



**Testimony to the City Council Governmental Operations Committee
Opposing Passage of Int. 2429 of 2021,
Supporting Int. 1901 of 2020**

November 29, 2021

Good morning Chair Cabrera and members of the Governmental Operations committee. My name is Tom Speaker, and I am a Policy Analyst at Reinvent Albany, a watchdog organization that advocates for open and accountable government. Today we are testifying on Int. 2429 of 2021 and Int. 1901 of 2020.

Opposition to Intro 2429 (Yeger) – Changing NYC Campaign Finance Board Budget Process

We are one of 27 groups that strongly oppose Intro 2429. We believe this bill would undermine the independence and effectiveness of the nationally recognized New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB), and weaken democracy in NYC.

I will highlight two points from the joint memo of opposition that we have submitted to the Council. First, the CFB is currently effectively allowed to set its own budget to prevent interference from the very elected officials that the agency oversees. The New York City Charter says that the Mayor shall include the CFB's requested funds in the executive budget "without revision." This bill would remove that requirement.

When this provision was approved in 1998 by NYC voters as part of a ballot proposal, the Charter Revision Commission's report explicitly stated that this "independent budgeting" would help protect the CFB from political meddling. In Hawaii, Maine, and many other states, campaign finance boards without an independent budget have seen their funding streams cut or threatened. If Intro 2429 passes, we expect Councilmembers or Mayors with an axe to grind to try to squeeze the CFB the same way.

Second, as the public matching program has expanded, the New York City Council has become increasingly diverse and more reflective of the NYC electorate. Last year's primary elections were the first in which candidates could receive an 8-to-1 match on donations. And next year's City Council will be the first in which 61% of the Councilmembers are women (up from 27%), and 67% are people of color (up from 51%).

We believe Intro 2429 is bad policy. If you approve it, this law would damage a NYC campaign finance system that is an extraordinary success and national model and that has steadily improved over time.

If it ain't broke, don't break it. Please vote NO on Intro 2429.

Support for Intro 1901 (Lander) – More Transparency for Independent Expenditures

Reinvent Albany does support Int. 1901 of 2020 (Lander), which would allow the public to see who is funding independent expenditures to pass or defeat NYC ballot proposals and referendums. NYC needs more transparency in our elections, particularly as dark money spending continues to increase both in the City and across the country.

Thank you for allowing me to testify. I welcome any questions you may have.