



Make the Road New York Testimony
New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations Public Hearing
Introduction 1130-A
April 27, 2017

Good Afternoon. My name is Daniel Altschuler, and I am the Director of Civic Engagement and Research at Make the Road New York. Thank you to the City Council, Committee Chair Kallos and the Committee on Government Operations for creating this opportunity for testimony on the benefits of Introduction 1130-A for New York City's immigrant communities and working-class communities of color.

Make the Road New York is the largest grassroots immigrant organization in New York City working to build the power of Latino and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. With a membership of over 20,000 low-income individuals and almost 20 years of history in the outer boroughs, we tackle the critical issues facing our community, including workers' rights, tenants' rights, language access, LGBTQ justice, health care access, youth development and immigrant civil rights. Our vibrant community reaches from Jackson Heights, Queens to Bushwick, Brooklyn, to Port Richmond, Staten Island and our community centers draw upwards of 15,000 people annually for adult literacy classes, legal and support services, and thousands more for community education meetings and campaign planning.

As we are all aware, too often immigrant communities and working-class people, especially those of color, are shut out of the political process. The results of the last presidential clear make this all too apparent.

There exists a critical need in our communities for genuine democracy where people's voices can be heard. For too long, big money has dominated our politics at every level of government, drowning out the voices of ordinary people and often breeding disillusionment. In New York City, we have taken significant strides by passing and implementing a small-donor matching system, which has substantially reduced the barriers to running for office and opened up our local democracy in critical ways.

But now we have an opportunity to go further. Even under the current system, there remains a "big-dollar" gap, which for Mayor reaches \$2.5 million. This gap is completely out of reach for City residents like our members, who typically cannot contemplate raising such a sum given the lower socio-economic level of people in their personal and professional networks.

We have members who are interested in assuming positions of public leadership, including elected office. By expanding to a full matching system, Intro 1130-A would reduce the influence of big money in our City's politics and make it easier for our members and people like them across New York to seriously consider running for office and representing their communities. We therefore support this legislation.

Thank you for your leadership and continued dedication to these issues.

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