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June 22, 2023

Governor Kathy Hochul

VIA EMAIL

RE: Please fill the long-standing vacancies in the Committee on Open Government immediately

Dear Governor Hochul,

We write to urge you to quickly fill the long-standing vacancies in the Committee on Open Government (COOG). Under the state's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), the Governor is charged with appointing five members, but only three have been appointed to date. The law requires COOG to include members of core stakeholders, and one of the two vacant positions is to be a representative of the news media.

Leaving these positions vacant deprives these stakeholder groups of a valuable avenue for input into the crafting and implementation of important public policy. COOG was formed in 1974 to provide advisory opinions and training on the NYS FOI, Open Meetings (OML), and Personal Privacy Protection Laws (PPPL). Though COOG does not have enforcement powers, the committee holds an important role in interpreting transparency statutes, and its advisory opinions have guided numerous court decisions.

We respectfully ask that you move quickly to appoint the two missing members of COOG and ensure that the body is well-staffed and well-led.

Sincerely,

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany

Noel Hidalgo
Executive Director
BetaNYC

Betsy Gotbaum
Executive Director
Citizens Union

Susan Lerner
Executive Director
Common Cause New York

Tim Hofer
Executive Director
Empire Center for Public Policy

Laura Ladd Bierman
Executive Director
League of Women Voters of New York State

Diane Kennedy
President
New York News Publishers Association

Blair Horner
Executive Director
New York Public Interest Research Group

cc:

Shoshanah Bewlay, Executive Director of the Committee on Open Government
Members of the Committee on Open Government