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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

**Testimony of Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Regarding New York City Campaign Finance Board's Proposed Rules for  
Local Law 116, Text Message Contributions  
November 24, 2014**

My name is Gale Brewer, and I am the Manhattan Borough President. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB) on rules to implement Local Law 116, in relation to text message campaign contributions. As you may know, I was the Prime Sponsor of this law when it was passed in the City Council, so I am very pleased to be here. First and foremost, I want to thank the CFB, as they have been incredibly supportive as we developed this legislation. I also want to thank David Seitzer from the New York City Council, who drafted this legislation and was my former Counsel when I chaired the Governmental Operations Committee. The reason why I initiated this bill is simple: I share the CFB's belief that small dollar donations are beneficial to the political process, as they reduce the impact of big money influencing elections. In the post-*Citizens United* era, anything we can do to level the playing field for the average citizen is a good thing.

The purpose of this law is not to bring more money into politics, but rather to make it easier for people who might not otherwise be involved in the political process to connect with their elected officials. Merging technology with good governance makes sense, and I hope it will attract more small donors to the political process. I understand that in order to make text message donations matchable, the CFB must apply an additional level of scrutiny. This is made even more difficult by the nature of text donations, which are paid through a donor's cell phone bill. Because a donation may be made on the first of the month, it may be nearly 30 days before

a donor actually pays a bill. I hope that during this rulemaking process, vendors and experts can suggest ways to speed up this process, as a 30-day lag period would make record keeping very difficult for candidates, especially those with limited resources. As I read the proposed rule, it would not be proper for a candidate and her staff to claim matching funds for such a text donation until they have received notice that a donor's cell phone bill was in fact paid. Furthermore, the CFB should make sure that there is a clear distinction drawn between donations made using an app and those made via text. My understanding is that an app-based donation, which would likely be done by connecting to a donor's credit card, would not be covered under these text-messaging rules. Again, the purpose of this legislation is to benefit donors and candidates engaging in grassroots work, so we must take care to make the process for compliance as streamlined and straightforward as possible. I am confident that the excellent staff at the CFB will perform the due diligence necessary to get it right.

Thank you again for implementing the policy that increases the number of small donors in the political process, and I look forward to seeing the final results of your efforts.