

City Council members who got 'queries' at hearing collected \$26G from teachers union in past 3 years

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Nearly half the members of a City Council committee who got cue-card questions from the teachers union at a heated charter school hearing got campaign cash from the labor group.

Eight of the 17 members of the [Council's Education Committee](#) collected \$25,650 from the UFT's political arm in the last three years, campaign records show.

The totals ranged from \$1,600 to \$4,950 each for Council members [Bill de Blasio \(D-Brooklyn\)](#), [Melinda Katz \(D-Queens\)](#) and [John Liu \(D-Queens\)](#).

Still, Council members insisted the UFT's ham-handed effort to plant questions at the hearing fell on its face.

Not all members got the printed index cards from UFT aides, and most who did said they ignored them or handed them to [Councilman Simcha Felder \(D-Brooklyn\)](#).

"I didn't see any cards on any Council members' desks," said [Chairman Robert Jackson \(D-Manhattan\)](#), who said all committee members attended Monday's hearing.

Katz said she was handed a card asking where charter schools are established in the city, but instead asked why the [Department of Education](#) didn't do more to make all schools in an area better.

"I raised a very good, substantive issue that deserved to be asked," Katz said. "It's our judgment as to whether we think the question is relevant."

Teachers union head [Randi Weingarten](#) has said she regretted the incident.

[Mayor Bloomberg](#) said the planted questions raised "a disclosure issue," but was a distraction from his bid to create charter schools for the thousands of parents who want to send their children to them.

"The UFT has the right, I guess, to give out cards and people have a right to take them and use them," he said.

"They probably should have disclosed that those cards were written for them by a party that has a vested interest."

Several of the lawmakers who have gotten UFT campaign cash said they never got a card with a question.

"In the past, I have asked questions recommended by the UFT - as well as dozens of other organizations participating in hearings," Liu said.

Gothamschools.org posted images of the cards with questions like "Doesn't the Department have a clear legal and moral responsibility to provide every family in the city guaranteed seats for their children in a neighborhood elementary school?"

Several Council members said it is routine for constituents or groups to suggest questions for them to ask during hearings, but they had never seen such an organized effort.

"This is much ado about nothing," said [Councilman Lew Fidler \(D-Brooklyn\)](#), who said he was not given any of the cards.

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