So again, thank you all so much
20	for being here. As you may know, because we of
21	course focused on this issue, every mayor has the
22	opportunity to appoint a Charter Revision
23	Commission to review the City's Charter,
24	essentially the Constitution for the City of
25	New York.

DIAMOND REPORTING

Our role here is to listen to the people who come to the meetings, to read comments, to listen to people who have expertise on different issues, but essentially to really have an opportunity to cull all the ideas people have about how the New York City Charter is working and what issues of concern you may bring to us.

The role of the Commission then is to come up with recommendations to amend the Charter.

These recommendations will be presented to voters in November. The Commission is called to review the entire Charter. So we can look at any portion of the Charter, but every mayor who has appointed a City Charter Commission has a particular interest. And as many of you know, that Mayor de Blasio is particularly interested in looking at how democracy works.

He is looking for us to engage you on questions of how our elections ought to be held, how much money should be involved, how we can get more people to vote, and ultimately how to make the city more democratic. So the opportunity to hear from all of you about this at the early stage of the game is critical to the process.

And we are really enthusiastic that people are

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1	sufficiently	y inte	erest	.ed	to be	her	ce on	a
2	weeknight.	And t	this	is	again	a v	wonde	rful
3	turnout.							

We conducted extensive outreach in advance of this meeting. Of course we followed all the required notice protocols and public notice in "The City Record." There have been hearing notices on the Commission's website. I invited to you review it if you haven't, nyc.gov/charter. There have been blast e-mails sent to thousands of New Yorkers. There have been notices to every major New York City media outlet, community news outlets, news outlets focused on particular community boards and ethnic newspapers, community boards and community groups.

It turns out we've entered the social media world and we have a Facebook and Twitter. I recommend you follow us on Twitter @nyccharter. The Commission will continue to ensure its outreach as broadly as possible. And certainly if you have suggestions on that, we will be delighted to hear that.

This meeting is being live streamed at nyc.gov/charter. We have posted videos of our initial meetings as well as our first two

hearings in Staten Island and the Bronx. There
are transcripts as well for those of you who
would prefer to read. And we will continue to
post videos of all of our public meetings and
hearings as soon as possible on our website as
well as transcripts as they become available
tonight.

We have sign language interpreters and other listening devices available. So again, we want to make sure that everyone is able to participate. We have Spanish language interpreters and headsets available. So if you again would like to listen to this hearing or testify in Spanish, we very much want to make that possible.

So the next steps for the Commission are to have a number of additional hearings as well as a public meeting to discuss topics for expert panels. Those will be held in June. And then there will be public testimony. So again, now focused on tonight, this is a public hearing, and so the goal here is to have anyone who would like to speak have that opportunity.

As you know, again as I have said, this about the Charter and comments are open to any

1	aspects of the Charter. As I've said, please
2	make sure that you've signed up at the welcome
3	table. In order to have an opportunity to listen
4	to everyone, we will have a clock which allows
5	three minutes per speaker. There will be an
6	opportunity for the commissioners to ask
7	questions.

If you are from an organization, please assign one representative from each group, organization, or institution to speak on behalf of the entire institution, because again, the goal is for everyone to be heard. Each person who wishes to speak will be afforded an opportunity no matter what time you arrive at the hearing.

We will have a structured order of testimony: Elected officials, if there are any; representatives of organizations; and individuals. And we will again provide commissioners an opportunity to comment or question to bring to the floor. And we would like commissioners to identify themselves before speaking.

And so again, thank you so much for being here. And we would like to identify any elected

1	officials	and	offer	them	an	opportunity	to
2	testify.						

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So we will first have Elias Holtz. Just to let everyone know, in order to have the testimony be as topic-focused as possible, as you might have noticed, we asked you to state what area you would like to focus on. And so panels have been constructed that will have people testify on similar areas of interest. And then there will be questions at the close of each panel for, again to make sure the commissioners have an opportunity to ask questions and that everyone has an opportunity to hear the specific questions about an area. So we will have panels of four to start.

And again, Mr. Elias Holtz, the Steering

Committee for the Campaign for the Elected

Civilian Review Board. After Mr. Holtz we will

have Juanita Young, Mothers for Justice; Alexis

Iwanisziw -- please make sure to correct me if I

mispronounce your last name -- and Noel Hidalgo.

So if it each of you would like to come up. Thank you so much.

Mr. Holts?

25 MR. HOLTZ: Good evening, Commissioners, my

name is Elias Holtz and I'm on the Steering
Committee, as you said, for the NYC Campaign for
an Elected Civilian Review Board. We are a
coalition of over 25 organizations, prominent
individuals. And we are representing feedback
from New Yorkers from over three years of
neighborhood organizing. We are here to urge you
to present the voters an amendment for an
empowered and elected Civilian Review Board and
independent special prosecutor over the police.

As you know, we are in the middle of an accountability crisis with the NYPD. BuzzFeed News recently published an investigation in early March about hundreds of NYPD officers who were guilty of serious misconduct like brutality, sexual abuse, lying on official reports and perjury. These officers were not meaningfully held accountable and remain in the department. It's nearly four years since Eric Garner was killed and almost two years since Delrawn Small was killed. Yet the officers responsible for the killing and misconduct in those cases haven't been held accountable.

Our current Civilian Complaint Review Board is supposed to hold police accountable; however,

its hands are tied. As many of you know, the CCRB decisions only amount to recommendations to the commissioner who can then reduce the penalty or throw it out entirely. In 2017, 73 percent of disciplinary recommendations by the CCRB's Administrative Prosecution Unit were either reduced or flat-out ignored. This fundamental conflict of interest where the police are except to police themselves is a total roadblock to justice, to transparency, to accountability. It's absolutely unacceptable that those who are paid to serve and protect have open season on a populous with no real consequence.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Say it.

MR. HOLTZ: This is an insult to justice to all of us who are accountable under the law. We need real reform now and that's why we bring a Charter amendment for an elected Civilian Review Board and independent special prosecutor. This Charter amendment is simple. It makes our current appointed board elected and then empowers that elected board to make binding decisions. So instead of recommendations after in-depth investigations and full due process for officers involved, officers found guilty of misconduct are

1	held accoun	ntable with	n binding	disci	pli:	ne.
2	There's no	overturn,	watering	down	of	those

decisions by the commissioner.

In addition to a Review Board for police officers involved in criminal offenses, our Charter amendment establishes an independent special prosecutor's office whose sole duty is to investigate and prosecute those cases. This clears up the conflict of interest that the DA's office has when they are prosecuting their co-workers, the police. We have drafted this Charter amendment and have copies for the Commission that are handed out to staffers.

This crisis of police accountability in our city demands a big solution, the type of solution a Charter Revision Commission has the duty to bring. We think a review of the City Charter without addressing the police accountability crisis we believe is an incomplete job. We urge this Commission to hear the call of the community, to be leaders in the fight for police accountability. Bring this change to the voters of New York because without an empowered mechanism to hold police accountable, we are really only waiting for another death in the

1	headlines. Thank you.
2	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much for your
3	testimony.
4	Mr. Hidalgo?
5	MR. HIDALGO: Hi, my name is Noel Hidalgo,
6	or you could call me Noel. It's an honor to have
7	this opportunity to represent New York City civic
8	technology and design and data community. I'm
9	the executive director of Make NYC. We are a
10	member-driven good government organization. And
11	in 2009, a group of concerned citizens started
12	meeting to talk about the future of municipal
13	open data. In 2012, we joined with Council
14	Member then Gale Brewer to support the city's
15	open data law. And over the last six years, our
16	4,700-plus members have fought to improve
17	people's lives through technology, data and
18	design.
19	In 2014, we published the people's roadmap
20	to New York City, outlined the need for our
21	government to adopt modern agile digital

laws and these laws have strengthened the city's

practices to be efficient participatory,

transparent. Additionally, we outlined 34

different ideas that ended up producing nine new

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open data program and have helped shape the Charter provisions around data and information sharing. Based on our work with the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and Manhattan's 12 community boards and feedback from our over four thousand members, I want to identify three core areas that this Commission can use to improve our collective democracy.

First of all, government should be digital.

Second, digital and data literacy are core
elements to a 21st century democracy. And we
need active civic participation. The testimony
that's written has a number of recommendations
and I will just briefly go over these. First of
all, paper and PDFs are super-expensive. They
limit access and privilege only the few. So we
would love to see the city Charter enable or
enshrine that all municipal information should be
accessible to all regardless of device.

We also need to rethink how the Charter kind of delegates power out to the different agencies around technology and data. So far we have DCAS, we have DOIT, and then there are a number of provisions within the Charter that say please do something with data and technology. There's even

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mentions of former names of DOIT in the city
Charter which is kind of frustrating because
it's, like, how can city planning work with an
agency that no longer exists?

We highly recommend that anything that's within the City Charter actually reference the piece of legislation that we got passed around the city record, so that way data is available in a nonproprietary, machine-readable format and a human-readable format that's capable of being downloadable in bulk.

Second, data and digital literacy are core elements of a 21st century democracy. And fundamentally, every single one of our community boards and borough presidents are underresourced in their ability to use technology data and design. Second to that, there's a provision within the city Charter that talks about COPIC, the Commission on Public Information and Communication. And then it's 29-year history, it's met less than 29 times. Its charter mandated it to meet once a year. It would be great if we could figure out how to revive COPIC or at least move it its powers to another agency.

Lastly, ideally we'd move civic

1	participation beyond the ballot box. That being
2	said, DOIT is currently not Charter-mandated to
3	respond to community board district needs. And
4	it would be great if DOIT can actually respond to
5	community boards and be able to facilitate their
6	technology data and design needs. And it would
7	be great if community boards were mandated to be
8	transparent as to who is on the board, how long
9	have they served, who is on which committee and a
10	general sense of how to communicate with them.
11	Right now there's next to zero transparency
12	within community boards.
13	MS. GODSIL: Thank you very much.
14	MR. HIDALGO: Thank you.
15	MS. GODSIL: Ms. Young?
16	MS. YOUNG: Good evening, everybody. My
17	name is Juanita Young. I'm with the Mothers for
18	Justice. My son was murdered in New York by the
19	NYPD in 2000. And going through the process of
20	finding out what happened with my son, I had to
21	deal with the CCRB. Through the years, I have
22	been out here for the past 18 years dealing with
23	other families that also dealt with the CCRB.
24	And we got very, very little results. We know
25	the CCRB answers to the mayor and to the

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commissioner. We are saying take the CCRB out of the hands of the mayor and the commissioner. Let the people elect an independent person that would have to answer to the people. You see when something happens with the NYPD and the mayor is involved, what happens? The NYPD stands up with the mayor.

Now it's not fair to the families that have to deal with such a tragedy, losing someone and then having to find out the answer. And we don't get no answers because of who we have to deal with. We are saying if it there's an independent person, the person is elected somebody from the CCRB, I feel and many other families feel that results might be better because why do we have to suffer pain unnecessarily and then the people that are supposed to serve and protect us are protected by the mayor and by the commissioner? What is it going to take people to wake up and see the system is not working? It's time for the people to say give us an independent elected Review Board and give equal opportunity to the victims. Thank you.

MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much for your testimony.

1	Ms. Iwanisziw?
2	MS. IWANISZIW: Good evening, my name is
3	Alexis Iwanisziw. I'm the deputy director of New
4	Economy Project and we are a group based here in
5	New York City. It works with community groups to
6	build and accommodate the works of all
7	New Yorkers based on principles of cooperation,
8	equity, ecological sustainability, and racial and
9	social justice.
10	For more than the past 20 years, we have
11	coordinated coalitions and campaigns that work to
12	eliminate discriminatory economic practices that
13	perpetuate inequality and poverty and
14	segregation, and to promote cooperative and
15	community-led development through community land
16	trusts, nonspeculative housing, worker and
17	financial cooperatives, and other strategies.
18	We see this Charter review process as
19	representing a really important opportunity in a
20	moment of compounding crises in the world,
21	ecological, economic, political, for New Yorkers.
22	We urge the Commission to take bold action to
23	defend New York and its residents against these
24	growing impacts and to advance equity,
25	resilience, transparency and accountability in

1 the City government.

We specifically urge the Commission to advance the City Charter that incorporates economic democracy in housing and land use, public finance, and our economy as a whole. By "economic democracy" we mean a paradigm for development that prioritizes the public good, and puts New Yorkers and their communities in the driver's seat rather than wealthy investors and developers.

Now specifically, we believe the Commission should prioritize making Charter revisions that first enshrine a right to housing for all the New Yorkers and support strategies to achieve this. And some examples include the disposition of public land and housing should prioritize public benefit over profit, ensure long-term affordability and prevent the extraction of public subsidy for affordable house. We also believe the Commission should prioritize the establishment of a municipal public bank for New York City to hold public deposits and make loans and investments that benefit all New York City communities.

The Charter right now establishes a

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The Charter Commission should also revisit
the Banking Commission's structure and strengthen
standards for institutions that the city does
business with overall.

Finally, the Commission should support the creation of democratically controlled community-led strategies for development including through supporting cooperative financial institutions, housing, businesses and more. As a key first step, the Charter Revision Commission should consider the creation of a New York City Office of Cooperative Economics to explicitly support these fast-growing sectors of movements and to coordinate learning and support across New York City agencies and programs.

Analogous offices have been widely successful in cities around the world, not to mention that New

1	York City is home to more than two thousand and
2	growing cooperative institutions.
3	Just to wrap up, a City Charter rooted in
4	economic democracy would not only advance racial
5	and economic justice in New York City
6	neighborhoods, but would also strengthen the
7	city's ability to address serious challenges
8	ranging from federal government to climate change
9	in the coming years. Thank you so much for the
10	opportunity to testify.
11	MS. GODSIL: Thank you for your testimony.
12	What any commissioner like to ask any
13	questions?
14	MR. SIEGAL: Good evening, John Siegal. I
15	also am currently a member of the CCRB. So I've
16	read quickly your proposal with great interest.
17	I want to ask you a couple of questions about it.
18	And I'm is not espousing a position on the
19	proposal. It's actually the first I have seen of
20	it this evening. First question is, it calls for
21	a 21-member Commission. How do you propose if
22	there were such a thing that a 21-member
23	commission would actually hear and decide cases?
24	MR. HOLTZ: The legislation outlines
25	guidelines for a panel that I believe would be

1	have a quorum of at least three members who would
2	reside over each case.
3	MR. SIEGAL: Because I will tell you we
4	currently have panels of three, and the case
5	discussions are often very in-depth, very
6	fact-oriented and so that's why I asked that.
7	Are you aware of any other government body,
8	because you are proposing I think 17 district
9	representatives and then four selected other ways
10	where it doesn't really, to me, comport with one
11	person, one vote.
12	Are you aware of any other government
13	agencies that have district representatives and
14	then add additional representatives from certain
15	impacted districts?
16	MR. HOLTZ: I would have to ask the
17	legislative team where they found that precedent.
18	But for us, we think it makes a lot of sense
19	because of the kind of asymmetrical, like, crisis
20	of police accountability in certain districts, we
21	really wanted to bump up representation in areas
22	where police misconduct was, you know, really
23	acute.
24	MR. SIEGAL: I understand the modicum of
25	actually making it a practice including tonight

which I'm skipping to have community (inaudible)
with the highest greatest importance. One last
point and I'm not here to defend the current
system or to comment on your proposal because
there are certainly real issues with the current
system including most particularly the
prohibition under Civil Rights Law 50A. that
prevents citizens from knowing what's happening
in a police disciplinary case unless and until it
goes to trial which just makes no sense at all.

And I just want to comment on the independence. And it's just a comment. I'm not saying that more couldn't or shouldn't be done. I'm just going to say this. I have been on the CCRB for, I forgot how long, a year, year and a half. I'm designated by the mayor. I've never had a conversation about a case with anyone outside the CCRB. Nobody in the Mayor's Office has ever communicated with me about a case. I've never had any contact with anyone in the police department about a case. And I understand perfectly fair-game to question how people are appointed and what that means about independence.

But I'm certainly sure that the factual determination case by case at this point is being

1	done independent of any political pressure or
2	oversight, for what that's worth. I appreciate
3	your interest and we will read through the
4	proposal more carefully.
5	MS. GODSIL: Any other questions from the
6	commissioners?
7	MR. HO: I just had a few questions as well
8	about the proposal to establish an elected
9	Civilian Review Board. It's the first time I've
10	heard of this idea, too, so I'm just trying to
11	understand some of the ideas here. I notice in
12	the proposal about how to form the 17 districts,
13	there are, it looks like specific city council
14	districts have been chosen to cluster together.
15	It's not just numerically one through three and

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MR. HIDALGO: My understanding is that it was just geographical. And as I referenced earlier, the assignment of extra representation for certain districts would happen for districts like really under a lot of strain of police

council districts together for purposes of

formulating the districts for this proposal.

four through six. And I was just wondering how

the decision was made to cluster particular city

Staten Island.

1

2	MR. HO: Part of the reason I asked the
3	question is one of the things I look at in a
4	redistricting plan is whether or not the plan
5	will give adequate representation to different
6	communities, particularly communities of color.
7	And I was wondering if that had played into the
8	decision to put these particular City Council
9	districts together as opposed to these. But you
10	are saying it's just geographic, not any sort of
11	demographic analysis of city council districts to
12	see what happens when you aggregate them together
13	in threes?
14	MR. HIDALGO: I think our legislative team
15	would be happy to answer that question with more
16	clarity. I'm not sure exactly their criteria.
17	MR. HO: And then just one last question,
18	sorry. I notice you propose to exempt elected
19	board members from term limits under the City
20	Charter, and I was just wondering what the
21	thinking was behind that.
22	MR. HIDALGO: So we think in this type of
23	community-driven effort in highly politicized
24	races, we wanted to really prioritize
25	community-run people. And we think that term

1	limits can hinder grassroots efforts, really get
2	everyday people elected. So we thought once, you
3	know, it takes a lot of resources for a community
4	to run someone and for them to succeed. So if
5	they are doing a good job, we think the
6	continuity helps the board become effective.
7	MR. HO: Thank you.
8	MS. ARCHER: I was hoping you could talk a
9	little bit more about what an Office of
10	Cooperative Economics would do and how that will
11	help address economic inequality.
12	MS. IWANISZIW: Sure. We will be submitting
13	written testimony, too. We will definitely
14	elaborate a lot more then. There's a lot of
15	things a cooperative office will do. One of them
16	right now is to coordinate across various city
17	agencies and not-profit initiatives to support
18	cooperative development in New York. So the idea
19	is to get everything under one roof and
20	coordinated. And there are some really strong
21	examples in other cities including Montreal and
22	Barcelona where those cities have created those
23	offices to create success.
24	And more generally, we believe that
25	cooperative economic development worker

1	cooperatives, financial cooperatives address
2	issues of racial and economic injustice because
3	they are controlled and led by the workers and by
4	their members. And so the institutions operate
5	for the benefit of the people who are
6	participating in rather than being top-down.
7	MS. ARCHER: Thank you.
8	MS. GODSIL: Any additional questions?
9	Thank you all so much for your testimony.
10	Council Member Ben Kallos. Thank you so
11	much for testifying.
12	MR. KALLOS: Thank you. It's been a while
13	since the shoe's been on the other foot. Good
14	evening. I'm Council member Ben Kallos,
15	@benkallos, K-A-L-L-O-S, on Twitter. I will say
16	just to begin your executive director can testify
17	to this, but my number one priority is and always
18	has been campaign finance reform. Since its
19	inception in 1988, New York City's had the model
20	campaign finance system in the country. It's a
21	system that has survived court challenges. It's
22	been strengthened and perhaps weakened by
23	legislative changes and helped candidates like me
24	repeat and get elected.
25	It is a system I've invested in protecting

and improving upon during my time in the City
Council. But no system is perfect, especially
not one as complex and impactful as the campaign
finance. There is room for improvement. I offer
to this Commission proposals large and small that
will create a fair campaign finance system by
shifting the power away from the wealthy and back
towards the people it was designed to serve. I
urge the Charter Revision Commission to consider
modest changes to the existing campaign finance
system will not put it at risk while still having
a large impact. I am going to go through just
the executive summary and hit on one specific
item.

The first is to get big money out of New
York City politics and power small donors. We
can match every dollar with equal public match.
This means increasing from a public match of
55 percent of the spending limit to 85 percent of
the spending limit to match every small dollar.
We can increase the match on small doors over big
money. So that would mean matching small dollar
contributions of \$100 or less at a higher rate
than the larger contributions. We can lower
contribution limits from current \$4,950 which is

more than you can give to the President of the
United States. You can only give the President
2,700. I'm recommending 2,000 for citywide
across the board, 1,000 for City Council.

Another idea that folks really like because a lot of folks don't make enough to actually participate in the system is democracy vouchers. Another piece is we need to change this to a citizen legislature and empower residents to run for office. One idea is ballot access reform and allow people who qualify for public matching to get on the ballot automatically as an alternative to the archaic petition requirements.

We also need to end the revolving door
between New York City and New York State with
lifetime term limits. It's something that's
worked in Los Angeles. Right now we are seeing
musical chairs in the City Council. And
in-district residency requirement, candidates
under the New York State Constitution for
legislature must live mere for five years in
their district for one year. Currently there is
no requirement. You just have the have to live
here on the day of election.

We can empower the voices of residents over

1	big money. I have spent many hours arguing with
2	your executive director or discussing how we can
3	limit independent expenditures. There's room
4	within Citizens United. And if you are
5	interested in going big before going home, I
6	would also recommend just going for clean money,
7	clean elections.
8	And the last but not least, we are not too
9	far into the process, what you recommend must be
10	in effect for 2021. The next election after 2021
11	is 2029. There is a 98 percent incumbency rate.
12	I think I will be my testimony is available at
13	my website. You should have copies of my
14	testimony in writing, but I will just leave you
15	with one anecdote. Has any of you ever given
16	anyone \$4,950 without expecting anything in
17	return? I can tell you I've only given one thing
18	worth more than \$4,950 to one person, and I
19	expected her to spend the rest of her life with
20	me. So there's that.
21	MS. GODSIL: All right. Nice anecdote.
22	Any questions from the commissioners?
23	So I will begin. You have a number of
24	proposals and is sounds like more of the
25	testimony I look forward to reading. Of the many

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proposals you have, if you had to identify the three you think would be most important, which would those three be?

MR. KALLOS: I would die on a hill for full public matching. As a City Council member who was turned down with 38 other City Council members, I am terrified of 2021. I am terrified of 38 people running for offices and raising 3,850 or \$4,950 from people. And those dollars come from real estate. That's where it comes from. And if you ever want to wonder how did that neighborhood get so tall or how did those developments happen there, you can literally just follow the money of the people who needed to raise it to run for a higher office.

And I am petrified of elected officials selling out their communities for real estate contributions to their campaigns and what our city will look like coming out of the 2021 cycle, because this council and borough presidents all have a lot of power over the land use process.

And I'm now planning dispositions and concessions chairing the Land Use Committee. And what I will tell you is we are not using New York City for city planning processes. We are using it to

1	bring money and people are making billions. And
2	that is a problem. Especially in the system
3	where you have chosen your residents over real
4	estate, I won't take that real estate money. And
5	that means that I would probably need to go to
6	300,000 people to ask for \$10 if I wanted to run
7	for mayor. And even then, there is no more
8	money. There's no public match. Like, it stops.
9	And I will also tell you that if you don't
10	reach your full maximum spending limit, you're
11	not competing. Your name may be on the ballot,
12	but that's it and you are getting nothing. So I
13	would say that is number one with the bullet.
14	And the other items in terms of lowering
15	contribution limits I think that would limit the
16	appearance of impropriety and increasing a match
17	for smaller dollars might incentivize somebody if
18	you had a ten to one match \$100, they would get
19	\$1,100. That might be better than getting 175
20	which comes out to 1225. And we want to
21	encourage people to get smaller dollars. It
22	would also change what elected officials do.
23	Right now they have this \$3 million hold when

they want to run for mayor and -- sorry, it's two

and a half million dollars. And so they are just

24

25

1	trying to find as many checks for \$4,950 they are
2	spending half their time dialing for dollars
3	trying to ask the people to given to every
4	mayoral candidate before. And you want your
5	elected officials spending time in the community,
6	asking for \$10 contributions, not chasing people
7	outside the district for checks for 9,540. Half
8	the money raised in 2013 were checks the maximum
9	amount under law. Guess what it was in 2017?
10	Half again.
11	MS. GODSIL: Thank you.
12	Any other questions?
13	MS. WEISER: I have one question. Do you
14	have any views on the spending limit? That
15	should be changed or changed under any
16	circumstances if that's sufficient?
17	MR. KALLOS: I know that some of my
18	colleagues not colleagues, but some folks in
19	good government and other places are concerned
20	about independent spending and the fact that
21	independent spending can outweigh spending
22	limits. But in 2013, there was a lot of
23	independent expenditure activity specifically by
24	real estate. And those dollars did not have the
25	same impact as when it was spent by a candidate.

1	I can tell you that having run a competitive
2	race, \$168,000 was just about the right amount to
3	send seven flights of mail sorry, ten flights
4	of mail at which point the district was literally
5	drowning in mail and saying please stop. We were
6	getting calls: Please stop sending mail. And I
7	have one of the larger mailing universes in the
8	city. We were mailing to 18,000 households. We
9	had 16,000 people vote. Many districts have less
LO	than 5,000 people voting. So 168, 182.
L1	I didn't even expect that in my reelection.
L2	I think I spent a fraction of that. And
L3	\$7 million is an awful lot of money for
L4	communicating to folks. So I think that those
L5	numbers are just fine. And I don't think that
L6	the independent money had the same effect that
L7	other folks do.
L8	MS. WEISER: Thank you.
L9	MS. GODSIL: All right.
20	MR. SIEGAL: John Siegal. I appreciate your
21	longtime advocacy on this issue. I guess I kind
22	of think there isn't a really good reason to have
23	higher contribution limits in city elections than
24	in a statewide senate election or presidential
25	election. However, could you comment on this?

1	If you reduce the contribution limit, don't you
2	maximum the power and influence of people who can
3	bundle a large number of thousand or \$2,000
4	checks which, by the way, is where the real money
5	comes from?
6	MR. KALLOS: Good to see you, John.
7	Full disclosure: We have had the
8	opportunity to work with each other over the
9	years through the different Bar Associations, the
10	City Bar Association in particular.
11	Bundling is part of democracy. One of the
12	items that is something that I fought for and did
13	die on a hill for, is that the city shouldn't
14	match contributions that are bundled by people
15	doing business with the city or lobbyists. And
16	so we have seen a lot less bundling in 2017. If
17	you check the Campaign Finance Board, there's
18	just less of it happening today. If you create a
19	full public match, this is going to get really
20	esoteric very quickly, whenever you raise more
21	money than is the maximum spending limit, you end
22	up paying it back to the city.
23	So if you had a full public matching system,
24	any time you got more than \$175 from somebody, if
25	the City wrote you their full 85 percent match,

then what would end up happening is anything over 100 would get paid back to the city. So I would like to live in a world where people aren't bundling 1,000 and 2,000 or this current world of \$5,000 checks. I would prefer to live in a world where a community baseball team who is trying to raise their baseball club manager or parents all bundled, everyone on the team gives \$10 clean money, clean elections, or \$100 match ten to one.

Or you had interest groups of people from Sierra Club saying this person cares about the environment and everyone, all 31,000 members we are all going to do \$10 for this person and that's going to be 300.

I think that's how democracy should work.

And I think in terms of (inaudible) whose work I am a big fan of puts it, membership organizations are very different than special interests because special interests you have got money where one person with a lot of money can have a larger voice than many people with small dollars. So I would hope that you do see bundling, but from smaller amounts from many more people in communities of interest. Thank you.

MS. GODSIL: One last question?

1	MS. ANGELO: Hi, Councilman, how are you?
2	MR. KALLOS: Good to see you.
3	MS. ANGELO: I thought I heard you say that
4	you were somewhat troubled by elected officials
5	after their term limit in the city go to the
6	state and visa versa. Was I clear on that?
7	MR. KALLOS: So I ran against a sitting
8	assembly member. They ran as an incumbent,
9	nobody willing to support me, and we won. And I
10	am not a fan of seeing people play musical
11	chairs. So to my north, one of my colleagues
12	Diana Ayala had to run against an assembly member
13	and we won. And I know that Antonio Reynoso ran
14	against an Assembly member; so did Carlos
15	Menchaca. So you can win and in my case, there
16	was a scandal that happened to the assembly
17	member. In other cases it was an uphill push.
18	But in every other case, in 2017, you saw
19	the assembly members coming in as very much all
20	incumbents raising and spending, in one case, I
21	think they spent a million dollars. And if you
22	have these musical chairs where people are going
23	back and forth, the communities never get an
24	opportunity to have other representation. And it
25	kind of defeats the whole purpose of term limits.

So Michael was talking about how in California people go from the State Assembly to the State Senate to the City Council which is the highest paid both here in and in Los Angeles and they move on. And the community gets people who are moving through the ranks. I don't think that the city is well served by people playing musical chairs.

And I think I believe in a citizen

legislature. And it changes the way you make
your decisions. If you are making decisions as
an elected official based on where am I getting
campaign contributions or what's my next job in
government or in real estate, which is too many
elected officials end up in real estate
afterwards or what's my next elected officials
job, what can the county organization give me,
that's a different sort of elected official than
you want.

You want somebody who has a profession, is from the community, and when somebody threatens them and says, if you do this, we don't support you for that office, if you do this, we won't give you campaign contributions, if you do that, we won't give you a job in the administration.

1	If the person is like, that's fine, I'm a lawyer,
2	I will go back to practicing law and make a lot
3	more money that way and I can sleep at night. I
4	think that's a good thing. But musical chairs is
5	bad for democracy.
6	MS. ANGELO: A specific proposal, how would
7	you do that?
8	MR. KALLOS: You get to serve for two
9	consecutive terms in an office, period, end of
LO	story. And because of the redistricting coming
L1	up in 2020, you would just have to say that for
L2	the definition of the district, it would be
13	somewhere where there's 50 percent allowed
L4	because every redistricting you could argue well
L5	the district has changed. Let's just say no, if
L6	it comprises 50 percent of the same people. But
L7	you get to be a council member, once for two
L8	terms, you get to be a public advocate, once for
L9	two perms, borough president and so on, and you
20	don't have folks coming back.
21	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much, Council
22	Member.
23	MR. KALLOS: Thank you so much for what you
24	are doing. I can't wait. I tried to get this
25	stuff through the City Council last time. And I

1	hope again. I hope to beat you to the punch in
2	the ballot in November, but if not, let's just
3	make it happen however we can. Thank you.
4	MS. GODSIL: So we would like to invite
5	Nancy Hanks, John Opdycke, Alvaader Frazier, and
6	Alex Camarda. I will repeat that. Nancy Hanks,
7	thank you.
8	Ms. Hanks? And I apologize for
9	mispronouncing your name.
10	Could someone hand Ms. Hanks the mic
11	microphone, please?
12	MS. HANKS: Hello, I'm Nancy Hanks. I live
13	in Sunnyside, Queens, and I earn my living as a
14	freelance grant writer for nonprofits. I'm a
15	lifelong community organizer. I am the
16	coordinator of the Queens Independence Club. And
17	I am an American revolutionary. I stand for and
18	will always stand for no taxation without
19	representation. As a registered independent in
20	New York, I am required to pay for participant
21	primaries in which I am not allowed to vote.
22	We have a system in which certain voters are
23	allowed to vote in the first round of a publicly
24	funded election process, and others are not.
25	It's wrong It's unfair Since I pay my taxes

which fund partisan primary elections, I should be able to vote. No one should be forced to join a party just to be able to vote. Every American believes in our founding principle of no taxation without representation. And we need to enforce that principle today. This Commission could create a proposal for nonparticipant municipal elections to be voted on by the people of New York City asking whether everyone should be allowed to vote in the first round of voting regardless of whether they are registered to vote in a party or not.

I'm a strong believer in the rights of political parties to organize and even their assertion that as private associations, they should be able to decide how their nominees are chosen. However, they shouldn't have it both ways. If they function as private associations, then our collective tax dollars should not fund their private activities. Taxpayer funds should be used to benefit all our citizens and should fund an election process that benefits and includes all voters.

How do we justify funding a primary system in which the taxpayers fund democratic and

1	republican primaries in New York City at a moment
2	when there are over a million independents in the
3	city which, by the way, is 300,000 more
4	independents than Republicans in the city? Thank
5	you.
6	MS. GODSIL: Thank you.
7	John Opdycke?
8	And please, everyone, correct me if I
9	mispronounce your name.
10	MR. OPDYCKE: Yes. Good evening,
11	Commissioners. My name is John Opdycke. I'm the
12	president of Open Primaries which is a national
13	advocacy group working to enact and protect open
14	and nonparticipant primary systems of municipal
15	state federal and presidential levels. Opponents
16	of nonpartisan elections have frequently pushed
17	back against advocates like myself by asserting,
18	as Nancy said, that political parties have this
19	unalienable right to determine who can and who
20	cannot participate in the selection of their
21	party nominees. We have already heard this at
22	primary hearings.
23	And to be fair, these opponents are on legal
24	grounds. The Supreme Court has ruled that when
25	the purpose of a primary is to select a party

1	nominee, the parties can determine who can and
2	cannot vote. But this argument, this party
3	rights argument is actually misdirection and has
4	nothing to do with your charge to improve
5	democracy in New York City.
6	And let me elaborate on that. There's
7	little distinction between primary elections and
8	general elections. They take place at public
9	schools and community centers. They are
10	administered by public election officials. They
11	are funded by taxpayers. It would make sense for
12	the parties to vocally assert their First
13	Amendment rights if they were conducting these
14	internal party selection processes with their own
15	money, their own time, their own methods.
16	And nowhere in the Supreme Court ruling did
17	they assert that parties have the right to have
18	their activities funded by the public. And also
19	in New York City, the primary is the election.
20	Let's just be very clear about that.
21	Ninety percent of the races in New York City, the
22	definitive election is the September primary, not
23	the November election. Nine out of ten
24	New Yorkers live in a neighborhood in which the
25	September election, not the November election,

1	decides who will represent them in City Hall and
2	on the City Council. And that is how it is. And
3	a growing number of New Yorkers are legally
4	barred from participating in that process.

One final or two final points. In 80 percent of the cities of this country, the word "primary" has a very different meaning. It means preliminary, not nominating contest. Most cities let voters vote, all voters vote in the first round of elections, whether that's primary election or general election or a general election in a run-off.

In most cities, the word "primary" has a very different meaning than how we use the word "presidential primary." Primaries are not nominating contests. They are preliminary elections and all voters get to participate in those. New York, to be very clear, is an outlier in how it conducts its municipal primaries.

And finally, you are considering a whole set of democracy innovations and reforms including the use of ranked choice voting. That's an innovative system that could work well in New York as it has in San Francisco and Minneapolis and other cities. But it's important

1	to note that ranked choice voting has been
2	enacted in cities that already have an open and
3	equal system. In every city using ranked choice
4	voting, independent voters are not locked down in
5	the first round of voting. So ranked choice has
6	been implemented by local reformers looking to
7	improve systems that already treat voters
8	equally.
9	So my recommendation to you is that you give
10	ranked choice voting and other reforms and other
11	innovations and projects a fair chance by pairing
12	them with measures to create a level playing
13	field for all voters and candidates and end this
14	discrimination against independents.
15	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much.
16	MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
17	MS. GODSIL: Mr. Frazier?
18	MR. FRAZIER: Alvaader Frazier. Say it with
19	me, "Alvaader."
20	MS. GODSIL: Thank you.
21	MR. FRAZIER: Good evening. Thank you,
22	Commissioners, for the opportunity to address you
23	tonight. My name is Alvaader Frazier, a longtime
24	activist and independent political leader living
25	in Harlem I was active in the civil rights

movement in my youth. I worked in the historic

1988 independent presidential campaign. I also
worked very hard in 2003 in the 2003 attempt to
pass nonpartisan elections for the City of
New York. I speak to you tonight as the leader
of the New York City Independence Clubs.

In New York City today, there are over one million voters who are independent of the Democratic or Republican parties. Closed party primaries are a severe expression of voter suppression, no less dangerous to our open democracy and poll taxes, purging voter rolls, and exclusionary voter ID laws. After the 2016 national presidential election, New York State was called one of the most draconian and outdated electoral systems in the whole of the United States.

Let me tell you some facts about New York
City and who New York City's independents are.
25 percent of New York voters under 30 are
independents. Ten percent of African-American
voters and 16 percent of African-American voters
under 30 are independents. Seventeen percent of
Latino voters are independents with 25 percent of
Latino voters under 30 registering as

independents. Thirty-four percent of Asian voters are independent, with 36 percent of Asian voters under 40 becoming independents.

In New York City today, there are 384,880 more independent voters, so-called blind voters, than there are Republican voters. Yet we are barred from casting meaningful ballots in any primary. And in over 90 percent of these races in this city, the winner is determined by the outcome of the primaries. Since taxpayers pay for the primaries, independents face taxation without representation.

We have fought for centuries in the United States for voting rights for the African-American community, for women, and the fight is now focused on allowing independents to have full voting rights. No American should be forced to join a political party in order to be able to vote. This Charter Revision Commission could lead the way for independents to be fully included in our city elections through placing nonpartisan municipal elections on the ballot for the voters' consideration.

I urge you to follow most major cities in the United States that use nonpartisan elections

1	and give every New Yorker the right to
2	participate fully in the voting process. Thank
3	you.
4	MS. GODSIL: Thank you very much.
5	Mr. Camarda?
6	MR. CAMARDA: Good evening, Commissioners.

My name is Alex Camarda. I'm the senior policy advisor for Reinvent Albany, and I'm here tonight to discuss six recommendations we have on campaign finance reform and one recommendation we have pertaining to voting.

Our first recommendation on campaign finance reform is to consolidate the very disaggregated and fragmented system in New York City for overseeing not only campaign finance but ethics and lobbying and elections. We know of no other locality that has a more fragmented system than the one in the city. The city Clerk's Office oversees lobbying. The Conflicts of Interests Board oversees ethics laws. The Campaign Finance Board oversees campaign finance. The Elections Board oversees elections administration. And the Mayor's Office of Contracts Services oversees the Doing Business Database which also pertains to campaign finance.

So we would like to see consolidation of
these administrative functions, ideally in one
entity, that being the Campaign Finance Board.
But at the very least, we think that lobbying
oversight and regulation should be moved out of
the city Clerk's Office into the Conflicts of
Interest Board.

I can tell you that 35 other states, many of which are smaller than New York City, actually oversee ethics and lobbying. And in California, their centralized entity which is called the Fair Political Practices Commission, it's been in place for 40 years. It's often held up as the ideal, and it oversees all of those functions that I previously mentioned. So we think that would be something good that the Commission could do if it's inclined.

And it's also something that's really needed in New York and not often talked about, although I will mention that in 2010, the Charter Revision Commission at that time moved the Advisory Committee and the Campaign Finance Board and that's actually been a great success. So we have already made small steps in that direction.

Our second recommendation was covered by

Council Member Kallos and previously by Represent Us and Common Cause, and that is to increase the public funds cap from 55 percent to 85 percent which is effectively eliminating it. We think that orienting candidates toward raising small donations from the beginning of their campaigns rather than seeking out the large contributions of \$5,000 for campaign money for mayor.

And along the same lines, our third recommendation is actually to only provide the six-to-one public matching funds for small contributions, those up to \$175 or something equivalent to that. I think it's not really widely known in the city except among candidates that run for office you are actually matched six to one on the first \$175 of any contribution. So if a candidate is running for office, there's a real incentive to just raise large contributions, get the match on 175, the first 175, and then not be inclined to raise money for smaller contributions.

And then lastly, I will wrap up here, we had two recommendations related to the Doing Business Database, expanding it to include clients and lobbyists as well as subcontractors which we

1	think is just a fairness issue. We believe
2	independent expenditures could be disclosed more
3	greatly by revealing the owners of the limited
4	liability companies which is something CFP
5	supports.
6	And then lastly on voting, we support
7	instant runoff voting. There's a bill that
8	applies it for citywide office for special
9	elections, and most importantly for military
10	overseas voters. We think the city is actually
11	vulnerable to a lawsuit on that. Military and
12	overseas voters cannot vote in the runoff because
13	there's not enough time for the Board of
14	Elections to send them a ballot and have overseas
15	voters complete it and send it back there two
16	weeks. And that's something where other states
17	have been sued and put in runoff voting.
18	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much for your
19	testimony.
20	Questions from commissioners?
21	MS. WEISER: I have two questions. One is
22	for Mr. Opdycke, is that correct? And one is
23	more Mr. Camarda.
24	For Mr. Opdycke, I understand your arguments
25	relating to open primaries and independents. I'm

1	wondering if there's any research on how open
2	primaries impact party organizations that you are
3	aware of?
4	MR. OPDYCKE: Political parties do
5	wonderfully under a nonpartisan system. They
6	organize. They raise money. They recruit
7	candidates. They promote issues. There's
8	absolutely no barriers to political parties fully
9	participating in all the ways that they are
10	designed to do. I think the biggest difference
11	in a nonpartisan system is that those candidates
12	representing these various parties are free to
13	take their message to the total electorate
14	instead of just members of their own party. And
15	that process, I would argue, is very beneficial
16	and very healthy.
17	But political parties themselves are in no
18	way discriminated against by a nonpartisan
19	system. It's much more about giving voters equal
20	access than curtailing the First Amendment rights
21	of political organizations be they parties or any
22	other type of political organization.
23	MS. WEISER: My question for Mr. Camarda,
24	you indicated that moving the Voters Assistance
25	Advisory Commission to the Campaign Finance Board

1	was a success. I'm wondering if you can
2	elaborate on that. There was somebody else who
3	testified suggesting that it be moved into a new
4	office and that it was less (inaudible). I would
5	love to hear your thoughts on, you know, why that
6	was a success and how it benefitted the functions
7	of that office.

MR. CAMARDA: The Voters Systems Advisory

Commission put out a report in the last week that
details all of their work. And it revealed data
that I have never seen before for the city
showing trends in communities, voter
registration. And they did an extensive outreach
campaign and have done research on why people
don't vote. I don't believe anything was done
like that with that level of depth by the
previous committee.

And I think it speaks to the value of consolidating these functions with one entity which is you have economies of scale. You save the city money. You pool expertise from people who work in this field, generally. And I think all of those things are beneficial not only for providing voter assistance and citizen engagement, but also for ethics and campaign

1	finance and lobbying enforcement.
2	MS. WEISER: And do you have a position on
3	the proposals that have been raised for, like, an
4	Office of Civic Engagement, how might that relate
5	to some of these consolidated functions that you
6	refer to?
7	MR. CAMARDA: That's not something we've
8	looked at in particular. We have looked at the
9	other states and other places and it seems that
10	many, many places consolidate those functions in
11	the very least ethics and lobbying oversight. So
12	I think that would be a good first step. As I
13	mentioned, I think California has been held up as
14	the ideal, but there are other states and
15	localities that actually have many of these
16	functions under one roof.
17	MS. WEISER: Thank you.
18	MS. GODSIL: Any other questions?
19	MR. SIEGAL: Alex, could you explain to me
20	what the proposal that you mentioned was about
21	LLC ownership disclosure.
22	MR. CAMARDA: So I should really give credit
23	to the Campaign Finance Board for this. And they
24	put out a proposed election report every four
25	years that has recommendations in it and we

L	obviously go through these and take a look at
2	them given their expertise. And so for
3	independent expenditures, the most that we can do
1	because of Citizens United and court cases that
5	preceded it is we can require robust disclosure.

And what we find is that with independent expenditures, some independent expenditures that donors reveal under the city's system is just an LLC, a liability company. And so we don't know who the parent company is for that LLC or we don't know who the beneficial owner is of the LLC. And the CFD has independently done analyses that are in their 2013 report, for example, but it takes time. The information is provided after an election cycle, so it's not useful to voters before they vote.

And we know that in state election law there are provisions that say the true donor of the contribution must be provided. And so we think requiring that to the extent the city can do so legally under the law in the Charter is something that would be consistent with state election law.

MR. SIEGAL: Thank you.

MS. GODSIL: Any other questions?

Thank you all so much for your testimony.

1	We would like to invite Sol Erdman, Jackie	
2	Salit, Alison Hirsch, and Felix Figaro.	
3	So Sal Erdman, please.	
4	MR. ERDMAN: Thank you all so much. Thank	
5	you for allowing me to speak to you today. I am	
6	the founder of Center for Collaborative	
7	Democracy. Our purpose is to try and promote	
8	instructive resolution of very large divisions.	
9	As everybody in this room is very well aware,	
10	this country is now in the midst of perhaps the	
11	most polarizing type of politics any of us have	
12	seen in our lifetimes,	
13	Now, New York City may have less of that	
14	because this is, well, let's face it, pretty much	
15	a one-party town. But that doesn't change the	
16	fact that most elections, especially competitive	
17	elections, are mostly negative campaigning. If	
18	you have two top candidates for any office, the	
19	easiest way to win is simply to undercut the	
20	other candidate because to make a coherent	
21	argument for a complex set of policy issues	
22	requires an attention span that most voters don't	
23	usually have.	
24	There is, however, a proven technique for	
25	almost eliminating the benefits of negative	

1	campaigning, and that's ranked choice voting.
2	Seventeen cities have adopted it. The state of
3	Maine is about to adopt it, we hope, in June.
4	The results have been in the cities that have
5	adopted it that the way to win is to run an
6	issue-based campaign and to build a broad
7	coalition of voters across the spectrum, not
8	necessarily the entire spectrum, but a very broad
9	swath of it.

New York City is in a sense behind the curve on that. Why would this city which is the leader in so many areas not want to adopt a method of voting basically to reward candidates talking issues, trying to build coalitions across social, economic and political lines and will result in candidate the who win being much more accountable? That is, in the next election, where each candidate is elected face a lot more competition and those have the opportunity to rank candidates from their first choice to last, the candidate makes more promises and doesn't deliver is much more likely not to win the next time around.

To be candid, those of you who are familiar with ranked choice voting know it's a little more

1	complicated than the elections just pick one
2	candidate. But that, using that as an argument
3	to not use it is like the argument we should have
4	stopped the horses and not gone to cars and
5	subways and so on.
6	There really is an opportunity for the
7	Commission to make a significant difference in
8	the way city politics run. And I urge you all to
9	be in favor of ranked choice voting. Thank you.
10	MS. GODSIL: Thank you.
11	Jackie Salit?
12	MS. SALIT: Good evening, Commissioners, my
13	name is Jackie Salit. I'm the president of
14	Independent Voting which is a national
15	organization that represents independent voters.
16	I wanted to use my time this evening to bring
17	three issues to your attention. But I also
18	wanted to begin by saying that I appreciate your
19	work and that I think you have a very, very hard
20	job.
21	I was listening as Commissioner Godsil gave
22	the mandate from the mayor in terms of the focus
23	of this Commission leading to how democracy
24	works. I think we all know the answer to that
25	not well. And what we are talking about here

tonight is in certain circumstances what we can do to address that, so I wanted to share some thoughts on that topic with a recognition that some of these things are a heavy lift because there's been a very long tradition of maintaining a certain kind of political status quo in this city.

But I think the pressure is coming from the general mood both in the country and the state, and the city requires some more open-minded thinking about directions to go in. The first issue that I want to raise here, frankly, I was not originally planning to speak to you about tonight, but given the events in Albany over the last 48 hours and I think just a tremendous sense of distress and helplessness on the part of the voting public with respect to the behavior of elected officials in this state and the difficulty in holding them accountable, the level of protection that goes on within the political system is just abhorrent.

I want to propose that one of the issues
that the Commission take up in your consideration
for democracy reform is the mayor has requested
is the issue of recall. I think that the voters

1	of New York City should have the right to	
2	directly recall elected officials. They don't	
3	currently have that right under the city Charter.	
4	But I think the level of frustration that the	
5	public feels with how elected officials are	
6	allowed to operate and the difficulty in calling	
7	them to account makes the issue of recall a very	
8	important and frankly a front-line issue for	
9	people concerned with democracy to consider.	

The second issue that I wanted to bring to your attention and ask you to consider which is related to the recall issue is the initiative process itself in New York City. We are fortunate in New York because, unlike the rest of the state, we actually have the right to initiative and referendum so that the voters can initial elevate changes to the City Charter on their own without having to go through the legislature, except for the fact that when the City Charter was written, the right to initiative and referendum was dramatically curtailed by first requiring that citizens present their petitions to the City Council, then go back out onto the street if the City Council doesn't act.

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And further, the mayor then has the right to

1	preempt actions taken through the citizen
2	initiative process. Let's get rid of all of
3	those little interruptions and control mechanisms
4	and just let the people of New York City have the
5	direct route to citizens initiative on the
6	ballot.
7	The third question that I want to raise for
8	you very briefly, the prior panel spoke
9	extensively about the question of nonpartisan
10	primaries and open primaries, the independent
11	voter. The statistics were presented to you.

voter. The statistics were presented to you.

Here is what I don't understand. I don't

understand how the mayor -- I don't understand

how the City Council can ignore the fact that

there are one million independents in the City of

New York and are not prepared to do something to

empower those voters.

I ask all of you, the mayor has appointed you to look at this issue. I ask you tonight if you can to speak to the issue of how you see those voters. What are you prepared to do for nearly one million voters who are disenfranchised under the current system? Thank you.

MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much.

25 Alison Hirsch?

MS. HIRSCH: Good evening, Vice Chair. Good evening, Vice Chair Godsil and members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here tonight and for your effort as well as holding these hearings. My name is Alison Hirsch and I'm the vice president and local director of 32BJ. Our union is made up of 163,000 men and women who make their living in property services.

Here in the city, our 85,000 members work hard to keep residential buildings, schools, offices, stadiums and airports safe and complete. Our members hail from over 60 countries and speak dozens of languages. But we are proudly united in our fight to ensure that all workers along with the families and the communities to which they belong have the opportunity to thrive and live with community respect.

Throughout these hearings we have heard many valuable suggestions to strengthen our democracy in New York City. On behalf of our membership, I encourage you to give them your fullest consideration. In order for government to be responsive to the needs of all people, it's essential that the broadest coalition of voices possible is able to be heard in the democratic

process. If participation in our electoral is narrowed, so too are the interests to which government is held accountable. Cities can lead the way in fighting back against these efforts to exclude voters and ensure that the electoral campaign laws within their jurisdiction is clearly written to promote participation and inclusion.

Our union works not only to empower our members on the job, but also to serve as a vehicle for civic engagement so that our members can come together and fight for common interests. The current city finance laws, however, impede the ability of members to communicate with one another about elections.

For example, the expenses the union incurs to organize member-to-member canvasses is counted as a campaign contribution if the candidate is briefed by the union is present to speak to members beforehand. If the union reaches its maximum contribution limit, we then face the options of either limiting member-to-member engagement from the race all together, denying members a valuable opportunity to meet with and be inspired by a candidate, or pursue

alternatives such as media buys as independent expenditures.

32BJ in the past mobilized our members to join in efforts. The members were engaged and inspired by their contact with the candidate and broader campaign. Now our efforts are made through the independent expenditures isolated from those candidates. As Felix Figueroa who will speak next can attest, this is confusing and frustrating to our members and is actually a disincentive to their active participation in the democratic process. Other units have gone so far as to give up mobilizing their members all together with some paid media for door knocking and phone banking in communities.

32BJ has a more detailed submission how the law ham strange the ability to engage union brothers and sisters in the political process.

Our submission includes a specific recommendation to suitably amendment the Charter to promote member-to-member communication.

In addition, I wish to briefly touch on several other democracy enhancing initiatives that are in effect elsewhere in America that we recommend the Commission can start for New York.

1	One, allow early voting. Voting in person at a
2	polling place on a Tuesday can be a major
3	impediment to the participation of working people
4	in the election process. These barriers are
5	particularly acute for low-income workers who
6	have less control over their work and personal
7	schedules. Simply opening polling places prior
8	to election day and allowing people to vote when
9	they could would allow people to get to their
10	voting and have their voices heard.
11	Two, allow same-day voter registration. The
12	public's engagement of elections including their
13	understanding of the issues of the state
14	assessment of the candidacies on the ballot
15	bills
16	MS. GODSIL: Could I ask you to summarize?
17	MS. HIRSCH: Sorry. I will skip ahead.
18	Same-day voter registration, simplify the
19	nominating process so that it is actually easier
20	to get on the ballot and run for office. It's
21	confusing. Magnify small donor contributions
22	which I think has been spoken to ad nauseam
23	today. And we support that. Consider adding
24	base grants. The idea of base grants and finance
25	laws, those are two programs put in place

1	recently enacted in Washington, D.C. campaign		
2	finance laws. And also consider enacting		
3	democracy vouchers, a new program that Seattle		
4	place recently for the 2017. Thank you so much.		
5	MS. GODSIL: Mr. Figueroa?		
6	MR. FIGUEROA: Good evening, Commissioners.		
7	My name is Felix Figueroa. I am a 32BJ Long		
8	Island City, Queens residents and community		
9	activist. I am passionate about my union and my		
10	neighborhood. Each year I get involved in		
11	elections work like door knocking, giving out		
12	fliers, phone banking to fight for issues that I		
13	think will make New York great. I work closely		
14	with Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer who is a		

process.

Campaign finance laws, member-to-member communication make it hard for me to get other union members active to support Jimmy or any other candidates. If the union organized a member-to-member canvassing, the cost is counted as a campaign contribution. If the candidate has been briefed by the union and is presented to

personal friend. I think he stands up for our

communities and I like that he wants to involve

more young Hispanics from Queens in political

1	talk to members, this is a shame. Basically			
2	young, young people who are disconnected from			
3	politics need candidates to feel inspired and to			
4	trust that they will fight for them. Because I			
5	am active in both, my union and my community,			
6	these laws can feel confusing to me.			
7	During last year's election, there were			
8	certain things I couldn't talk about with Jimmy.			
9	There were certain events, even certain events			
10	Jimmy had that I couldn't go to. I shouldn't			
11	have to decide between campaigning with my union			
12	and supporting a candidate I believe in. I want			
13	to see changes in the Charter that will make sure			
14	union members, members-to-members communication			
15	is not counted as a contribution. That will help			
16	me better talk with members I know and to get			
17	more of them active to help this process.			
18	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much.			
19	Any questions from the Commission?			
20	MS. ANGELO: I'm not sure who would be able			
21	to answer this, but are the laws, campaigning			
22	finance laws directed at unions the same as those			
23	that are directed at a corporation?			
24	MS. HIRSCH: In some ways yes; in some ways			
25	no. And I think the bottom-line issue is there			

1	has sort of historically often been a false			
2	equivalency between corporate charitable and			
3	union employee members. Union members are, you			
4	know, they it's a voluntary association. It's,			
5	there are really part of one collective			
6	organization in a way that, you know, a			
7	corporation doesn't have the same kind of it's			
8	not they are just not the same.			
9	And corporations union members pool their			
LO	resources to move political action or their			
11	collective bargaining action, whereas a			
12	corporation is a for-profit entity that generally			
13	a few people control.			
L4	MS. SEECHARRAN: My question is for Jackie.			
L5	I wonder if you could elaborate on your			
L6	recommendation around recall of those elected			
L7	office.			
18	MS. SALIT: Well, I think the spectacle that			
L 9	we are seeing in Albany right now is a situation			

MS. SALIT: Well, I think the spectacle that we are seeing in Albany right now is a situation where you have, you know, a very significant violation committed by an elected official. And then you have a legislative body and the party organizations trying to figure out how to get themselves off the hook and replace this person in such a way as so that they don't lose any

1	political power off of that shif	t. And this in
2	the face of, you know, fairly eg	regious actions
3	by the former Attorney General.	

I think the recall issue, first of all, the right to recall is a fundamental progressive reform which gives the voters an opportunity to judge and to hold elected officials accountable in between elections. I think it becomes all the more urgent and the reason I bring it up today is because there's such a sense that there's so much self-dealing that goes on within legislative bodies and within political parties that even holding elected officials accountable when they violated the law is a compromised process.

And so I think the argument for recall which is really a basic democracy argument becomes all the more compelling given the levels of corruption and self-dealing that go on.

MS. SEECHARRAN: So who would initiate the recall?

MS. SALIT: You would initiate it by a petition process. Yeah, yeah. And, you know, there were in the 1990s, there was an effort through the initiative, citizens initiative process to bring recall before the voters which

Τ	did not make it all the way to the ballot booth.
2	So there's already been draft language that has
3	been looked at for how such a process would take
4	place. We could look at that and look at other
5	versions of that as well.
6	MS. SEECHARRAN: Thank you.
7	MS. GODSIL: Any additional questions?
8	MS. WEISER: One further question for
9	Ms. Hirsch and Mr. Figueroa, which is can you
10	elaborate a little bit precisely how restricting
11	member-to-member communication or ensuring that
12	member-to-member communications are independent
13	expenditures reduces engagement to members, how
14	that functions?
15	MS. HIRSCH: Sure. So first I would say
16	that, you know, in federal elections, you compare
17	the city elections to federal ones. Federal
18	elections, member-to-member communications are
19	not considered able to, you know, organize
20	volunteer activity from your members coordinating
21	with the candidate. And so the impact is that
22	our primary work, and I can speak for most
23	federal elections, the primary work we engage in
24	is talking to members about the importance of
25	candidates, trying to introduce them to those

candidates, recruit volunteers on a Saturday or a
Sunday to go to those candidates' office and
participate in volunteer activities, knock on
doors, all of that work.

Now, any cost associated with that, you know, ends up having to be a contribution whether it's, you know, paying for food or a van or things like that. But the act of communicating with our members and talking to our members and introducing them to candidates is not -- is separate and apart from any contribution limit.

In the city that's not the case. In the city, any communication we have to our member, we have to quantify staff time, material, all of those things. And so what we have seen happen since this was really enacted in post 2009 since the interpretation that the Charter -- this was the interpretation is in 2013 and 2017 even more so, most unions decided, you know, if we are going to have to do an independent expenditure anyway in order to engage at all in this election, then it's probably, like, we will get more credit and we will do, you know, be seen more probably if we are just spending a lot of money on media and spending our cash instead of

1	focusing on talking to our members and
2	encouraging them to volunteer and educating them
3	about the process and introducing them to their
4	Council members and candidates, et cetera.
5	And so I think it's actually created a
6	perverse incentive away from focusing on what we
7	should be focused on which is engaging our own
8	members in the democratic process. Because if
9	you can't members don't go to campaign offices
10	or can't be seen, then you're not sort of
11	building that kind of relationship between
12	members or the union and candidates. And so we
13	try to make a splash.
14	MS. WEISER: Thank you.
15	MR. BRAGG: So I'm confused. Are you
16	talking about the expenses for the union to
17	communicate with the members, or are you talking
18	about the expenses that the union has to
19	communicate with members in a situation where
20	there are nonmember participants?
21	MS. HIRSCH: I'm simply talking about unions
22	communicating with members. So we currently, you
23	know, we have 85,000 members in New York City.
24	You know, to send one piece of mail to all 70,000
25	of those are registered to vote, so send one

1	piece of mail to 70,000 voters obviously breaks
2	every contribution limit in the city. And so
3	what we often will do is in our mail or
4	communications and at worksites we will send
5	staff to worksites, or Felix has often come off
6	of the job as a member organizer. He leaves his
7	worksite and for a month or two at a time will
8	work for the union, but being paid for by the
9	union, work for the union doing political
10	engagement and outreach to members.

So what he will do is -- Felix, correct me if I am wrong -- you go to a worksite and talk about the importance of city elections that are coming up. And that's why it's so important to volunteer. And so we don't pay our members to volunteer. We ask them to do that on their own time. So once that act, according to the New York City, the current interpretation of the campaign finance laws in New York City would be considered an in-kind contribution if any member that Felix speaks to to volunteer goes on his or her own time to someone's office on a Saturday.

MR. BRAGG: Very detailed. Let me speak to you offline. I don't think I'm up to date.

MS. GODSIL: Any additional questions?

1	Thank you all so much.
2	So we would like to invite Melissa Appleton,
3	Ilana Cohen, E. Beers-Dimitriadis, and Katherine
4	Molina-Powell. If anyone has written testimony
5	you would like to distribute, obviously please
6	feel free.
7	So Ms. Appleton?
8	MS. APPLETON: Good evening. Thank you for
9	your time and attention. My name is Melissa
10	Appleton. I work in the Participatory Budgeting
11	Project as a project manager and for the past
12	three cycles, I've supported New York City
13	council's PB process. On Monday you probably
14	heard my colleague Josh Learner, our co-executive
15	director, speak about why the Commission should
16	support the proposal that goes beyond traditional
17	elections, in particular for an Office of Civic
18	Engagement and for citywide PB.
19	I just want to say a little bit more about
20	how and why we think citywide PB could work. And
21	to start, I want to frame this by looking at its
22	track record. PB is a proven way to make
23	political participation more inclusive. We know
24	that PB voter participation has been more

representative of city demographics than for

25

traditional elections. It's been recognized as a best practice for good governance by the former White House and by Harvard. And when PB started in New York City seven years ago, it was an experiment, but it worked. And when experiments work, you expand them. You apply them more broadly, which is why we believe this should be institutionalized in the Charter Revision.

And lastly, while 100,000 people or so voted in City Council's PB process each year, we hear consistently that they want to have more impact to be able to make bigger and more meaningful decisions. If the city wants people to trust government, we believe that the city needs to place its trust in the residents and share real power. So for those reasons, we are proposing that at least one percent of the city budget be allocated to PB to build on the current council-level process and the school process the DOE is launching.

This would enable residents to vote on projects for their schools, districts, borough, and city. The funds should be for both capital and expense. People have important and innovative ideas for both and especially for

1	low-income communities being able to fund vital
2	programs and services will ensure PB can address
3	the most pressing needs. This following
4	precedents from cities like Seattle and Boston
5	that do have citywide PB processes and cities
6	like Paris that have invested significantly no
7	are in participatory budgeting.
8	In Paris, a city that has about a quarter of
9	our population, residents allocate about
10	100 million Euros every year. And lastly when
11	there's a central mandate and support for PB, we
12	see the quality of ideas tend to improve. It's
13	difficult and resource-intensive for Council
14	members and Council offices to run this process
15	successfully, and we see it works best with
16	dedicated central support. So our organization
17	would be happy to speak with you more and help if
18	there is anything that would further your work,
19	Commission. Thank you so much for your time.
20	MS. GODSIL: Ilana Cohen?
21	If you just want to go along the line.
22	MS. COHEN: Good evening, members of the
23	Commission and members of the public. Thank you
24	for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ilana
25	Cohen and I'm a high school senior. I am also

1	the founder and co-facilitator of the
2	Participatory Budgeting Youth League, a
3	student-led and organized group working to
4	increase youth voter engagement to participatory
5	budgeting process based in Council District 39.

My experience with PB youth and other student-organized platforms has affirmed the following: New York City students are already making change. Yet there are clear ways our city government can and should support us in these efforts.

One such way is by establishing an Office of Civic Engagement. Already New York City suffers from low voter turnout. Fewer than 15 percent of registered voters showed up to cast their ballots in the primary election last September. This poor turnout is indicative of disinterest and distrust of city government. There's also a misconception that the extent of one's civic duty as a city resident is casting one's ballot when elections come around.

Our democratic process extends far beyond voting and politics and relies upon fostering closer relationships between City agencies and their constituents. Establishing an office

dedicated to engaging New Yorkers and public initiatives would help redefine a broader sense of civic duty, integrating civic engagement into the fabric of our everyday lifers. More than the one-time act of casting a ballot, city residents could shape the institutions that shape our daily experiences in time.

An Office of Civic Engagement could also support and extend the work of New York City students. Whether it be the public education or transportation or housing systems, students' daily experiences are shaped by the city civic institutions as are those of our parents. Yet student voices are ignored by both representatives and government agencies because they are excluded from the voting booth.

However, falling below the voting age does not stop students from developing their own initiatives and making their beliefs known. Our students are facilitating PBNYC processes, organizing student turnout and fighting for citywide school integration. We are civically minded and passionate, but many of us are not public schools. Those students for whom opportunities to engage are not readily available

would be able to find opportunities while already active students can find new resources and connections through an Office of Civic

Engagement. Such an office would not only prepare new students to become change-makers in their local communities, but also equip our city's future voters with a more intimate understanding of city issues and civic structures.

Furthermore, an Office of Civic Engagement could help support and expand PBNYC, a process emblematic of democracy. PBNYC grants students a voice at as early as age 11. It also involves noncitizens or felons and people who are not registered to vote in either state or federal elections. In other words, it invites the voices of those who might otherwise be excluded from government processes into civic decision-making with their neighbors, uniting New Yorkers of diverse backgrounds and interests.

And the process also prioritizes

inclusivity, encouraging residents to use the

resources that the their disposal to positively

impact our community. An Office of Civic

Engagement could help engage more residents in

1	the PBNYC process and potentially launch new PB
2	pilot programs.
3	To this end, taking part in the City agency
4	as elected officials and nonprofit organizations
5	news an Office of Civic Engagement can bolster
6	both individual civic participation and overall
7	engagement in the city's local democratic
8	processes. With this office, New York City can
9	continue to serve as a beacon of activism and
10	engagement for the rest of the nation. Thank
11	you.
12	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much.
13	MS. BEERS-DIMITRIADIS: Good evening,
14	Commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to
15	testify in support of establishing an Office of
16	Civic Engagement and expansion of participatory
17	budgeting citywide. I'm Heather
18	Beers-Dimitriadis, president of the Citywide
19	Committee Participatory Budgeting and have served
20	as a participatory budget delegate to City
21	Council District 29 over the last three cycles or
22	the Education Committee.
23	This year our district saw an increase in
24	community participation resulting in 3,300 votes.
25	Eight hundred and eighty of those came from

first-time voters and Russell Sage Middle School,

JHS 190. As this year, the voting age was

increased to 11 years old. I echo the sentiments

from Monday evening's hearing. Young voters form

habits that last a lifetime. Participatory

budgeting gets students voting earlier and more

frequently reinforcing habits that we hope will

last a lifetime, habits that will go a long way

to addressing the voter turnout concerns of

everyone in this room.

Participatory budgeting impacts civic engagement by engaging voters in decision-making and problem-solving that directly impacts their communities whether it be in the fall when communities gather to brainstorm new and creative ways to improve their community or in the winter when select committees meet to turn those ideas into projects that by spring find their way on to ballots.

Throughout this process, residents turn into community advocates. This year my community voted for bus countdowns, public school bathroom renovations and public school water fountains and water refill stations. Eight schools in all stand to see improvements due to the exercised

1	voice of my community. Participatory budgeting
2	essentially moves civic engagements from the
3	halls of government into the streets of our
4	communities. Throughout the participatory budget
5	process, a more educated voter and a more
6	invested voter is created.

As projects go to city agencies for approval, you learn the lessons of limitations. You learn how to work collaboratively with these agencies. You gain a deeper appreciation of what is required to make a capital project happen. As you see the project through from conception to ballot to selection, you become invested in seeing this project through to fruition.

Over the past three years, the most rewarding part of the participatory budget process has been seeing people vote on final projects. This year I handed a ballot to a new U.S. citizen who got to cast her first vote ever. There was also the excitement in a 12-year-old's face when he realized that yes, he could vote.

And then there are the moments when people want to vote, but then realize their district is not participating this year. I would encourage the Commission to consider expanding

participatory budgeting citywide, giving all communities a voice in how funds are spent to improve their neighborhoods.

And in the spirit of nonpartisan cooperation and as the establishment of an Office of Civic Engagement would facilitate this expansion in an efficient manner. Thank you, Commissioners, for your time this evening. I believe strongly in participatory budgeting. It gives voice to the voiceless, allowing the residents not simply citizens to have a say. It takes democracy out of City Hall and pushes it into our communities. Again, thank you for your time.

MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much.

MS. MOLINA-POWELL: Good evening, my name is Katherine Molina-Powell. I am speaking today about participatory budgeting and advocacy for the creation of an Office of Civic Engagement, focused mostly on the process of PB as my peers here at the table, but also I am speaking today as a community member as a PB volunteer. I'm a resident of the Bronx participating office in the district team in the last few years. This last year I've also joined the citywide committee to help coordination across New York City.

1	I've lived in New York since 2001, in the
2	Bronx since 2011. Both my children are Bronx
3	residents. And I am really invested in seeing
4	the kind of engagement and thriving, active,
5	thoughtful participation in the democratic
6	processes that I have seen through this process
7	almost exclusively. I've experienced voting
8	again in New York since the early 2000s. And I
9	think traditional voting for me has seemed
10	very it's been challenging as you heard from
11	former folks who have been up here speaking.
12	It's a process that requires a lot of time,
13	a lot of effort and a lot of, frankly,
14	bureaucracy that we don't necessarily have to
15	see. And I have never seen in my time in
16	New York anything on the level of passion and
17	local engagement that I have seen in my time of
18	working on the PB projects in New York. As an
19	volunteer, I have seen this truly amazing process
20	where community members and stakeholders have
21	come together directly to collaborate how to
22	invest the funds that have been allocated for
23	this process.
24	And every step in this process from the
25	creation of ideas to the work and research at the

1	delegate level, so the vetting and the creation
2	of the ballots, the ultimate vote of all these
3	ideas has been a step that promotes the
4	thoughtful and enthusiastic engagement of local
5	residents around concrete ideas for the
6	communities that we live in that we exist in and
7	that affect our daily lives.

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Delegates and people who are really involved in this tend to be local community advocates for nonprofits or just very, very involved in our communities. Sometimes, sometimes not representative sort of a larger group of people within the district. These delegates do a tremendous amount of work and I think the important part that I have seen speaking as a delegate and volunteer has been the ability of the delegates to lift our heads above our single or sort of dual issue thoughts and actually start to collaborate with our peers with other local activists and leaders about how we can build a total system of improvement and look for opportunities to invest effectively in our communities.

It's a really great collaborative experience that doesn't necessarily have another forum to

1	happen. There's been a lot of talk about making
2	democracy better in this in tonight's forum
3	and in the other forums that happened. I think
4	this is really the place that you can actually
5	invest in a strategic way to see that happen
6	across all age groups and across all demographics
7	in the city. And I really hope that you will
8	give this the significant consideration that it
9	deserves.
10	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much.
11	Any questions from the commissioners?
12	MS. MIROCZNIK: My question is directed to
13	Ms. Cohen. First of all, I want to thank you for
14	coming out with the exact example of engagement
15	that we need as a city and society. You have to
16	be thanked. My question to you, Ms. Cohen, is,
17	in school, was this done by the councilmanic from
18	the 39th District Council person? Was the school
19	principal and teacher on board? Was this part of
20	a civics class? If yes or no, what should the
21	schools be doing to encourage this?
22	MS. COHEN: So the Participatory Budgeting
23	Youth Committee is not school-based. I interned
24	for Council Member Lander and founded it years
25	ago with some friends. Since then we have been

1	able to reach out across the city to students
2	across the city and different boroughs. And I
3	think PB should be expanded both on a citywide
4	level in terms of city council districts and also
5	in schools which is part of the civics sorry,
6	am I answering your question? Yes, was this
7	about this specific committee or about what type
8	of expansion of PB?
9	MS. MIROCZNIK: You answered perfect.
10	MS. SPEAKER: Okay.
11	MS. MIROCZNIK: My main concern is civics in
12	school in class
13	MS. SPEAKER: Yeah.
14	MS. MIROCZNIK: history class, civics
15	class. Are the teachers and the principal in the
16	school encouraging young people like yourself to
17	come out and engage in participatory budget so
18	you can have civic engagement? Like testifying
19	tonight, it's not easy sitting in the hot seat in
20	a crowded room testifying coming from Brooklyn
21	tonight. Who is encouraging you to do it? It's
22	a wonderful thing.
23	MS. COHEN: My council member is a
24	wonderful. I have a really supportive school
25	environment. But to be honest, I think New York

1	City Public Schools, in my experience, are
2	incredibly lacking in terms of civic engagement.
3	I mean, we learn about the founding of the
4	national Constitution, but we learn nothing about
5	state or city government, which is why I love
6	participatory budgeting, because anyone can get
7	involved and you can vote starting at age 11.
8	And I have seen middle school students my
9	little sister get involved themselves. And I
10	think it provides a level of civic education that
11	honestly could be implemented in the public
12	school system. So while that wasn't directly in
13	my testimony, I think an Office of Civic
14	Engagement could seriously help with that
15	initiative in fostering better relationships
16	between city agencies, public schools and
17	ensuring that students are opened up to these
18	types of students, especially because I come from
19	Brooklyn from Park Slope and I go to school in
20	Midtown Manhattan. So I see a lot of more of
21	these opportunities than many of my peers do in
22	other areas of the city, and I think they should
23	have equal opportunity and access to them.
24	MS. MIROCZNIK: Answered my question as with
25	the schooling, and you corroborated my thoughts

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regarding the right to vote. I appreciate the comments.

MS. SPEAKER: Do you mind if I added on to that? It was my experience students of this age could vote. I rolled it out at my children's school. I have twin 11-year-olds. And I think to completely reinforce it, at this school, they nearly did the voting as a sort of task, a homeroom task. And I think that was unfortunate because I think looking at her, she is a mindful young woman who understands what she is voting for. And that's what we want to raise up.

And I think we have an opportunity in our schools to do that. And I think if we worked with the DOE to implement this as a part of a civics or a social studies class where they understand more and they are mindful, then we are able to really grow this and we are able to have a generation that will actually think about what they are doing and are more mindful of what the impact of their actions are. So I would say that we are lacking there right now, but I think that's partly because this is the first year we have had voters who were 11.

25 MS. GODSIL: Any additional questions from

1	commissioners?
2	MS. ANGELO: Can you tell me how many
3	council districts are participating in the
4	participatory budgeting?
5	MS. SPEAKER: The question is how many
6	council districts are participating? There's 27
7	this year. It's been up to 31 in the past. But
8	because the political transitions this year, that
9	number changed. More than half the city, but
10	there's a lot of room for growth. I would also
11	like to see this beyond the council level.
12	MS. GODSIL: Thank you all so much. Very
13	impressive.
14	So we would like to invite Roxanne Delgado,
15	Cristina Gonzalez, Frank Morano, and Jenny
16	Akchin.
17	You want to go first, Ms. Delgado?
18	MS. DELGADO: Okay, hi. I would just like
19	to say the issue I'm sorry, the issue isn't
20	voter registration or education. It's a lack of
21	competition where even before the race begins,
22	most people know the outcome. The campaign
23	finance has made races less competitive, and as a
24	result there's a lower voter turnout. As I
25	stated last week, there has been lots of abuses

of campaign matching funds. In the case with

City Council Member Ben Kallos took over 125,000

in public funds even though he outraced his

combined opponents by over 2,000 percent. His

opponents didn't receive any public money and he

won reelection by over 80 percent.

There are some city council members who want to increase the gap in such scenarios by increasing the matching funds or fully financing these races. Not only does that increase the gap between established and grassroots candidate, but it's a waste of money. The way to stop this abuse is by not matching any race with other opponents not eligible for public funds and raise 50 percent less than their opponent.

And then I would like to say quickly also regarding special elections, over half of the elected officials came into office through special elections certain voters so this also needs to be ended because there's too many people don't vote because they realize that the system is already rigged.

Regarding community boards, I support term limits for community board members because in some districts it's very hard to find people who

1	are free time or interest in serving on the
2	board. However, I do support term limits for
3	community board leadership to two terms so other
4	members can have a chance to lead as well.
5	Community board members with poor attendance
5	should be automatically removed from the board
7	and not at the discretion of the other community
8	board members.

Currently I have board members who have over 90 percent attendance failure but still are on the Board because they are political appointees. And a community board should not be allowed to vote on any issue not on the agenda at last 24 hours before the meeting. This happened in my community board.

And lastly regarding the ranked choice voting, I think that I would recommend you to cause a low turnout, lowering the 40 percent of the vote threshold to 30 percent of the vote in citywide races to avoid runoff because the Board of Elections is too inept to handle ranked choice voting. They don't have the funds and they are just inept. Thank you.

MS. GODSIL: Thank you.

MS. GONZALEZ: Hi, good evening. Thank you

for having us today and giving us the opportunity to testify. My name is Cristina Gonzalez. I'm one of the co-founders of Women of Color for Progress. We are a multi-strategy organization that works to create more transparency and equity in our government to allow women of color to excel, lead, and be heard in government.

While we have presented a few proposals regarding land use, housing, transparency, I'm here today to testify on and speak on the expansion of paid leave specifically as it pertains to paid parental leave and bereavement leave. Our first proposal is to expand parental leave to all City employees. As it currently stands, only 20,000 of the currently -- of the employees in the city qualify for paid parental leave, even though there are over 294,000 full-time City employees.

In the year between 2015 and 2017 that we had paid parental leave, only 436 people who qualified for paid parental leave actually accessed it, which is only two percent of the 20,000 people that qualify for it. Expanding it would mean that people who are teachers, City employees that are unionized members would be

1	able to access paid parental leave and not have
2	to utilize paid sick days or vacation days if
3	they had to go for parental leave.
4	I would additionally like to expand
5	bereavement leave, specifically the part that
6	the way that family is identified. So as it
7	stands, every agency gets to define what is
8	family. So if you have a death in the family,
9	that means if your agency does not cover that,
10	like your grandparent, you have to also utilize
11	your vacation time to bereave your family member.
12	So we are proposing that this term of
13	families that hasn't really been revised since
14	2004. And obviously the way that we view
15	families has changed in the 14 years since we
16	have revised the term to expand these different
17	definitions of family to further grant these
18	rights, to access the bereavement leave.
19	And we are also proposing that this
20	definition of family also extend to sick leave so
21	that if someone needs to take care of their
22	family member, the way that we define family is
23	also expanded for that as well.
24	MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much.
25	MR. MORANO: Good evening, Commissioners.

My name is Frank Morano. Thank you for the opportunity to be heard this evening. You were so kind to thank us for coming out here. Thank you for all the work that you have done. I think anybody that's watched the Charter revision process not only this year but previously years knows the endless amounts of time, effort, and energy that you guys put into this without getting paid, without becoming famous, and a lot of times it seems thankless. But thank you. It is appreciated by those of you that are working towards making democracy a bit better.

I wanted to -- I heard a lot of great ideas today and I am going to try and not repeat too much of what other folks said. And for other similar ideas that folks mentioned, I want to emphasize a couple of different reasons that I think you should consider them.

With respect to campaign finance, which I know a lot of people have spoken about and you've indicated you are exploring a number of solutions, you know, I really do want to dispel the notion that the current campaign finance system is working in New York City. It is absolutely not. It was designed to make it

easier for regular people to run for office. It has done completely the opposite. It has done nothing but become -- but create a new cottage industry of accountants, of lawyers, consultants, and people that know how to game the system in order to fill out the right forms and match properly with the right donors.

If you are a regular person trying to navigate the morass of the campaign finance system in this city, you are rewarded with fines for innocuous mistakes and hours and hours' worth of paperwork in which you can spend campaigning. It is absolutely impossible to do that.

Additionally, the same people end up as the donors. Regular people don't end up donating to grassroots candidates.

Instead, what I would suggest, and Council
Member Kallos alluded to this, is a proposal
similar to what Seattle has done with democracy
vouchers. Maybe start it on a pilot level here
in New York City where rather than go to the same
real estate and financial services industries for
the same donors, instead give every New Yorker
\$250 vouchers that they can use to contribute to
any campaign. If they choose not to use it, it's

not used. But what it does is it forces all of
these candidates to go to regular people, not big
money bundles.

Additionally, I know you've heard a lot of talk about ranked choice voting. One area beyond the case of saving the cost of a whole separate second runoff election that I urge you to consider is you guys have the opportunity to absolutely abolish that term spoiler in city elections.

If you listen to the discussion of the governor's race right now, everyone is talking about oh, is Cynthia Nixon going to be a spoiler? And I will wrap up with this. The consequence for voting your conscience shouldn't be the candidate that you like the least getting elected. Do away with the whole spoiler process. You have an unprecedented ability to do that.

Lastly, if you talk about a time when New York City Council was really at a golden age in terms of electing minorities, when I say "minorities," I don't just mean ethnic and gender-based minorities, but working minorities, it was the 12 years that New York City had proportional representation from 1933 to 1945.

1	You saw a body in this city that was much more
2	representative of how the public voted.
3	So I would encourage you when you have your
4	expert testimony hearings in June, have at least
5	one evening dedicated to proportional
6	representation. Can it be implemented in 2018 in
7	a practical level in compliance with the Voters
8	Rights Act and should it be? Just one evenings
9	of experts on proportional representation, how it
10	worked in New York City and then in the '30s and
11	'40s and how it could work in the 2020s. I think
12	you would see a world of really, really
13	incredible ideas. Thank you.
14	MS. GODSIL: Thank you.
15	Any question from the commissioners?
16	All right. Thank you all so much for your
17	contributions.
18	MR. SPEAKER: Commissioner Weiser looked
19	like she wanted to ask a question.
20	MS. GODSIL: I think we all want to ask many
21	questions, but we are listening and talking.
22	Thank you so much.
23	We would like to invite Angela Connors,
24	Towaki Komatsa, Matthew Shapiro, and Jerry
25	Goldfeder.

MR. SHAPIRO: All right. I will go first.
Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Good
evening. My name is Matt Shapiro and I'm the
legal director of the Street Vendor Project at
the Urban Justice Center. Street Vendor Project
is a membership-based organization with more than
2,000 members that sell food, merchandise and
artwork from trucks, carts, and tables across the
city. We organize vendors to make their voices
heard, provide legal representation, and small
business assistance.

I'm here to recommend that the New York City Charter be updated to address a grave injustice to the current system for allocating mobile food vendors permits. Since 1983, the number of citywide mobile food vending permits has been capped at 3,000 by local law. These are held in perpetuity by former vendors who rent them out in underground market to people who are actually vending from food carts and trucks on streets and sidewalks.

The permit holders pay \$200 to the city every two years, and then charge actual vendor 20 to \$25,000 on this underground market. The cap on permits enacted more than 30 years ago has

allowed the secondary market to expand and thrive with no benefit to the city or the vendors. As a result, only those people with enough capital to afford this inflated price have the right to be food vendors in the city. Other vendors take dangerous risks and sell without permits resulting in arrests and thousand-dollar fines.

Street vending in New York City has always been a means for mostly new immigrants to get a foothold in the small business community. The same vending system that once launch Fairway and other beloved New York City businesses now results in many vendors taking a dangerous risk selling without permits on being paid a low wage to work for someone who has enough capital to rent a permit from the underground market price.

The New York City Charter should be updated to require the city issue new mobile food vending permits at certain intervals to eliminate this underground market and provide opportunities for immigrants and others looking to start a small business. While there have been previous efforts of the City Council to legislatively increase the number of permits, those efforts were diffused by a small powerful group of special interests who

1	have been historically opposed to street vendors.
2	On the contrary, we know that average
3	New Yorkers love street vendors. You just have
4	to look at the lines that form in front of the
5	coffee carts in the morning or the vendors
6	selling falafel for lunch. If they have the
7	chance, the majority of the voters would likely
8	support increasing the number of permits
9	available to provide better opportunities for
10	these small businesses struggling to achieve the
11	American dream. Thank you for the opportunity to
12	testify today.
13	MS. GODSIL: Thank you.
14	MR. KOMATSA: Hi, I'm Towaki Komatsa. I'm a
15	U.S. Navy veteran. To begin my testimony, let me
16	use testimony I gave at City Hall on March 28th
17	before Steven Levin, the Chairperson of the
18	General Welfare Committee. It was in regards to
19	Steven Banks, the commissioner of HRA. So I will
20	just play back a clip of the video.
21	(Holding up a tablet.)
22	MS. GODSIL: I'm not sure if it we can hear
23	this. I'm sorry, sir.
24	MR. KOMATSA: I will quickly summarize it.
25	So basically I had a conversation with Steven

1	Banks on December 14th at the end of the mayor's
2	town hall meeting in Brooklyn. I recorded him on
3	audio. I live in a shelter for military
4	veterans. I got assaulted. I got punched in my
5	left temple only because HRA failed to act.
6	There was an attempted assault. The landlord,
7	they are going to have a fundraiser tomorrow
8	night. They essentially did a bait and switch
9	with the apartment lease agreements with everyone
10	who lives in that building. Taxpayers pay for
11	those leases.
12	So the question is if HRA is supposed to be
13	providing oversight, they have been in the news
14	in the last three weeks and the daily news for
15	essentially committing fraud with respect to the
16	OCA, the City agency, I had asked Mr. Carrion
17	previously HRA if taxpayers are essentially
18	footing the bill and there's no oversight, people
19	like me get concussions because of that assault.
20	HRA is doing business with a company six
21	years ago. I had a conversation with Steven
22	Banks in Kew Gardens asking him if the taxpayers
23	are paying for the contracts, an ITT company

haven't been paid, for which I have active

that's the one six years ago for which I still

24

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1	litigation, can you as a commissioner make a
2	responsible decision for procurement?
3	Stop making the people in this room
4	(inaudible) to have bank accounts of this
5	company. That still hasn't paid me for the past
6	six years and for which I need to provide
7	financial assistance for my family members.
8	Also when I met Steven Banks on March 1st at
9	the Yale Club, I told him that (inaudible)
10	judicial misconduct against me. If you take a
11	look at the report, there were 2,143 complaints
12	against state judges, only about 60 percent
13	disciplinary. So if there's no if there's
14	inadequate oversight of the judges throughout
15	New York State Mr. Bank's wife is the
16	supervisor for the Housing Courts isn't there
17	a conflict of interest between Mr. Banks and his
18	wife such that he should never have been
19	considered for his current position given the
20	fact if his wife is improperly supervising
21	judges?
22	Then people get illegally evicted from their
23	homes. And I have a mentally unstable roommate
24	who is now working for the Department of
25	Education. Yeah, prone to essentially assaulting

1	school	kids	because	there's	no	oversight.

MS. GODSIL: Thank you.

MR. GOLDFEDER: Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, Commissioners. You have a daunting task to look at the entire charter of the State of New York. And I'm sure you are up for it. I wanted to congratulate Cesar for his role, but he's not here, so I do so in absentia.

As an election practitioner and adjunct professor of election law at Fordham Law School and University of Pennsylvania Law School, I studied the Charter, the City Charter of New York and Charter revision quite closely for over 30 years.

I've participated in what we call the
Citizens Charter Change in the mid-1980s and led
a group to initiate a Citizens Charter Commission
pursuant to Section 363 of the New York Municipal
Home Rule Law. I testified in various charity
revision commissions over the last number of
decades and have written and lectured extensively
on a variety of proposals for inclusion as
charter amendments.

25 With that in mind, I offered an amendment

1	that the Commission ought to seriously consider.
2	The accompanying democracy agenda for New York
3	City, fashioned as proposed Section 1057-F of the
4	Charter which I've attached to the testimony that
5	I have handed up. Its provisions include
6	enhanced registration and enrollment
7	opportunities, early voting, instant runoffs, and
8	no excuse absentee ballot.
9	With one bold and comprehensive stroke, this
10	democracy agenda offers the people of the City of
11	New York an opportunity to create more robust
12	elections by making it easier to vote, to
13	register and to vote. The City of New York, I
14	think the predicate question that you need to
15	face is whether or not the City of New York has
16	the authority to enact such reforms in municipal
17	elections.
18	You do. It's been articulated by various
19	experts and disinterested parties including the
20	courts a former New York Attorney General and a
21	former New York City Corporation Counsel.
22	Indeed, I testified myself before the previous

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program term limits reduced petition requirements and nonpartisan elections for vacancies.

The proposed democracy agenda will allow the city to take the crucial next step in easing the voting process. Thirty-seven states already have early voting. New York City should join them.

Twelve states and the District of Columbia have enacted automatic registration. New York City should at least provide the opportunity to register on the eve of elections. Twenty-six states and Washington, D.C. allow no excuse absentee voting. We should permit that as well.

There are many states that allow primaries. I'm not in favor of open primaries, but New York City voters should not have to wait almost a year to change political party affiliation in order to vote in a primary. An instant runoff voting using 15 cities in the state of Maine would eliminate an extra trip to the polls and save taxpayer dollars. This was used in New York City in our Board of Election -- sorry, School Board elections during the 1980s and 1990s. We should embrace this voting procedure for all municipal elections.

25 Each of these reforms and all taken together

1	would prove to be a giant step for democracy in
2	New York City. I urge you to seriously consider
3	them. And after the as I said, after the
4	testimony, I actually have written out
5	Section 1057-F for your consideration with an
6	executive summary so that you can see how the
7	various proposed reforms can come into play if
8	the Charter is amended. I welcome any questions
9	or comments you have about the process, your
10	authority, and your views with regard to these
11	particular proposals.
12	MS. GODSIL: Any questions?
13	MR. SIEGAL: Thanks for coming and for doing
14	all this work. Having been friends for a long
15	time, I cannot resist having you on the witness
16	stand. So
17	MR. GOLDFEDER: Do I need a lawyer?
18	MR. SIEGAL: You will do fine. So first
19	off, on instant runoff, I really can't believe
20	you are citing School Board elections as any
21	indication of a positive for democracy. They
22	were universally reviled so much that we
23	eliminated them and I just don't think that's a
24	good example.
25	MR. GOLDFEDER: We didn't eliminate School

1	Board elections because of instant runoff. We
2	eliminated School Board elections because three
3	people voted. Nobody voted and there was
4	corruption among those school boards. It wasn't
5	the process of the election. It was the fact
6	that these particular boards functioned
7	inappropriately.
8	MR. SIEGAL: Agreed, but they were widely

MR. SIEGAL: Agreed, but they were widely viewed as the most controlled elections there were. But let me get to the point because I think you made a very positive contribution and I want to ask a bigger question which is, we are charged with enhancing democracy. If you look at the trends, they are abysmal in the city, that the plunge in voter anticipation since 1969 is more than half the people who voted 40 years ago don't vote.

We are on the verge of having mayoral elections to continue with less than a million voters, when we used to have two and a half million voters. Since 1989, a period in which we had public financing, term limits, voter assistance commission, a whole panoply of pro-democracy reforms, voter participation has again dropped almost by half.

So my question is, why are we to think that
any of these reforms particularly instant runoff
are going to somehow enhance participation, and
how do we know the irony that those advocating
instant runoff are saying the solution to
democracy is fewer elections? Because the one
place where there has not been where there is
not a drop-off in voter participation is in
mayoral runoff elections.

MR. GOLDFEDER: Well, I think you raise the broad question about the purpose of electoral reforms. And I think you're right to raise that. I don't know that instant runoff is going to increase voter turnout. That's the purpose. The purpose is to save taxpayer dollars, to make the elections more efficient. Increased registration opportunities allowing people to register up to ten days before a primary or special or a general will get us more people registering.

Will that increase turnout? Perhaps. But at least it will allow people who wake up on the eve of an election to register. Changing -- allowing the ability to change political parties or change from a blank to a party member closer to the election might very well increase voter

1	turnout.
<u>L</u>	carnoac.

As of now, people need to, if I want to vote in this June 26, 2018, primary for Congress, and I change parties, I had to have changed parties 25 days before the last general election. Well, that's absurd. It's been upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States, but that doesn't mean it's wise. It that doesn't mean we should continue just because it's not unconstitutional.

If we give people the opportunity to change parties because people are energized and they want to vote in a political primary, I'm not suggesting that people be allowed to do so on the day of the primary. But I am suggesting that they allow — they be allowed to do it within 30 days of that primary. That at least prevents the kind of party-raiding that the laws address.

But it gives people an opportunity to be involved in an election that they want to be involved in because of charismatic candidates or because of political issues and so on. So whether or not those kinds of reforms will increase turnout is unknown. I think it will, but at least it gives people more of an opportunity to be involved. And that's the

1	candid answer. I wouldn't say that one thing
2	leads to the next automatically. That would
3	be that just wouldn't be honest.
4	MS. WEISER: I have a question for
5	Mr. Goldfeder which is, have you thought
6	mechanically or as you know, party registration
7	deadlines are set by state law, not by city law.
8	Have you thought of the mechanics of how your
9	proposal would function? Are you suggesting
10	there would be sort of a separate party
11	registration roll that's applicable only for
12	municipal elections and would that be a request
13	for registration change also for state elections?
14	MR. GOLDFEDER: Right. So the mechanics are
15	tricky. The way this would function whether it's
16	early voting or enhanced registration or changing
17	parties, we would need a separate municipal
18	ballot. Think about it this way. A primary for
19	mayor in September, in the same primary election,
20	you might also have a primary for District
21	Attorney or for judicial delegate or for
22	Republican Party district leader or whatnot. You
23	have the authority through Charter revision to
24	make changes affect municipal elections.
25	But you can't change the election procedures

1	as they relate to a District Attorney's justice
2	for the Supreme Court, Civil Court or whatnot.
3	So you need two separate pieces of paper. You
4	need two separate ballots. And we have that on
5	occasion already. And if I change my enrollment
6	or if I register later than the state law
7	currently allows me to, I can theoretically I can
8	vote my municipal ballot, but I can't vote my
9	District Attorney ballot.
10	MS. WEISER: Are you suggesting a separate
11	registration roll as well?
12	MR. GOLDFEDER: Well, no, you mark down
13	you don't have a separate registration
14	enrollment. What you have is an indication on
15	the voter enrollment book voter registration
16	book. You have an indication of when the
17	registration takes effect, when the registration
18	is done. And therefore, it could take effect for
19	the municipal ballot, but not yet take effect for
20	the District Attorney ballot.
21	And so that person is now registered and can
22	vote for mayor, but can't vote for District
23	Attorney, but can come back for the next election
24	and then vote. Same is true if there's a change
25	in enrollment. If you change parties close to

1	the primary, you can only vote for municipal
2	election, but you can't vote for District
3	Attorney because the law pertaining to the state
4	election, the nonmunicipal election doesn't allow
5	you. And that would be in the voter book. So
6	the poll workers know to give you one ballot, but
7	not the other.
8	MS. WEISER: So it's just changing what's
9	listed on the printed voter book to include the
10	enrollment?
11	MR. GOLDFEDER: That's right.
12	MR. HO: Just one really quick question
13	about the proposal to change the registration
14	cutoff date for municipal elections to ten days
15	prior to the election. Is it your understanding
16	that New York State Constitution, Article II,
17	Section 5 about the registration for state
18	elections in New York having to be completed ten
19	days before the election would prohibit the City
20	from setting an even shorter cutoff period for
21	the purposes of municipal elections?
22	MR. GOLDFEDER: No, but I'm not doing that
23	for the very reason you suggested, because it's
24	the New York State Constitution that says ten
25	days before. Everything relating to registration

1	needs to be finalized ten days before. So my
2	suggestion is that we move up the ability to
3	register.
4	So, so you can't do it later than ten days
5	before, but now the law is 25 days before. So
6	what I'm suggesting is let's make it ten days
7	before. So that's consistent with the
8	Constitution.
9	MR. HO: Yeah, no, no, I understand that.
10	Are you saying the City couldn't go beyond that?
11	Because one way
12	MR. GOLDFEDER: Are you asking me whether we
13	can have same-day registration?
14	MR. HO: Or something shorter than ten days.
15	MR. GOLDFEDER: Only if we amend the
16	New York State Constitution. You folks can't do
17	that. That's my view. If you have a different
18	view and you want to impose same-day
19	registration, God bless you. I will vote for it.
20	MR. HO: Thank you. Thank you all so much.
21	MS. GODSIL: So our final panel is Teri
22	Hagedorn, Harpreet Toor, Bitsy Bentley, Robert
23	Hollander, and I think we will have the final
24	person in this panel as well, Rebecca Lamorte.
25	All right.

1	So thank you all so much. You have the
2	honor of being our final panel. So we can hear
3	from why don't we just start here and go all
4	the way down.
5	MS. LAMORTE: Hello, my name is Rebecca
6	Lamorte. I am one of CBA secretaries and I would
7	like to read testimony on behalf of the Chair of
8	Manhattan Community Board 8. The City Charter
9	sets out the role of 59 community boards
LO	throughout City of New York. CBA would like to
11	emphasize the importance of community boards to
L2	the effective responsive governance of the city.
L3	New York City is an extremely diverse city
L4	and not only racially, religiously, ethnically,
L5	and geographically. City determinations affect
L6	each neighborhoods differently. By virtue of
L7	this great urban diversity, we are as a community
L8	uniquely able to inform and advise the city of
L9	the needs for city services, the impact of city
20	decisions, and the potential effect of these new

Community boards are vital links between the public, both business and residents, and the city administration. We see from the ground level the localized impact of potential city policies. We

policies.

L	are able to respond quickly to the public's
2	concerns. We are the liaison between the public
3	and the city agencies and elected officials.
1	Giving our community a voice, we need to have the
5	city maintain and even strengthen its ear.

Each policy and decision potentially has a different impact on each of the 59 diverse geographic areas of the community boards. We are the most effective way to communicate the effect of those policies and decisions on our communities and the public's concerns. Living or working in these areas, we see the disparate effect of various policies on different neighborhoods. Inviting the public to come see us with their views and city-related problems, we are the voice of the public.

As such, we play an essential advisory role to the city agencies that do not have the funds, time, or manpower to assess each policy's impact on each community. Community boards are vital. Without expressing a view at this time towards either City Charter Commission or any of the Charter provisions, we urge that, in the request to examine the City Charter, the important role of community boards be respected and

1	strengthened. Thank you.
2	MS. GODSIL: Thank you.
3	MR. HOLLANDER: Good evening, Commissioners.
4	Thank you for the important work that you are
5	doing and the time that you are putting into it.
6	My name is Rob Hollander. I am a professor of
7	linguistics at City University at Hunter College
8	and John Jay College of Criminal Justice.
9	Tonight I am here as the secretary of the
10	Chinatown Working Group which is a community
11	planning process group based in Chinatown.
12	My testimony concerns the obstacles that the
13	City places on a community planning process.
14	These plans reflect broad community consensus.
15	The Chinatown Working Group includes 63 community
16	organizations in this Chinatown in the Lower East
17	Side. The city processing costs of implementing
18	these plans set impossible hurdles for low-income
19	communities, while the Sutton Place community
20	with its deep pockets was able to promote its own
21	rezoning. The Chinatown Working Group does not
22	have the resources for that kind of a process.
23	Specifically for the process, the
24	environmental impact statements, this is I think
25	a fundamental injustice because it allows

communities of wealth to have self-determination and it prevents self-determination for communities of low-income. And is sort of aggravates the problem that, you know, community of wealth has in the marketplace greater options in the first place for self-determination and here the government is actually following that grain and tilting the playing field even further rather than trying to level the field.

So we would like to see the costs of the environmental impact statement removed from that process. I think there are a number of different ways that the Charter could do that. It would be possible for an independent assessment made of a community planning process where a report could be issued on whether the planning process is actually viable and of the consequences would be that would be a very inexpensive way to show that this process is a useful process.

Currently, the only waiver for the process is highly politicized because it can only be done through the borough president. The borough president appoints all the community board members and this, and the community board members are not elected. So this is a kind of incestuous

1	political process for the community board
2	themselves include other neighborhoods than a
3	specific neighborhood that might be rezoned. So
4	the entire thing is much more politically
5	complex.

But you could also ask that a certain percentage of local residents of the rezoning area are signed off on some kind of petition and that would be part of the way to move forward a community-based planning process. Chinatown Working Group as I said is, you know, 60-plus organizations, local organizations. We worked for seven years to come up with a planning process, and we cannot move it forward because we simply don't have the money.

MS. GODSIL: Thank you so much.

MS. BENTLEY: Hi, I'm Bitsy Bentley and this is my very first time attending one of these things. And it's been totally fascinating and I've learned so much. And it's been super-cool to, like, hear everybody's thoughts about things. And the reason why I wanted to come tonight is because I have this fantasy that, like, 150 years from now, everybody when they graduate from high school, they do a couple of years of civil

service and they use that for college and a big

part of what they do in that process is to

actually implement participatory democracy

processes.

And so when I found out about Lander's proposal for the Office of Civic Engagement, I was like oh, my goodness, this is, like, the coolest thing. This is perfectly exactly putting us on the path to my dream 150 years from now. And so I just wanted to be here to voice my support for that.

And then two things that for me were really interesting and compelling about that proposal were the expansion of participatory budgeting as well as the year in service. And the year in service in particular I think is really, really important because one of the things that I see an awful lot is that it takes a lot of privilege to be able to sit here at this microphone and be here on a Wednesday night and actually have the time.

It takes a lot of privilege for me to actually be able to, like, read the entire

Charter because I've got enough time to do it. I have the education and the resources and the

support to do those things and there are so many people in our communities with so much less than I have that aren't able to be here. And for me, things like a year in service, things like the Office of Civic Engagement, those are the things that provide the path for people to be able to have that kind of engagement.

There's so much dissatisfaction right now with our government. There's so much dissatisfaction with the way that our communities are being managed. And I think for a lot of people it's because there's just a lack of exposure and a lack of experience.

When I talk to people who work in city government, when I talk to people who are civil servants, these are amazing folks that are trying to make the world a better place. And that's a really wonderful and beautiful thing. But there's so little exposure that we have as average everyday citizens. A few years ago, I have been living in New York for 12 years. And a few years ago, I had this realization that, like, when I was agreeing up in a small town in Minnesota, my mom taught the kids in the community that I grew up in and my dad went to

1	the power	plant,	the electricity for the
2	community	that I	grew up in.

And I live in New York City and at the time
I was a market research executive and I could
have done my job anywhere. I didn't have any
kind of relationship with my city. I didn't have
any kind of relationship with my community. So
I'm really excited at the idea of something like
an Office of Civic Engagement because it provides
the opportunity for people like me to be able to
engage in the community. But even more
importantly than that, it gives an opportunity
for people with less resources than I have to
actually be a part of city government.

MR. TOOR: Thank you. My name is Harpreet
Toor. You have a problem pronouncing it; it's
not the first time. Everybody does. Thank you,
Commissioners, for giving me this opportunity.
Basically, you know, I have been listening. I
came with something else to say, but after
listening to people here, there are a few things
which from my personal experience I am going to
share which I am definitely you need to look at
when you sit down and look at those revisions for
the Charter.

1	The 2020 Census, even though the consulate
2	said that redistricting will take place in 2020,
3	it will be in 2022. Last time the Census took
4	place, redistricting when we walked down,
5	literally we were told that the area which we
6	were planning to have together it was divided
7	into six sections.
8	The councilman who was literally walking on
9	the street while he has (inaudible) he got
10	elected finally he is behind the bars right now.
11	So those kind of people who run, there should be
12	some sort of checks. We are talking what I've
13	seen happen in India. This is definitely a
14	better place, but these things are happening.
15	Seeing what happened in India, criminal and you
16	run over here, a criminal over here. And he won.
17	Those, the way the Census is conducted and how
18	those numbers are used in redistricting, that is
19	one I would definitely like you to look at.
20	Number two is linguistic participation.
21	Reading about it, but I found out there's a
22	hearing going on and this whole thing for me, it
23	was, like, in the last 24, 36 hours I will go and
24	do it. Linguistically, we can talk a million
25	plans here. If linguistically those people we

1	are working for whom we are trying to make the
2	life easy, if they cannot understand what the
3	city is trying to do, how they will participate
4	and tell you or me or anybody what they are
5	looking for.
6	That's number three, and I know the time is
7	really constrained and I'm I will try to say
8	it in three and a half minutes. And the other
9	thing is that the way the redistricting come from
10	the federal and the state, I literally have seen
11	because in 2010 Census. I worked in southeast
12	Queens. The whole southeast Queens, I have seen
13	literally walking street after street which was
14	not in even paved, not taken care of because
15	funds do not get directed.
16	Based on those communities, they do not
17	participate. The reason they do not
18	participation is because they did not know about
19	it, but they do not understand those things.
20	MS. GODSIL: Thank you very much. I think
21	we are going to switch the microphone.
22	MS. HAGEDORN: Hi. Thank you for the chance
23	to testify. I know everybody's tired and hungry,
24	so I will make this very fast. My name is Teri
25	Hagedorn and I am a volunteer member of the

New York chapter of Represent Us which is a national anticorruption organization. And our mission is to pass tough anticorruption laws in cities and states across America and to end the legalized corruption that has come to define modern politics the it's a big task. A big component of our efforts is campaign finance reform. Obviously it's a priority for the mayor and for you as well.

And as we have been talking about tonight, even though New York has one of the best public match systems in America with up to 55 percent of the campaign spending provided by the public funds, we are still seeing a lot more wealthy donors than we really should. And Represent Us New York did a study with Reinvent Albany and found in 2017, 68 percent of council members' campaign funds came from donations over \$500, and 54 percent came from donations over \$1,000. So it's obviously a lot of money, and especially when you consider that 60 percent of New Yorkers haven't saved even three months' savings.

So one of the solutions to the problem is to increase the amount of available public spending.

And it's something that Mayor de Blasio mentioned

in his State of the State address when he said our goal is for elections to be funded primarily by public dollars, thereby greatly reducing the power of big money. So there's an existing bill.

And we actually have the man up here tonight. I did not know we would. Ben Kallos, his bill, the introduction of 732 which would raise the public financing cap up to 85 percent.

Personally I like the voucher program, in

Seattle as well. But I feel like this bill is

it's a manageable, incremental step. And I feel

like if New Yorkers have a chance to have

matching funds in their elections they would vote

yes, and that it would help to bring in new

candidates, more civic engagement and build

greater faith in our elected officials.

And there's actually a study released in

June 2017 talking about the benefits and campaign

finance reform which included greater racial and

class diversity among donors, more women running

for office, and increased number of donors and

more quality time with constituents. I have in

my testimony some of the other descriptions of

these types of campaign finance programs.

And just on a personal notes because I have

1	40 seconds, I'm from a small town in
2	North Carolina where, you know, a state like has
3	to be dragged into the next century. And I moved
4	to New York because of its progressive politics
5	and I'm excited to see what this council, this
6	Commission can bring forward. Thank you.
7	MS. GODSIL: Thank you all.
8	Any questions from the commissioners?
9	Thank you all so much. And thanks to
LO	everyone for staying here tonight. It's been an
L1	amazingly informative and value opportunity for
L2	us to hear from people. And please come up to
13	further meetings we will be having going forward.
L4	And again, thanks everyone. Good evening.
L5	Is there a motion to adjourn?
L6	MR. BRAGG: So moved.
L7	MS. GODSIL: And a vote? All in favor?
L8	(A chorus of ayes.)
L9	MS. GODSIL: Any opposed?
20	The meeting is adjourned.
21	(Whereupon, at 8:56 p.m., the above matter
22	was concluded.)
23	
24	0 0 0 0

25

1	CERTIFICATE
2	
3	STATE OF NEW YORK)
4	: SS.: COUNTY OF NEW YORK)
5	
6	I, JOSHUA EDWARDS, a Notary Public for and
7	within the State of New York, do hereby certify:
8	That the above is a correct transcription of my
9	stenographic notes.
LO	I further certify that I am not related to any
L1	of the parties to this action by blood or by marriage and
L2	that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this
L3	matter.
L4	IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
L5	this 10th day of May 2018.
L6	
L7	Joshua B. Edwards
L8	
L9	JOSHUA EDWARDS
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	

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