



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Reso. 740-2025 (Restler)

March 11, 2025

TITLE OF BILL

Resolution calling on the State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.590/A.3665, which would eliminate the rule that provides whenever a city charter commission puts a proposal on the local ballot, other referendum proposals are barred from the ballot.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

The organizations listed above support the resolution urging the State Legislature to pass S590 (Krueger)/A3665 (Simone). This bill would close two loopholes that make the charter revision process vulnerable to political manipulation. It would prevent mayors from blocking ballot questions solely by establishing a charter revision commission and require minimum timeframes for charter commissions, including at least 180 days between a commission's first meeting and the filing of ballot proposals.

These reforms would ensure the charter revision process serves the public interest, not political maneuvering.

Recent experiences underscore their necessity: in 2024 and 2025, Mayor Eric Adams used mayoral-appointed charter commissions to block a Council-approved referendum and prevent a Council-established commission from filing questions. Mayors de Blasio, Bloomberg, and Giuliani also exploited this power to derail referenda submitted by city councils and petition initiatives. Until this loophole is closed, future mayors will continue to do the same, denying the City Council or voters equal input in City Charter matters.

The absence of minimum timeframes has further undermined the charter revision process. The 2024 Charter Commission, announced just two months before its filing deadline, had inadequate time for public engagement and thoughtful deliberation. Rushed timelines like this weaken the ability of charter commissions to represent the full spectrum of New Yorkers' voices and condense what should be a judicious process. Our groups cannot provide meaningful input on improvements to the city's constitution without adequate notice and time.

Using the charter revision process for political gamesmanship fosters cynicism, confuses the public, and disproportionately favors the executive over the legislative branch. Instead of promoting collaboration between the different branches, these loopholes incentivize power plays that undermine public trust. As the City's foundational governing document, the charter should be amended through a deliberate process, not political tactics.

A3665 (Simone)/S590 (Krueger) offers a long-overdue update to Section 36 of the Municipal Home Rule Law, which governs charter revision commissions and has remained largely unchanged for decades. Passing this bill would strengthen the City Charter and restore confidence in its revision process.