



Good Afternoon Council Members, and thank you Council Member Kallos for holding this important hearing today. My name is Moira McDermott and I am the Executive Director of the newly launched 21 in '21 Initiative, a non-partisan effort with a goal to elect at least 21 women to the NYC Council by 2021. I'm here today to support Intro 1130a.

Across the nation, women are underrepresented in all levels of government, New York is no exception, especially when it comes to the NYC Council.

- The population of women in New York City is 52.3%, yet out of the current 51 Members in the NYC Council, only 13 of them are women or 25%.
- This year, 4 of the 7 Council Members Term Limited are women, leaving the Council vulnerable to a potential of 9 out of 51 or 18%.

Our initiative, not just aims for quantity but to recruit, and prepare women so those candidates and hopeful future Council Members are the most qualified. This is where money often becomes such a significant barrier.

For a first-time candidate to receive “buy-in” they have to prove their viability or “path to victory”- while there is no step 1, then step 2, then step 3, typically fundraising is involved at every point. Contributions come in, giving way for endorsements, which bring in more money, more endorsements, the momentum builds, causing a snow ball effect.

Creating that viability starts with small asks to friends, family, neighbors, co-workers and expanding on those networks. That's where the CFB Matching Funds program helps candidates by leveling the playing field, especially for women and minorities. Ideally, once a candidate maxed out on their public funds, fundraising is no longer necessary and they can focus solely on getting their message out- talking to voters. However, with public funds currently at \$100,100 that leaves a nearly \$82,000 gap.

This is a significant amount when that money can be used for additional mailers, robocalls, paid-canvassers, activities that potentially result in a win or loss. Additionally, it isn't conceivable to expect one to raise up to the spending limit through small individual contributions. This leaves wealthy donors, political institutions, PAC's, and/or special interests, which after decades of the male dominated structure, few women have the same connections to, and even fewer women of color.

To state the obvious, elections are essential to our government, so political campaigns are inevitable, and create a better democracy, however, fundraising is a necessary evil to run a successful campaign and also deters many qualified candidates from running. In fact, according to a 2014 study, 62% of women said they felt fundraising was the biggest barrier to running for office.

Thank you for your time.