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Public Campaign Financing Board

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American democracy is suffering a crisis of confidence. In too many states, the very mechanics of elections has become a partisan and polarizing issue, with deeply damaging results. This year New York has the chance to model a path forward, with a bipartisan commitment to strengthening democracy and providing the best possible systems for our citizens to be heard.

As appointees to the new Public Campaign Finance Board, that commitment is our pledge. In 2020, the state enacted [a new small donor public financing program](#), to amplify the voices of more New Yorkers in the political process. We were appointed to oversee this program by opposing party leaders in the legislature. By choosing us, they knew they were choosing problem solvers bent on working together. Whether longtime supporters of the policy or thoughtful critics, now that public financing is the law, our duty is to prepare the program for a successful launch in November 2022.

We know our fellow officials and staff at the Board of Elections are ready to work together toward that launch, even with hardly a chance to catch their breath after the challenge of holding elections in a pandemic. We are grateful that Gov. Cuomo's proposed budget includes the necessary start-up funds for the public financing program and urge our elected leaders to maintain that commitment through the final budget.

This voluntary program will enable candidates for legislative or statewide office to try to qualify for public matching funds for small donations (less than \$250). Contributions by New York residents to statewide candidates will be matched \$6-to-\$1. Legislative candidates can be matched for donations from their district residents, the smaller the donation, the higher the match.

Getting this program off the ground requires an extensive administrative coordination, from hiring staff to procuring office space to working with vendors who can help build and test the relevant technology. As these resources get into place, staff will also be writing the rules and regulations that will govern the program.

Of utmost priority for us as commissioners is creating transparent public financing that's worthy of the public's trust. This means having clear guidelines that explain when a candidate is allowed to receive matching funds, and what happens when anyone violates the rules. And it's also essential that the system is user-friendly so that candidates find it straightforward to take part, with the rules and regulations enforced equitably among all who participate. Doing both means the public is assured that their dollars are secure and new candidates inspired to run and veteran public servants alike can be confident they are

treated fairly. We will reach out to experts who have successfully done this before, learning from them as the Public Campaign Finance Board moves forward in New York.

There is no time to waste: New York is required to launch small donor public financing by November 2022, so that candidates running in 2024 are able to fundraise under the new program. Connecticut's simpler public financing program took two years to build. But if the program receives the necessary start-up funding this year, we are determined to work together and with our colleagues to make this program a success – and make New York an example for other states looking to bolster their democracies.

Ekow N. Yankah and Brian M. Kolb are members of New York state's new Public Campaign Finance Board.