



**Testimony of Christine Wood  
On Behalf of Public Citizen**

**Submitted to NYS Senate Finance & Assembly Ways & Means Committee Chairs  
For February 6th, 2024  
Joint Legislative Hearing on Local/General Government**

Dear Senate Finance Chair Krueger, Assembly Ways & Means Chair Weinstein, and members of the New York State Legislature:

My name is Christine Wood and I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of **Public Citizen**.

Public Citizen is a non-partisan organization representing more than 52,000 members and supporters in New York and 500,000 members and supporters nationwide. Together, we strive to realize a democracy where each person has an equal voice, regardless of income, race, gender, or zip code. That is why we're proud to indicate our support once again for New York's small donor matching system, which will amplify the voices of everyday people and restore trust in our government.

Public Citizen is pleased with the Executive Budget's commitment to fully funding the New York State Public Campaign Finance Program (PCFP) for FY 2024-25. It provides \$114.5 million for the program, including \$14.5 million for administrative costs and \$100 million for public matching funds.

As of this writing, almost 200 candidates have opted into this system, with robust participation across party lines. As such, the PCFP must receive the funding necessary to ensure the program meets its desired effect and that both candidates and small-dollar donors have a positive experience in this critical first election cycle.

Americans have long felt that the ultra-wealthy and special interests have too much influence in politics. Poll after poll shows that voters are concerned about the role money plays in our elections - and for good reason.

Special interests and the ultra-wealthy continue to spend huge sums of money to shape election outcomes and influence priorities in Albany. This outsized influence of large campaign donors silences the voices of everyday New Yorkers and is often at odds with the solutions our communities need. The small donor matching system laid out in the PCFP incentivizes candidates to spend time in their communities speaking with constituents. It provides a path for those seeking elected office to run competitive elections without reliance on wealthy donors or special interests.

The New York state-wide system is modeled on the New York City system which has been successfully funding campaigns city-wide for two decades. In addition to amplifying the voices of constituents, the program has also created a path for people of average means to run for office too.

In states and cities where similar programs have been implemented, results have shown an increase in the diversity of candidates elected into office, such as in [New York City](#), and in constituents engaging in their local and state elections, such as in [Seattle](#). As such, this program has the potential to increase electoral engagement across communities in New York State.

Through the PCFP, New York has an opportunity to lead the nation by implementing a model program that amplifies the voices of everyday New Yorkers.

As budget negotiations get underway, we're encouraging Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Heastie, and the members of the Legislature to ensure that the state's final budget reflects the full \$114.5 million in the governor's proposed budget<sup>1</sup>.

Our elected leaders must ensure that the PCFP gets the necessary funding to ensure this program is a success.

**Public Citizen** fully supports funding the Public Campaign Finance Program. We urge the Legislature to allocate \$114.5 million to the program as included in the FY 2024-25 Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the New York State Public Campaign Finance Program.

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<sup>1</sup> New York State., op. cit.