

**Written Testimony of Danielle Brecker, Co-lead Organizer, Empire State Indivisible**

**Submitted to the New York State Legislature  
at the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing  
Concerning Local Government**

**February 9, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of funding and implementing the statewide public financing program, enacted by the legislature in 2020, in the full year 2022-20223 budget.

My name is Danielle Brecker, I am co-lead organizer of Empire State indivisible. The Indivisible movement is predicated on engaging people to hold those we elect to serve us to account.

As such, Empire State Indivisible is dedicated to policies that amplify the voices of everyday New Yorkers in our democracy. We have been working with other grassroots groups in the Fair Elections for New York coalition since 2018.

Empire State Indivisible has canvassed and called New Yorkers across our state asking them to support policy or candidates. We have seen first hand the struggle candidates who have bold policy platforms but are not part of the established political system have raising money, staying in a race, reaching all voters, and getting elected, And we have seen firsthand the devastating and stifling influence of corporate and special interest money on our communities and communities across our state.

The New York State small donor public financing program is the key to changing this and we are pleased to see funding for the program in the Governor's budget. Today we ask that our Legislature augment that funding so the program can be as robust as possible — as bold as the many diverse candidates it will uplift.

The small donor public financing program, administered by the Public Campaign Finance Board at the State Board of Elections, is set to launch November 9, 2022, for the 2024 legislative elections. We support the inclusion of \$10.53 million for the administration of the program and \$10 million for future matching funds in Governor Hochul's executive budget. We encourage the Assembly and Senate to increase the appropriation for future matching funds to \$40 million, in line with the projected costs of the first legislative cycle of the program.

It is important that the program receives adequate funding for both administration and future matching funds this year to build confidence in the program for both candidates and voters. The potential benefits of this program cannot be overstated. We fought so hard for this law because...

Public financing is key to fostering a multiracial democracy. Folks from all walks of life can run and win without needing to know or depend on donors who can write big checks. Together with voting reforms, this policy brings more people into the democratic process. We do not have to look beyond the new New York City Council to see how well it can work!

Large corporate and special interest contributors continue to spend huge sums on state elections translating into disproportionate influence over our political process and democracy. The weight and influence of these corporate and special interest donations are at odds with the solutions our communities need.

Funding this program now is an investment in our democracy's future. We commend the budget lines in the executive budget for the Public Campaign Finance Board and urge the legislature to increase the funding for future matching funds to \$40 million.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important reform.