



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 1537-2021, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 1537

Resolution calling on the Governor of the State of New York to sign an executive order allowing candidates to gain access to the ballot through means other than petitioning, in the interest of public health and safety.

By Council Members Cabrera and Kallos

Whereas, In New York State, candidates for public office must collect a certain number of petition signatures to qualify for the ballot, depending on the office they are seeking; and

Whereas, Pursuant to the New York City Charter, the required number of signatures for New York City elected offices are 3,750 for Mayor, Comptroller, and Public Advocate, 2,000 for Borough President, and 450 for City Council; and

Whereas, On March 14, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York, recognizing that in-person signature gathering could exacerbate the spread of COVID-19, Governor Cuomo issued an executive order suspending petitioning for the June 2020 primaries and reducing the required number of signatures by 70 percent; and

Whereas, The Governor's executive order has not been extended to apply to petitioning requirements for the June 2021 primaries, and the Charter-mandated thresholds therefore apply; and

Whereas, Petitioning for the 2021 primaries runs from February 23 to April 1; and

Whereas, New York Senate bill 2733 (S.2733), sponsored by Senator Rachel May, and Assembly bill 3356 (A.3356), sponsored by Assembly member Bichotte Hermelyn, would reduce the required number of signatures for candidates running for office in 2021 by 70 percent, and would adjust the June 2021 primary petitioning period to March 2 through March 25; and

Whereas, S.2733/A.3356 passed their respective chambers on January 26, 2021, but have not yet been

signed into law by the Governor; and

Whereas, According to the New York City Campaign Finance Board, as of late-January, over 400 candidates have registered with the Board to run in the 2021 local elections; and

Whereas, Since the start of the pandemic, New York City has confirmed approximately 500,000 COVID-19 cases and over 21,000 deaths; and

Whereas, The COVID-19 pandemic is still raging in New York, with the State reporting over 10,000 new cases a day and the City reporting over 5,000 new cases a day during late-January 2021; and

Whereas, A more contagious strain of COVID-19, first identified in the United Kingdom, has now been found in several states, including New York; and

Whereas, The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine in New York has been slow, and according to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, much of the population is unlikely to even be eligible to be vaccinated until summer 2021; and

Whereas, State- and City-mandated social distancing measures are still in effect and necessary to reduce the spread of the virus and keep the public safe; and

Whereas, Collecting petition signatures in such a large election cycle will necessitate close contact and exchange of paper and writing utensils between tens of thousands of people in New York City; and

Whereas, This face-to-face contact poses a severe and unnecessary health risk to candidates and New Yorkers who sign petitions, many of whom may be older or immunocompromised, during an ongoing global pandemic; and

Whereas, There are other means to demonstrate seriousness and meaningful support for one's candidacy for public office, such as qualifying for the City's public funds matching program, raising another threshold of financial contributions, or paying a fee; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the Governor of the State of New York to sign an executive order allowing candidates to gain access to the ballot through means other than petitioning, in

the interest of public health and safety.

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