



**CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**Testimony before the City Council Committee on Finance**  
**City Hall – June 10, 2026**

**Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027**

Good morning, Council Members.

My name is Ben Weinberg, and I am the Director of Public Policy at Citizens Union, a nonpartisan good-government group working for fair and open elections, honest and accountable government, and a civically engaged public in New York.

I am here to support increasing the funding of two of the city's ethics watchdog agencies, the Department of Investigation and the Conflicts of Interest Board, beyond the levels proposed in the Mayor's Executive Budget for FY 2027.

Investing in oversight agencies is an investment in a more efficient and effective city government. Their work saves city resources by preventing fraud, waste, and abuse.

Yet these agencies have been chronically underfunded. The Adams administration weakened these anti-corruption watchdogs through budget cuts, attrition, and hiring freezes. Rather than reversing course, the Mayor's Executive Budget deepens that damage.

For the Department of Investigation, repeated cuts have already harmed performance—investigations and background checks take substantially longer, according to the Mayor's Management Report. As the DOI Commissioner testified before the Council, the proposed budget and personnel reductions will lead the agency to eliminate lines in critical areas such as legal oversight and investigative squads and will have a tangible impact on its ability to fulfill its anti-corruption mandate. We support the agency's budget request—which is, in fact, much more modest than what it requested at the preliminary hearing—for \$6 million to stabilize the agency's PS and OTPS needs and \$4 million to complete the 9/11 toxins investigation mandated by the Council.

The Conflicts of Interest Board has also suffered from reductions in personnel and resources under the past administration. The small agency provides education to tens of thousands of public employees every year and same-day legal advice to anyone who contacts it, helping prevent violations before they occur and reducing the risk of costly misconduct. Yet it now has almost the same headcount it had when it was founded in 1990. The Executive Budget adds two new paralegal positions, bringing COIB's headcount to 24, but that is still two positions short of the level it had in 2022. In a specialized agency such as this one, each position plays a critical role, and retention is key. COIB requests one additional staff attorney, \$300,000 for pay equity within the agency to maintain personnel, and funding for critical IT improvements. We support these requests. They constitute a small blip in the budget but will do much to improve public integrity across the municipal workforce.

This is the first budget the Council will pass following the Adams administration. At a time when public trust in government has been tested, we urge you to invest in the agencies that safeguard integrity and accountability and demonstrate to New Yorkers that corruption and ethical misconduct will not be tolerated.