

March 6, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Majority Leader of the New York State Senate  
State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie  
Speaker of the New York State Assembly  
State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie,

As national leaders in the movement to protect and strengthen our democracy, we write to express our concern over reports that lawmakers are considering underfunding or delaying the implementation of New York's voluntary small-dollar matching system. Failing to implement or fully fund the program in the FY 2023-2024 budget threatens to erase years of progress that New York has made toward empowering ordinary citizens and would be a significant blow to the national movement to reduce the impact of big money in our elections.

New York's public financing system is the result of a decades-long effort to build a state government that represents *all* New Yorkers, ensure fair policy outcomes, and empower candidates and elected officials to spend more time on the issues that matter to their constituents and less time on high-dollar fundraising. The program addresses the outsized influence of wealthy donors and shifts the balance of power to everyday New Yorkers. Additionally, it creates more opportunities for historically disadvantaged candidates—including low-income individuals, women, and people of color—to run for public office and win.

New York City's public matching program, which has been in place since 1988, is a case study on the benefits of small dollar matching: it has [resulted](#) in more small donors, greater candidate diversity, and increased government accountability. Public financing programs have been gaining in popularity nationwide, with long-running statewide systems in Connecticut and Maine, and new local programs in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Denver among others.

New York's statewide small-dollar matching system will deliver on a crucial commitment made by state leaders to make more voices heard in our democracy and help set an example for the rest of the country, and New Yorkers want their leaders to keep that commitment. A

[newly-released poll](#) by Stand Up America and Data for Progress found that a majority of New York voters support the small-dollar matching program and believe their representatives should fully fund, and participate in, the program. The poll also reveals a shortage of trust in government, which the public financing program directly addresses. Eight out of 10 voters believe that wealthy donors have a greater influence on New York elected officials than do ordinary citizens, and that the influence of money in politics harms our democracy.

As the 2024 election cycle kicks off, it is essential that New York's lawmakers implement and finance the public matching fund this year to give candidates and the public confidence that the new system can be relied upon. We believe that New York's leaders are up to the task and that any disagreements can be resolved without need for delay. We look forward to your swift action on this matter.

Sincerely,

Christina Harvey, Executive Director  
Stand Up America

Clifton Albright, Executive Director  
Black Voters Matter Fund

Ben Jealous, former President  
NAACP

Maya Wiley,  
Former New York City Mayoral Candidate

Svante Myrick, President and CEO  
People For the American Way

Virginia Kase Solomón, CEO  
League of Women Voters of the United States

Tiffany Muller, President  
End Citizens United//Let America Vote Action Fund

Lawrence Norden, Senior Director, Elections and Government  
Brennan Center for Justice

Rahna Epting, Executive Director  
MoveOn

Leah Greenberg, Co-Executive Director  
Indivisible

John Bonifaz, President  
Free Speech For People

Trevor Potter, President  
Campaign Legal Center

Robert Weissman, President  
Public Citizen

Fred Wertheimer, President  
Democracy 21

Joshua Graham Lynn, Co-Founder & CEO  
RepresentUs

Analilia Mejia and DaMareo Cooper, Co-Executive Directors  
Center for Popular Democracy

DeNora Getachew, former commissioner  
New York State Public Campaign Financing Commission

Ann Toback, CEO  
The Workers Circle

Common Cause

Declaration for American Democracy Coalition

New American Leaders

New American Leaders Action Fund

Secure Elections Network

SMART Legislation

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

CC: New York State Legislators