

Commissioners

Oakland Public Ethics Commission

June 14, 2023

RE: Support for budget amendment from Council Budget Committee

As members of the Bay Area Political Equality Collaborative, we wish to communicate our continued advocacy and support for the successful implementation of Democracy Dollars in Oakland. While we still would support an adequately funded and staffed pilot program for Democracy Dollars in 2024, we recognize that neither the Mayor's budget nor the City Council's amendments offer sufficient funds to mount a meaningful pilot in that time frame. Nonetheless, we believe that the funds provided in the Mayor's budget (\$525,000), together with the program manager position and discretionary funds added in the Council's budget proposal, will allow the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) to lay a solid foundation for a successful, full launch of Democracy Dollars in 2026.

Therefore, we support the current budget proposals for PEC funding as modified by the Council's budget team. By providing these funds in the face of a historic deficit, we believe the Mayor and the Council have demonstrated a commitment to the long game of improving campaign finance transparency and equitable electoral participation. Specifically, the proposed PEC budget (with the Council President's amendments) will permit:

- Funding (\$525,000) for implementation of the Oakland Fair Elections Act, including the development of the technological infrastructure necessary to distribute, track and process Democracy Dollars
- Staffing that can cover the use of the those funds as well as manage the PEC's duties to train and counsel candidates and monitor the other provisions of the FEA that will become effective in 2024 and
- Additional discretionary funding that you may deploy as you deem best including possibly initiating a process to possibly make some funding available to candidates in 2024.

We had originally hoped for additional resources, but we believe, if the amended budget passes with these provisions, you will have the means to continue the work of implementation here without additional strain to existing staff. For our part, we will continue with our advocacy with the City and with the philanthropic community to ensure that additional and adequate funds are committed in the 25-27 budget cycle and that robust outreach resources will be in place for the 2026 election.

We are grateful for the continued partnership with you and the PEC staff., Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions, thoughts, or feedback.

Sincerely,  
BayPEC

Oakland Rising, Bay Rising, League of Women Voters Oakland, Asian Law Caucus, ACLU of Northern California, California Common Cause