

Memorandum in Opposition

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND THE LAW

Children # 1

March 18, 2019

S. 1510-A, Part R
A. 2010-A, Part R

By: BUDGET

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Senate Committee: Finance

Assembly Committee: Ways and Means

Effective Date: Immediately

THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND THE LAW OPPOSES THIS LEGISLATION

This proposal would require that organizations and individuals who spend \$500 in a calendar year on lobbying must register with the Joint Commission on Public Ethics. This legislation reduces the threshold for registering from the current level of \$5,000 to just one tenth of that amount.

The Committee on Children and the Law opposes this proposal because it will prevent grassroots organizations, small not-for-profit organizations, and many individuals from providing valuable information to their elected representatives to help inform the legislative process. The proposed threshold can easily be met by preparing for and participating in one or two visits to speak with an elected official on a single matter. Large segments of the population who are not able to dedicate staff or resources to complying with the registration requirements, will be silenced from speaking further, unable to participate in follow-up discussions, and be prevented from addressing any other issues that may be of concern to them. As a result, the legislature will be precluded from receiving input from New York's most vulnerable citizens and the organizations serving them.

We appreciate the goal of achieving transparency in the legislative process. However, this proposal is not an adequate vehicle for achieving that goal. The large organizations whose influence this legislation seeks to capture already register as lobbyists. This bill is unlikely to provide any greater window into that kind of influence, but is quite likely to quash the ability of individuals, small groups and not-for-profit corporations to be heard by the legislature. Ironically, the result of this will be to increase the influence of wealthy individuals and groups in the legislature.

Based on the foregoing, the New York State Bar Association's Committee on Children and the Law OPPOSES this proposal.