



March 20, 2025

Governor Kathy Hochul
New York State

Minority Leader Robert Ort
New York State Senate

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senate

Minority Leader William Barclay
New York State Assembly

Speaker Carl Heastie
New York State Assembly

Re: Fully fund the NYS Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government with \$8.9 million in the FY 2025-2026 budget

Dear Governor Hochul and Legislative Leaders,

We strongly urge you to fully fund the NYS Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG) by appropriating \$8.9 million in the final FY 2025-2026 state budget.

Our request is very modest and amounts to adding only six hundred thousand dollars to the executive budget proposal. This is a tiny amount in a \$252 billion budget, but a very meaningful amount to COELIG, which is the first line of defense against corruption in state government.

COELIG staff have broad responsibilities, and it is crucial they have the funding to help public officials comply with reporting requirements, hold mandated training sessions, and ensure rules and laws are being followed by all. [According to COELIG's budget testimony](#), the 2022 law creating COELIG increased the number of state employees required to submit disclosures from 30,000 to 330,000. COELIG is also busy monitoring the explosion in lobbying activity with 10,000 people filing as lobbyists in 2024, and lobbying hitting a record \$360 million in 2023.

Without the requested \$8.9 million, COELIG said that it will be “unable fully to perform its duties with the thoroughness and speed that its legislative mandate demands.” The \$8.3 million proposed in the executive budget is “inadequate to meet the Commission’s minimum needs,”

according to COELIG. Importantly, what appears to be a \$250k budget increase from last year is functionally a reimbursement for the 2022 [Hogan Lovells report](#) on former Gov. Cuomo's book deal.

As noted in COELIG's budget request, its ability to hire senior staff was stymied by former Governor Cuomo's lawsuit. Now that COELIG has been ruled constitutional, it needs full funding to hire three key staff:

- a second investigative counsel (who will also serve as a liaison for investigation and enforcement purposes to the agency's Lobbying Division),
- a third investigator (to work out of our New York City office); and
- an electronic document specialist position to support the handling and trial of complex enforcement matters.

We are impressed by COELIG's ongoing ability to do an enormous amount of work with a very small budget. The COELIG management team is using technology and intelligently analyzing workflows to create a time- and cost-effective disclosure process, which it is continually improving. This is good work and COELIG deserves to be fully funded at the modest level it has requested.

Thank you,

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany

Erica Smikta
Executive Director
League of Women Voters of New York State

Betsy Gotbaum
Executive Director
Citizens Union

Blair Horner
Executive Director
NY Public Interest Research Group

Evan Davis
Manager
Committee to Reform the State Constitution

Erica Vladimer
Co-Founder
Sexual Harassment Working Group

Susan Lerner
Common Cause New York
Executive Director