



CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Testimony before the City Council Committee on Contracts
250 Broadway – January 27, 2026
Procurement Reforms

Bills:

- [T2026-0163](#) Approval for emergency procurements and submission of contracts for audit (Menin)
- [T2026-0164](#) Maintaining information on subcontractors and penalties for providing false information in contracting (Menin)
- [T2026-0156](#) A public procurement interface (Won)

Good afternoon, Speaker Menin, Chair Restler, and members of the Committee. My name is Ben Weinberg, and I am the Director of Public Policy for Citizens Union, a nonpartisan good government group working to ensure work to ensure honest and accountable government, fair and open elections, and a civically engaged public in New York City and State. I first want to congratulate this committee on its first hearing of the term, and thank Chair Restler for dedicating it to such an important topic.

This hearing comes at a critical moment for New York City government. The outgoing mayoral administration left behind a legacy tarnished by corruption scandals, weakened accountability, and eroded public trust. Restoring integrity to City Hall and to city government must be a top priority for both the new mayor and this City Council, which is why we appreciate Speaker Menin's recognition, [in a recent interview](#), that the Council will look back at what happened over the past years and strengthen oversight mechanisms in response to those failures.

The three bills before the Council today represent an important step forward in that effort. They address two significant weaknesses that were exposed under the last administration: the use of emergency contracts and the overuse of subcontracting.

Emergency contracting authority and subcontracting are necessary tools to preserve the City's ability to act quickly and to deliver programs effectively. But these areas are also riddled with gaps and insufficient enforcement that invite misuse of public funds, conflicts of interest, and, in some cases, outright corruption. These concerns are well documented in past reports by the [City Comptroller](#) and the [Department of Investigation](#), which have repeatedly [warned](#) about the lack of transparency and accountability in these spaces.

We thank Speaker Menin and Council Member Won for introducing these bills and for advancing reforms that would bring greater scrutiny, reporting, and oversight to emergency procurement and subcontracting practices. We look forward to seeing these measures move forward and strengthened where necessary to ensure they meaningfully address the risks that have come to light.

And there is more the Council can do as it reflects on the lessons of the last several years, and examines structural weaknesses that demand serious legislative attention.

One such area is conflicts of interest and cronyism in appointments. These problems have been enabled by insufficient ethical safeguards for incoming officials and by opaque, and in some cases secret, guidance from the Conflicts of Interest Board. New Yorkers deserve clear, transparent, and enforceable ethics rules that apply from day one of the official's service and that are not subject to behind-closed-doors interpretations.

Another area demanding scrutiny is the largely unregulated lobbying landscape in New York City. Insiders are able to evade contribution limits through bundling, trade campaign consulting services for lobbying access, and benefit from lax enforcement by the City Clerk's office. This environment undermines faith in government decision-making and reinforces the perception that access and influence are reserved for those with insider connections.

Many of these weaknesses have legislative solutions that have been proposed by council members, and we look forward to seeing them advanced.

Looking back at the last few years must also include protecting the City's oversight agencies from budget cuts and erosion of capacity. Independent watchdogs cannot fulfill their mission if they are underfunded, understaffed, or politically constrained. Ensuring stable funding and institutional independence for these agencies is essential to preventing future misconduct and restoring accountability. It also means establishing, for the first time, a mechanism to remove a mayor for serious misconduct, so that New Yorkers have crucial tool to hold the nation's most powerful mayor accountable. These two proposals were put forward by the Charter Revision Commission established by this Council. We encourage the Council to prioritize those proposals.

In closing, today's bills represent a meaningful and necessary response to real failures that have damaged public trust. They should be viewed as part of a larger project: learning from what went wrong, strengthening oversight, and rebuilding integrity across city government. We thank the Council for taking these issues seriously and for continuing the work of reform.