



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
INDEPENDENT BUDGET OFFICE

110 WILLIAM STREET, 14TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10038
(212) 442-0632 • FAX (212) 442-0350 • EMAIL: iboenews@ibo.nyc.ny.us
<http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us>

Testimony of Jonathan Rosenberg
Director of Budget Review, New York City Independent Budget Office
To the New York City Council Finance Committee
On Tracking the City's Covid-Related Expenses

June 10, 2020

Good morning Chairman Dromm and the members of the Committee on Finance. I am Jonathan Rosenberg, the director of budget review at the New York City Independent Budget Office. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify today regarding Intro. 1952, which would require the creation of an expenditure tracker for all city expenses related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

IBO's role is to provide nonpartisan information on the city's budget to members of the Council, other elected officials, and the public. As we have testified in the past, we generally support efforts to increase government transparency, particularly when it provides the public with information that is presented in a straightforward, easy to understand way. This is of particular importance today in light of the many millions of dollars the city is spending on Covid-19 related expenses.

City expenditures related to the Covid-19 pandemic have already exceeded \$2.0 billion with \$2.8 billion budgeted for such expenditures in the current fiscal year. But these totals only include what the city plans to submit to Federal Emergency Management Agency for reimbursement and not expenditures using the funds flowing to the city from the four coronavirus relief packages passed by Congress earlier this year. In April, IBO estimated that over \$5 billion in aid from these relief packages could eventually flow to the city. Note that this total does not include other funds that are expected to be provided to agencies outside of the city's budget including the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, NYC Health + Hospitals, and the city's public housing authority.

In early April, IBO brought online its own [dashboard](#) to track the city's Covid-19-related expenditures. IBO's dashboard presents Covid-19 expenditure information aggregated in three ways: by date, by agency, and by expenditure type. The aggregated data is also broken down into its component parts with spending by date categorized by agency and spending by agency broken down by expense description. The dashboard envisioned under Intro 1952 would add considerably more detail on individual contracts and provide a searchable database of all contracts and purchases tracked in the dashboard. Because of the special circumstances surrounding the pandemic and the need to quickly procure many critical items, the city waived its normal contracting process. While few would doubt that there was a need to expeditiously acquire necessary life-saving materials it is also of critical importance that the expenditures are done in the light of day. A public database and tracker would provide the transparency necessary particularly when the safeguards provided for by the city's typical contracting process are suspended.

Given IBO's support for increased transparency and data sharing in general, the Covid-19 Expense Tracker required by Intro 1952 is of particular interest to IBO and certainly would be a benefit to the

public. Thank you for giving me this time to speak with you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.