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**Testimony to the New York City Campaign Finance Board**

Robin Frith

Member Political Organizer, SEIU 32BJ

March 10, 2011

Hello, my name is Robin Frith and I am a proud member of SEIU 32BJ. I am a cleaner at 125 Barclay Street, and I have been a member political organizer for two years. I live in the Flatbush neighborhood in Brooklyn.

I support requiring increased disclosure of independent expenditures, and am glad to see that New York is taking steps to make sure New Yorkers can make educated decisions during election season. However, I am concerned about the idea that the Campaign Finance Board may regulate member to member communications in a way that would make it more difficult for me and other members like myself to spread information about politicians and the political process to our coworkers.

I want to speak to you today about my experience as a member political organizer. As a member political organizer I have been able to educate my fellow 32BJ members about the importance of politics in our lives at work and in our communities. I volunteer my time to run monthly meetings to help members get information about politics and about laws that might impact them. We invite politicians and community groups to speak at these meetings, and we have discussions about our union and its participation in politics. These meetings are member driven and member run, and provide a venue for members to discuss the impact of politics on their lives.

Our members are low and middle income workers. Many of them are immigrants. Most of them live in communities with low levels of political participation. Working with our members to increase their knowledge about politics and their ability to participate in an informed way has been a very meaningful experience for me. When I first talk to many of our members, they don't even know who their elected officials are or what elected officials even do. As member political organizers, we help members understand the bigger picture of why working people need to be involved in politics. For us, it is not about getting members to vote for certain politicians. It is about making sure that members are registered, educated on the positions of different candidates and elected officials, and know how they can participate in the political process.

Before I became active in my union, I was interested in politics, but I never knew how to get involved. I was very interested in the issues, but unsure about where to get information about the positions of candidates. Sometimes I did not know who to vote for, and sometimes I would not vote. Now that I am more active in the union, I am able to get information about the political process and about politicians, and I can pass that information along to my coworkers and to other members at union meetings.

Our union is our membership, and we are only strong when we can communicate with each other, educate each other, and come together to act. Member to member conversations and communications are fundamental to the voluntary and democratic culture of our union. As a member, I am here today to express concern that burdensome reporting requirements could limit the flow of information within the union, harm our ability to communicate with other members, and diminish our members' capacity for participation in the city's democratic processes.

