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Testimony of Eleanor's Legacy
IN SUPPORT OF INTRO 1130-A, Increasing the Cap on Public Funds Available

Before the Committee on Governmental Operations

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There are eight million people in New York City represented by 51 members of the City Council and three citywide offices. To serve on the New York City Council or in citywide office is a rare privilege enjoyed by a few, but the opportunity to try, the opportunity to run for office, should be available to all of us. For a healthy democracy, the barriers to running for office must be removed so that anyone with grit and good ideas has an equal shot. It is the function of the New York City Campaign Finance Board to level the playing field through public funding. Raising funds is the biggest barrier to entry for women in electoral politics. Increasing the cap on public funds available to candidates would reduce the barriers facing New York women when they decide to get off the sidelines and run for office.

And we need New York women to run and to have an equal shot at winning. There are four million women in New York City. But women currently hold just 13 of the 51 seats on the City Council, and just one of the three citywide offices. This is not good enough, not for women, not for our city, and not for our democracy.

Of all the components of a campaign plan, the premium put on fundraising persists in dissuading women from pursuing public office. It is not simply that women don't like to ask for contributions in comparison to their male opponents. It is that the network of wealth women have to draw upon is smaller than their male opponents. Wage equality does not mean that a woman has less take home pay than her male colleagues, it means that all women take home less pay. Women are small donors. Women candidates are likely to rely on a network of small donors. Empowering small donors empowers women candidates and elevates women candidates to a level playing field with their male opponents.

Therefore, I urge the committee to support passage of INTRO 1130-A and in so doing to increase equality of opportunity for all New Yorkers.