

March 10, 2023

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tempore and Majority Leader
New York State Senate
172 State Street
The Capitol, Room 330
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker
New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building 932
Albany, NY 12248

**RE: SUPPORT FOR THE PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCE BOARD BUDGET REQUEST FOR
\$114.5 MILLION IN SFY23/24**

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie, and members of the State Senate and Assembly:

We are strong supporters of the New York State Public Campaign Finance Program (PCFP), passed into law by the Legislature in 2020 (Chapter 58 of the Laws of 2020). We thank you and your members for your continued leadership on this vital democracy reform. Now it is time to follow through on your commitment to this critical program with full funding so it can be successfully implemented.

With the PCFP's first cycle underway for the 2024 elections, we urge you to ensure the program receives adequate resources in the state's FY 2024 budget. For the forthcoming fiscal year, the New York State Public Campaign Finance Board (PCFB) requested \$114.5 million in funding, \$14.5 million for program administration and \$100 million for future matching funds. Governor Hochul responded with \$39.5 million in funding for the agency in her FY 2024 executive budget. While the executive budget falls short of what is needed to build a robust program in New York, achieving the long-held goal of enacting public funding of elections at the state level is now more possible than ever. This is why we call on the Legislature to make a significant commitment to this historic program in your one-house budgets this March.

New Yorkers have organized for campaign finance reform for decades because it is necessary to ensure we have a healthy democracy that represents the people. As a result, the Legislature led the nation by passing the PCFP, the most potent legislative response in the nation to the flood of campaign spending unleashed by *Citizens United*. Any tactic to delay funding for the program now is nothing more than an effort to keep our democracy weak and preserve corporate power. It would be unacceptable. The program is critical to restoring our constituents'

trust in state government by addressing the undue influence of big donors. The weight and influence of corporate and special interest donations are at odds with the solutions our communities need: whether it's tenants' rights and low-cost housing; real clean energy and climate solutions; well-paying jobs; health care for all; consumer protections; or ending police violence and mass incarceration.

In the 2022 election, the 200 biggest donors outspent over 200,000 small donors, individuals who contributed \$250 or less in state races. The PCFP has the potential to correct this imbalance. It promises to make everyday New Yorkers the most important source of campaign funding while allowing a wider range of diverse candidates to raise competitive sums. This increases participation in the democratic process for candidates and residents who aren't wealthy. Coupled with other recent election reforms, the PCFP brings New York closer to our goal of becoming a truly inclusive, multi-racial democracy.

The PCFP is well on its way. Under the leadership of Chairwoman Barbara Lifton, a former New York State Assemblywoman for nearly twenty years, the Board has staffed and will continue to staff the agency with the expertise necessary to administer this program. The underlying infrastructure is being built. Candidates have already begun opting into the program.

Adequate funding in this year's budget will be essential to completing the goal set by the Legislature in 2020. Therefore, as supporters of fair elections, we write to insist that the Legislature includes in their respective one-house budgets the \$114.5 million as requested by the PCFB for its FY 2024 budget. New York needs you to fulfill your commitment to this transformational democracy-strengthening reform.

Sincerely,

Adirondacks Indivisible
Alliance for Quality Education
Bethlehem NY Indivisible
Brennan Center for Justice
Bronx/NYPAN
Brooklyn Resisters
CCoHOPE Indivisible
Center for Popular Democracy
Chinese-American Planning Council
Citizen Action of New York
Citizen's Response Network of Wayne County
Citizens Union
City Island Indivisible
Common Cause New York
Community Voices Heard
Declaration for American Democracy Coalition
Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance

East End Action Network (EEAN)
Empire State Indivisible
Indivisible Brooklyn
Indivisible Cayuga
Indivisible Cortland County
Indivisible Mohawk Valley
Indivisible New Rochelle
Indivisible Onondaga county
Indivisible Rochester
Indivisible Scarsdale
Indivisible Westchester
Indivisible YorktownNY
IndivisibleWeStand UWS
Inwood Indivisible
Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS
Larchmont/Mamaroneck Indivisible
League of Women Voters of New York State
Long Island Activists
Long Island Network for Change
Long Island Progressive Coalition
Make the Road New York
Met Council Action
Met Council on Housing
Metro New York Health Care for All
Nassau Progressives
New York Civic Engagement Table
New York Communities for Change
New York State Council of Churches
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Progressive Action Network
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)
Northern Westchester Indivisible
Northwest Bronx Indivisible
NY Renews
Oneida County Democratic Women's Club
Pantsuit Nation Long Island
PEER/NYPAN Suffolk County, Progressive East End Reformers
Progressive Schenectady
Public Citizen
Putnam Progressives
Rise and Resist
Rockaway Women for Progress
Saratoga-Warren-Washington Progressive Action
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

Stand Up America
Strong Economy For All Coalition
Suffolk Progressives
The Holland (Willows) Indivisible Group
Together We Will LI
VOCAL-NY
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Westchester for Change
WFP North Country Club
Working Families Party