



New York City Campaign Finance Board
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**Testimony of Amy Loprest and Frederick Schaffer
Executive Director, and Board Chair
New York City Campaign Finance Board**

**New York City Council Committees on Governmental Operations and Finances
May 21, 2021**

Good afternoon Chair Cabrera, Chair Dromm and members of the Committees on Governmental Operations and Finance. My name is Amy Loprest, and I am the Executive Director of the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB). With me today is Board Chair Frederick Schaffer. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the CFB's budget for fiscal year 2022 and to answer any questions you might have.

The CFB's fiscal year 2022 budget request is \$72,422,974. This budget reflects a slight decrease in other than personal services (OTPS) and a slight increase in personal services (PS). Please note that the budget includes approximately \$10.275 million for printing and mailing a citywide voter guide for the 2021 municipal general election. The budget also includes \$40.8 million for public funds payments for the general election.

Like other parts of government, we were forced to rethink how we conduct our work during the COVID pandemic; most of our staff were forced to adapt to remote work to conduct voter outreach for a crucial Presidential election and administer the biggest election in the history of the matching funds program. Despite these challenges, CFB staff continued to admirably perform their jobs at a high level and should be commended.

In addition to the difficulties brought on by the COVID pandemic, 2021 was the first election cycle to fully incorporate changes from the Mayor's 2018 Charter Revision Commission, Local Law 128 of 2019, and the Council's 2019 Charter Revision Commission. Some of the most significant changes include earlier disbursement of public funds, an increase in the matching rate

from 6:1 to 8:1 while also allowing candidates to run under the 6:1 system, an increased public funds cap with larger payments, and the mandate to implement a robust public education campaign for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV).

The 2021 election has been the largest in the history of the matching funds program. At one point, as many as 579 active candidates were registered with CFB, an all-time high. For reference, the previous high was 390 candidates in 2001. With so many candidates running for office this year work has increased substantially across the agency, particularly for our Audit and Candidate Guidance and Policy teams. To date, the CFB has paid out \$75,853,172 to 250 candidates participating in the 2021 elections, another all-time high. To date, 104 candidates running for office in 2021 have received the maximum payment available under the law and 194 first time candidates have received a public matching funds payment this election cycle. There are two additional payment dates left before the June 22 primary election. We have allocated a total of \$96.5 million for public matching funds payments in the current fiscal year.

This year we have also rolled out technology improvements to enhance the candidate experience. As many of you know, we recently launched the CFB Portal to make it simpler for candidates, treasurers, and campaign staff to keep track of campaign tasks and communications with the agency. The Portal will make it easier for campaigns to update their registration information and respond to compliance or audit requests. For future elections, it will allow all candidates and political committees to register online, eliminating any paper forms. This is part of the first phase of a larger project to overhaul our legacy database and update its technical infrastructure.

Further, we have made improvements to our NYC Votes Contribute fundraising platform, including a new feature that allows campaigns to organize and report fundraising events using the system. At a time when in person fundraising was nearly impossible, we aimed to make online fundraising as seamless as possible. Between January 12, 2018 and April 30, 2021, 417 campaigns used NYC Votes Contribute. Over that same period, a total of \$14,553,756 was raised from 123,985 contributions. We will continue to make enhancements to the platform throughout fiscal year 2022.

An increase in the number of candidates running also calls for a more expansive Voter Guide and Debates Program. As you know, the Voter Guide is mailed to every household with a registered voter in New York City. We have invested significant time and resources into re-designing the Voter Guide to engage as many New Yorkers as possible and to prominently feature information on Ranked Choice Voting. Ranked Choice Voting is featured on the cover of the primary election Voter Guide, and it includes tools that prompt voters to consider their rankings. We have also successfully completed work on our video Voter Guide, which includes American Sign Language interpretation, and was filmed, produced, and scheduled entirely remotely for the first time.

Our Debate Program kicked off this month with the first Democratic mayoral debate on Thursday, May 13. The first Republican mayoral debate is scheduled for Wednesday, May 26. With a diverse and expansive field of mayoral candidates, we've added a third debate to the official schedule. Our debate partners have done a phenomenal job balancing the safety of candidates and their production staff while also making sure New Yorkers are presented with a meaningful discussion of the issues at stake in this year's election.

In addition to incorporating RCV into our Voter Guide and Debate Program, the CFB has also conducted a carefully planned voter education campaign to inform voters about Ranked Choice Voting.

To date, staff has conducted well over 100 training sessions with community groups, religious organizations, senior centers, and elected officials, training over 7,000 New Yorkers so far. Early returns suggest that our outreach is effective. According to exit surveys conducted by Common Cause New York and Rank the Vote NYC after special elections in Council Districts 24, 31, 11, and 15, the first to use Ranked Choice Voting, 95% of respondents found the ballot simple, and easy to use, remaining true across gender, and education levels. Further, over 75% of respondents were very or somewhat familiar with Ranked Choice Voting prior to casting a ballot and an additional 61% of respondents also ranked more than one candidate.

As mentioned earlier, Ranked Choice Voting will be featured prominently in our primary election Voter Guide. Much of the \$2 million we're spending on Ranked Choice Voting will be dedicated to our advertising campaign, which recently went into full effect. Our ad campaign prominently displays Ranked Choice Voting in public spaces like bus shelters, television and streaming services, radio, social media, and community and ethnic print media. Before early voting begins, we will also kick off our volunteer-led text banks which will directly inform New Yorkers about Ranked Choice Voting. To complement this work, we have recently unveiled branding and website updates to our [voting.nyc](https://www.voting.nyc.gov) website. The new design elements and digital tools are grounded in the needs, questions, and issues that matter to NYC voters, which were identified and validated in research in early 2021.

We are thrilled that the Mayor's office has dedicated an additional \$15 million in Ranked Choice Voting education funding. It will take help from all levels of government to ensure New Yorkers know how to cast a Ranked Choice ballot, and we look forward to continuing our partnerships with DemocracyNYC, the Civic Engagement Commission, and the Board of Elections in the City of New York to get this important work done.

The 2021 elections represent the first instance in our experience where the primary and general elections are split across two fiscal years. As we move ahead into fiscal year 2022, our work administering the public matching funds program, overseeing the Debate Program will continue through the general election, and producing a general election Voter Guide which will include matter on at least two constitutional amendments.

Our budget contains a slight increase in Personal Services and an increase in the cost of the Voter Guide. Overall, FY2022's budget request is over \$34 million lower than FY2021, primarily due to the anticipated decrease in anticipated public funds disbursements.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

**New York City Campaign Finance Board Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 2022**

	FISCAL 2021 CFB BUDGET	FISCAL 2022 CFB BUDGET	CHANGES FROM 2021 ADOPTED
PERSONAL SERVICES (PS)	\$12,322,521	\$12,509,085	\$186,564
OTHER THAN PERSONAL SERVICES (OTPS)			
OTPS	\$9,211,810	\$8,838,889	-\$372,921
VOTER GUIDE	\$7,647,050	\$10,275,000	\$2,627,950
NYC CAMPAIGN FINANCE FUND	\$78,000,000	\$40,800,000	-\$37,200,000
SUB TOTAL OTPS	\$94,858,860	\$59,913,889	-\$34,944,971
TOTAL	\$107,181,381	\$72,422,974	-\$34,758,407

HEADCOUNT	FY2021		FY2022		CHANGE	
	Full Time	Seasonal	Full Time	Seasonal	Full Time	Seasonal
	121	9	130	0	9	-9