



**Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Oversight and Investigations  
On Requiring the DOI to Implement Public Outreach and Reporting  
Int. No. 1618 and Int. No. 1633 (Gentile)**

**June 20, 2017**

Greetings Chair Gentile and members of the Committee on Oversight and Investigations. Citizens Union is a good government democratic reform organization that brings New Yorkers together to strengthen our democracy and improve our city. Nonpartisan and independent, we seek to build a political system that is fair and open to all – one that values each voice and engages every voter. We thank you for the opportunity to testify about Int. No. 1618 and Int. No. 1633.

The Committee on Oversight and Investigations works diligently to increase government transparency and accountability and we are happy to see it considering Int. No. 1618 today. Int. No. 1618 would require the Department of Investigation (DOI) to institute a public outreach program designed to educate the public on forms of government corruption, fraud, and waste and how to report them. It would also require the DOI to submit an annual public report that details the complaints received disaggregated by agency, month of complaint, type of misconduct, and the mechanism through which the complaint was submitted. Currently the DOI does undertake public education campaigns on reporting instances of corruption, but this type of outreach is done voluntarily and is not required by law.

Citizens Union Supports Int. No. 1618 as a measure aimed at codifying and systematizing an existing practice that has the potential to curb corruption. The DOI's current public outreach and education campaign (advertisements to inform the public of how to report corruption) is a novel approach to both empowering New Yorkers to address impropriety in government and expanding the DOI's organizational capacity to meet its goals. At the moment, this practice is not mandated by law and is undertaken arbitrarily and without review of its effectiveness. Int. No. 1618, in addition to requiring the DOI to engage in public outreach efforts, would require the DOI to submit reports detailing complaints, which would allow for the monitoring of such outreach efforts so that practices can be adjusted to maximize their impact.

Citizens Union also supports complementary legislation, Int. No. 1633, which would force the City to conduct vendor name checks thirty days prior to the start of a city contract to ascertain

if the business or individuals associated with the business have been the subject of a DOI investigation. This is an important measure to ensure city government performs its due diligence in matters related to contracting.

By implementing this legislation, New Yorkers interacting with government in any form will have a greater chance of knowing the appropriate method of reporting impropriety and corruption and the city will have expanded opportunities to identify such instances. Furthermore, this legislation would enable the DOI to improve its outreach efforts on an ongoing basis because of the reporting requirement, which increases the program's public accountability.

Thank you again for providing Citizens Union the opportunity to testify on the matter of requiring the DOI to undertake public outreach efforts and to report on them.