

6/23 COIB Testimony

Good morning, and members of the Board. My name is Zack Viera. I've lived in New York City for seven years, and I plan to spend the rest of my life here. This city has given me a great deal — professionally, intellectually, and personally. The people I've met here are people I intend to keep in my life, and the relationships I value most are ones where we hold each other to a high standard — where honesty isn't optional and accountability runs both ways. I hold the institutions of this city to the same standard.

That's why I'm here today in support of the Board's proposed amendments to its rules regarding the reporting of donations and gifts to the City, including travel-related expenses.

At its core, this proposal is about transparency — and I believe the case for it is straightforward. The current reporting threshold of \$5,000 is too high. There is a meaningful amount of third-party-funded travel happening between \$1,000 and \$5,000 that the public currently has no visibility into. Lowering the threshold to \$1,000 — consistent, as the Board notes, with the existing Annual Disclosure Law — is a common-sense correction. I don't see a compelling reason to maintain the gap, and I think the public interest clearly favors closing it.

But I want to spend a moment on what I find most exciting about this proposal, which is the detail level of the new disclosure requirements. Under proposed Section 1-19, agencies would be required to report not just the donor and the dollar amount, but who traveled, where, when, and for what purpose. That shift matters enormously. We are living in a moment where the tools available to analyze and summarize large amounts of public data are more powerful than they have ever been. More granular disclosure creates a living public record that journalists, researchers, advocates, and ordinary New Yorkers can actually use. The Board itself acknowledges it currently lacks basic information about how frequently third-party travel is accepted and for what purposes. Detailed disclosure is how we fix that — for both the public and the Board's own capacity to govern this area well in the future.

I also want to name the structural risk that this proposal addresses. The current system places approval authority entirely at the agency level, with no reporting back to the Board or the public. That is precisely the kind of opacity that creates conditions for abuse. In my own life, I've found that the people and institutions I trust most are the ones willing to be seen clearly — not just when it's convenient. Transparency is not a guarantee against misconduct, but it is the minimum necessary condition for accountability. The days of officials quietly jetting off on someone else's dime, with no public record, should be behind us. The people of this city deserve to know, in specific terms, who is paying for their public servants to travel, and why.

The best relationships I have — personal and civic — are the ones where nothing is hidden. I'm here today because I want that same standard for my city. I am grateful to the Board for taking this up, and I commend the staff for the thoroughness of this rulemaking process. Members of the Board, thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to the integrity of New York City government.