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Citizens Union News Release

For Immediate Release

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**Citizens Union Champions
New Lobbying Reforms Before City Council
Legislation and Resolution Sponsored by Mayor and Speaker
Increase Transparency and Tighten Oversight
to Further Ensure a Healthy Democracy**

*Legislation Results from 2011 City Lobbying Commission Report
Includes Many Citizens Union Recommendations*

Citizens Union today [testified](#) before the City Council Governmental Operations Committee, supporting landmark legislation sponsored by Speaker Christine Quinn and Mayor Michael Bloomberg that will allow New Yorkers to better know who seeks to influence important governmental decision-making.

"Today's legislation is the culmination of 8 years of work to improve the City's Lobbying Laws," said Dick Dadey, Executive Director of Citizens Union. "In 2006 when Citizens Union partnered with the Speaker and Mayor to tackle lobbying reform, most activity was hidden in the shadows, unknown to New Yorkers. The reforms adopted then, and the subsequent reforms being considered today will shed new light on who seeks to influence the choices our elected officials make. We see lobbying as helpful to the functioning of a healthy democracy, because it can provide needed information to public officials on a range of complicated subjects, so long as that activity is reported, transparent and conducted fairly and without undue influence. We commend Speaker Quinn who began her term as Speaker championing lobbying reform and ends it doing the same by strengthening current laws."

The legislation and resolution heard by the Governmental Operations Committee largely reflects the recommendations of the [City Lobbying Commission](#) created in 2011. Citizens Union [testified at every public hearing](#) of the Commission in 2011 and 2012, [issuing 14 recommendations, seven of which were adopted](#) in the Commission's [final report](#) issued in March 2013. The convening of the Commission in 2011 was itself a product of landmark lobbying laws passed in 2006, which Citizens Union helped bring about by releasing a report showing little enforcement or transparency of lobbying laws. The 2006 laws resulted in real disclosure of city lobbying activity for the first time and changes to campaign

finance law preventing lobbyists from having their contributions matched with public funds.

“The expansion of the definition of lobbying in this legislation to include the period before bills are introduced, rules are written, and agendas are finalized by commissions and boards will require the reporting of much more lobbying activity,” said Alex Camarda, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy. “However, the law’s requirement that the City Clerk modernize their [database](#) must be completed in a timely fashion to ensure the lobbying information that is collected is actually made publicly available.”

Among the other provisions in the law for which Citizens Union successfully advocated are a mandatory training program for lobbyists which will result in better compliance with the law as lobbyists are informed of the requirements of reporting. Citizens Union also suggested an amnesty program that will give organizations like small non-profits the opportunity to come out from the shadows and disclose past lobbying activity without penalty. Citizens Union found in its work related to the Commission that some social services organizations that advocated for funding in the budget were unaware that the activity was considered lobbying.

Citizens Union at the hearing today also made suggestions for improving the legislation including codifying recommendations in the Commission’s final report not in the bill like the agreement that the Clerk will hire an outreach and education full-time staffer and that the Clerk’s Office will communicate with the City’s Campaign Finance Board to ensure that lobbyists seeking extensions on reporting are still in the Doing Business Database and therefore prevented from making contributions exceeding \$400. It also recommended that the resolution calling on the state to accept city filings for those who only lobby the city be revised to reflect the additional transparency required by the state, namely donors to the lobbying entity and their business relationships with elected officials.

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[Citizens Union](#) is a nonpartisan good government group dedicated to making democracy work for all New Yorkers. Citizens Union serves as a civic watchdog, combating corruption and fighting for political reform. We work to ensure fair and open elections, honest and efficient government, and a civically-engaged public.

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