



**TESTIMONY
of the
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
before the
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS,
STATE & FEDERAL LEGISLATION
New York, N.Y.
December 16, 2025**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the New York Public Interest Research Group Fund (NYPIRG). NYPIRG is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, research and advocacy organization. Consumer protection, environmental preservation, health care, higher education, and governmental reform are the principal areas of concern of NYPIRG. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on issues relating to legislative and executive compensation for New York City government.

In order to cut to the chase, NYPIRG urges you to reject Int. No. 1493. The proposal allows you to short circuit a time-tested way in which compensation levels have been set. Simply put, don't do it.

As a multi-issue organization, we are well aware of the importance to the government of attracting and retaining high-caliber individuals. We know that providing reasonable compensation for public service is an important factor in making government work. We also are deeply sympathetic to anyone who has not had a raise in a decade. We have been proud to work with city elected officials to advance policies that are important to the public interest. However, as an organization that includes governmental reform as one of its priorities, we are also deeply concerned by the public's growing cynicism over the state of its own democracy. A cynicism that can be fueled if they view elected officials gaming the system for their personal enrichment. In a similar vein, NYPIRG vigorously opposed then-Mayor Bloomberg's push to exempt himself from voter-approved term limits and allow him to have a third term.

It is in an increasingly toxic political environment that you must consider the issue of setting reasonable compensation levels for members of the executive and legislative branches. Combating that public cynicism and growing voter anger is as important a goal as identifying appropriate, defensible compensation levels.

New York City has a law on the books that helps combat that cynicism and relies on a more or less "independent" examination into appropriate compensation levels for public officials.

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As you know, under City law the mayor *must* create a Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials. The law states that the pay commission must include three private citizens recognized for their experience in management and compensation. The commission is required to hold public hearings, consult experts, and publish detailed reports. The finalized report does not mandate that the Council follows its recommendations, but it offers a powerful public rationale for the proposed compensation.¹ Any changes to salary levels are enacted through a local law amending the City Charter. The mayor can veto it, just like any law.

Intro. 1493 ignores that time-tested mechanism. Instead, it raises the compensation for elected officials without a meaningful public analysis, as would be required under current law. It simply adjusts for inflation.

The rationale for this action? The Mayor simply refused to follow City law.² In this case, two wrongs simply do not make a right. It is true that the Mayor ignored the law. And this isn't the first time that a Mayor has done so.³

Action is needed. The current law has no enforcement mechanism and Mayors have shamefully ignored their legal requirements. Fixing that should be the focus of Council legislation, not an attempt by the Council to undermine the law.

Fix the current law, perhaps add another office to the Commission, or give the Council itself the authority to initiate a compensation commission. Keep the schedule to a four-year cycle in order to smooth out inflation changes as well as other metrics used to set adequate compensation.

Hold a hearing on that plan. Establish a compensation commission. Act on its findings. Just don't do it the way Intro. 1493 proposes to do so.

NYPIRG does not have a position on whether your current compensation should be raised, lowered, or stay the same. That decision should be left up to an independent panel based on defensible criteria. You should act but act to fix a broken law; do not attempt to circumvent it.

Thank you.

¹ New York City Administrative Code, Title 3, Chapter 6: Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials, section 3-601 Quadrennial advisory commission for the review of compensation levels of elected officials.

² Sidewalk Chorus, "Neglecting NYC elected officials' pay: a threat to democracy," January 27, 2024, <https://www.sidewalkchorus.com/p/neglecting-elected-officials-pay>.

³ Ibid.



CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Testimony before the City Council Committee on Governmental Operations,
State & Federal Legislation**

250 Broadway – December 16, 2025

Introduction 1493-2025 (Williams)

**Compensation of the mayor, public advocate, members of the city council,
borough presidents, comptroller and district attorneys**

Dear Members of the City Council Committee on Governmental Operations,

My name is Grace Rauh, and I am the Executive Director of Citizens Union. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

For over a century, Citizens Union has worked to ensure honest and accountable government, fair and open elections, and a civically engaged public. We have been involved in many previous cycles of elected officials' salary reviews over our long history, and this experience informs our testimony today.

Elected officials should be well paid. High compensation attracts strong candidates for office, allows people who are not wealthy to consider public service, helps keep out incentives for corruption, and symbolizes the importance of serving the people. Citizens Union has historically supported better pay for elected officials.

There are also valid arguments for raising current salaries. Council Members and other officials have gone almost a decade without a pay adjustment, and the cost of living in New York City has increased significantly.

Importantly, it is entirely possible for elected officials in New York City to get a raise through an honest and transparent process. Unfortunately, the proposed legislation before you today does not do that.

It represents a stark break from over fifty years of tradition in our city of using independent compensation commissions to drive the salary-setting process, accepted by city council that preceded you since the 1960s.

It offers no supporting analysis for the proposed 16% pay increase. Even if that figure is reasonable, or possibly even low, establishing a precedent where lawmakers set their own pay

without analysis or public review invites future abuses, suggests self-dealing, and undermines trust in government.

It is being moved forward in a rushed, eleventh-hour effort, attempting an end-run around the legal ban on approving salary bumps during a lame duck period by holding a hearing today and expediting the legislative process early next term, in clear contradiction of the intention of the City Charter time restriction and opening the door to potential legal challenges.

And lastly, it seeks a retroactive raise, no matter when the bill is passed, which might be a first for this Council.

Council members should not move this bill forward. Instead, you should pursue your long-awaited salary bump through an honest, transparent, and credible process.

Why should council members go through the normal compensation commission process?

Every increase in elected officials' salaries over the past fifty years has been enacted after a commission of experts reviewed compensation levels and offered recommendations.

Compensation commissions provide an independent, transparent, and data-driven process for setting salaries. They engage in an open evaluation of key questions, like: How high should the raise be? Should it apply equally to all offices? When should it take effect? And should reforms accompany the raise?

And they serve both the public and elected officials.

Compensation commissions serve the public interest by preventing self-serving decisions. Without a commission, lawmakers could set their own pay with little accountability or analysis made to determine an appropriate pay increase. Compensation commissions also serve lawmakers' interests. Even justified salary raises can be politically unpopular. Independent commissions are designed to take politics out of the decision and help officials achieve a pay increase through a credible and more independent process.

That is why compensation commissions have been used every time the City Council has approved a raise in the past half century.

New York State also uses a compensation commission for recommending salaries for legislators, judges, and executive officials. In addition, [twenty-one states use](#) compensation commissions for legislative salaries.

What should council members do to get a raise if the mayor does not convene a commission?

Under [a 1986 law](#), every four years the mayor must create a Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials (a pay review commission was used even before it was codified in law). Commissions were set up in 1979, 1987 (Koch), 1991 (Dinkins), 1995, 1999 (Giuliani), 2006 (Bloomberg), and 2015 (de Blasio).

Unfortunately, several mayors have ignored the mandate to establish a commission, including Mayor Bloomberg in 2003 and 2011, Mayor de Blasio in 2020, and Mayor Adams in 2024.

Since no commission has been convened since 2015, salaries have remained unchanged for nearly a decade. Before that, salaries remained unchanged between 2006 and 2016 because commissions were not convened in those years.

Although current law offers no enforcement mechanism if the mayor refuses to establish a commission, the City Council has the legislative power to make the appropriate changes that would lead to the establishment of a commission. These options have been at the Council's disposal for the last several years.

We recommend the Council take one of the following steps:

1. Call on Mayor-elect Mamdani to appoint a commission in January

The new mayoralty presents an opportunity to ensure the law is being abided by. The City Council could call on the incoming mayor to appoint a compensation commission in the beginning of 2026. The [current bill already](#) requires him to convene a one-time commission before December 31, 2026, though it is unclear why a commission would be needed right after elected officials receive a raise, if the Council moves forward with its ill-advised effort to raise pay for itself without a commission.

Instead, the Council can amend this bill to compel Mayor-elect Mamdani to convene a one-time compensation commission by January 31, 2026, and drop the immediate pay bump before such commission is established.

2. Authorize another elected official to appoint the Quadrennial Advisory Commission if the mayor fails to do so

The Council can amend [Administrative Code 3-601\(a\)](#) to allow another citywide elected official - like the City Comptroller - to appoint the compensation commission if the mayor fails to do so by January 15 of the required year. If the Council passes this bill in early January 2026, a commission could be established soon after.

3. Create a one-time compensation commission for 2026

The Council can pass a law establishing an ad hoc commission to operate in 2026. In fact, the Council is already advancing legislation to do that, as the current pay raise bill instructs Mayor-elect Mamdani to convene a one-time compensation commission in 2026, *after* council members give themselves a pay raise. The bill could be amended to mandate the creation of a Council-appointed compensation commission – rather than a mayor-appointed - that begins without delay, and abandon the effort to achieve an immediate and retroactive raise.

This would not be unusual. Council-created compensation commissions are anticipated by the City Charter ([Section 26\(c\)](#) says, *"If prior to the enactment of a local law increasing the compensation of council members, the council establishes a commission to study and make recommendations for changes in the compensation levels of council members..."*), and one-time legislative approvals have been done before - in 2006, [the City Council gave the mayor the permission](#) to skip the 2007 Quadrennial Advisory Commission appointment.

4. Sue the mayor to compel him to establish the commission

The Council, or another official, can seek a court order requiring the mayor to comply with the law mandating the appointment of a compensation commission. The City Council has sued mayoral administrations for refusing to carry out local laws, [most recently in 2024](#). It could have taken this step at any point in the last five years.

In summary, there is no need for the Council to rush through this flawed legislation when it can use similar legislative means to achieve the same result without breaking a half-century of precedent that has served New York City well.

Council members can indeed get fair compensation that benefits New York City government while keeping the integrity of the salary-setting process. We look forward to working with Council Members to promote that shared goal.



**BROOKLYN COMMUNITY
BOARD 14**
FLATBUSH-MIDWOOD COMMUNITY DISTRICT
810 East 16th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11230

December 16, 2025

Dear Chair Restler, and Members of the Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation,

My name is Shawn Alyse Campbell. I am the District Manager of Brooklyn Community Board 14. I am submitting this testimony in relation to Intro 1493. It reflects the testimony I presented in person at the public hearing held on December 16, 2025.

I acknowledge the justifications noted in the memorandum in support of this legislation. I note that the council's proposed 16% pay increase would be the first in ten years and is therefore described as "updated compensation" meant to address an increase in responsibilities, additional workload and a higher public expectation of the roles of the council and adjacent bodies of city government needed to serve effectively.

I also value the effort in Intro 1493 to align the salaries to other public bodies and to promote a mechanism to ensure compensation safeguards to make certain that the mayor meet the requirement to convene a compensation advisory committee to ensure salary transparency and predictability going forward.

As evidence of my agreement, I reference my testimony before the Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation at your March 21, 2025, and June 16, 2025, hearings advocating for a baseline budget increase for Community Boards citywide. We proposed an 18% increase to make up for a 20-year lag in funding increases. We offered the same reasoning using nearly identical language and suggested similar procedural mechanisms to secure reasonable, predictable funding increases going forward.

I wish the best outcome for the council and hope that your stated principles will be applied citywide as service to our communities deserves appropriate architecture and ample resources.

Thank you.



Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation

Re: Fix the Compensation Commission Process and Use It Before Increasing Council Salaries

December 16, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the compensation of New York City elected officials, and on [Intro 1493](#). We are generally supportive of salary increases for elected and appointed government officials because they ensure that the important job of serving in government is appealing to a broad spectrum of qualified candidates. However, as the City Council considers this issue and legislation, we ask the City Council to do two things:

- 1. Create a better compensation commission process, with representation from all NYC elected officials – and use it.** It is clear that the current process is not working as intended. The Quadrennial Commission established under Section 3-601 of the Administrative Code requires the Mayor to appoint all three members and provide funding for its operation in the city budget. The Council should create a new, independent commission via a City Charter amendment that includes representation from all three citywide officials and the Council. This would ensure that if the Mayor chooses not to appoint any members, it could still function. The appointments could be made as follows:
 - 2 appointments from the Mayor
 - 1 from the Public Advocate
 - 1 from the Comptroller
 - 1 from the Speaker of the City Council
- 2. Do not use today's hearing to allow legislation to move forward in 2026 without a hearing as a "[pre-considered resolution](#)."** Having today's hearing suffice for this important Charter requirement deprives incoming City Council members who have not yet taken office from hearing the perspectives of the public and asking questions about the merits of any increases or proposals to reform the compensation commission structure. Section 27 of [Chapter 2 of the City Charter](#) wisely ensures that local laws increasing or decreasing salaries of the City Council or Public Advocate cannot be passed by "lame duck" City Councils. It is logical to extend this prohibition to today's sitting Council not being the one that "pre-considers" any salary changes made next year.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please email Rachael Fauss, Senior Policy Advisor, at rachael@reinventalbany.org.