



November 15, 2019

Dear Members of the Public Campaign Financing Commission,

We, the undersigned members of the New York State Legislature, are strong supporters of the Fair Elections legislation that has been introduced and/or passed by the Assembly and Senate in recent years, and we thank you for your work to create a voluntary system of public funding in New York State. A strong law will be critical to increasing participation in the democratic process and restoring our constituents' trust in state government.

We write to respectfully express our strong support for including the following key policy points into the state public financing program you are now crafting. It is critical that the system:

- Provide at least a **6-to-1 match on small donations**, to ensure that participating candidates are able to raise significant sums from small donors.
- Set **qualifying thresholds** that are attainable by viable candidates with community support but avoid wasting public funds on frivolous candidates.
- Establish **lower contribution limits (including lower doing business limits) for all candidates - participants and nonparticipants** -- that incentivize fundraising from small donors and program participation.
- Establish a campaign finance agency overseen by a board with a **candidate services and oversight unit** separate from the State Board of Elections -- one that will guard against fraud but will also support candidates and set them up for success.
- **Cover all statewide and state legislative races for both primary and general elections.** (Ideally, a public financing of elections program would also cover district attorney races.)
- **Not alter or diminish fusion voting**, which is wholly unrelated to public financing and any assertion to the contrary is disingenuous. The Commission was formed in response to an outcry around big money in politics, not fusion voting. The statute is clear that the Commission is to be focused only on matters relevant to establishing a public financing program.

The donor class -- which is overwhelmingly white, wealthy, and male, and not representative of the diversity in our state -- heavily represents industry interests. In the 2018 elections, just 100 donors gave more to state candidates than all estimated 137,000 small donors (contributing \$175 or less) combined, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. At a time when attacks on marginalized groups are coming from the highest echelons of our government, from many who believe that power *should* reside in the hands of a small group of white men, it is imperative

that we do all we can to increase the political power of all people. We must dramatically shift our campaign finance system to one that amplifies the voices of people of color, women, immigrants, working and middle class families, and all under-represented New Yorkers.

The state budget we passed tasked the Commission with making its recommendations "in furtherance of the goals of incentivizing candidates to solicit small contributions, reducing the pressure on candidates to spend inordinate amounts of time raising large contributions for their campaigns, and encouraging qualified candidates to run for office." The law also provided us with a short window in December to "amend or abrogate" the Commission's recommendations.

We are confident that the goals we've set forth for the Commission in the statute will lead to the "model for the nation" the Governor has promised; however, we also take seriously our statutory responsibility to craft and sponsor legislation to act in December if needed.

Thank you for your work to create a more fair and representative campaign finance system in New York state. This is a unique opportunity to pass much needed campaign finance reforms, and we look forward to seeing the results of your work.

Sincerely,

New York State Senate



Senator Salazar – 18th District



Senator Ramos – 13th District

New York State Assembly Members



Yuh-Line Niou – 65th District



Linda B. Rosenthal – 67th District



Catalina Cruz – 39th District