



# Civic Groups Welcome Launch of NYC Open Records Web site

*Important step towards faster, fairer FOIL responses*

**New York City**—Today, major New York City civic groups thanked Maya Wiley, Counsel to Mayor Bill de Blasio, Commissioner Pauline Toole and her team at the NYC Department of Records, and NYC DoITT for launching the beta version of the new OpenRECORDS website. The groups say the Open RECORDS website is an important first step towards making New York City’s FOIL process fairer, more transparent, and more efficient.

Based on the 2014 study *Beyond Magic Markers*, the groups think the new website, when adopted by all agencies and including a full set of features, will save taxpayers as much as \$12 million a year in reduced FOIL costs.

The groups are optimistic the site will continue to evolve and will help reduce the widespread delays and agency non-compliance that Public Advocate Bill de Blasio documented in his 2013 report *Breaking Through Bureaucracy*.

Additionally, the groups believe the new website will help show what data is most frequently FOILed and should be published on the city’s Open Data Portal.

In early 2014, dozens of organizations, led by the NYC Transparency Working Group, wrote in support of the “OpenFOIL” bill, which mandated the creation of a website displaying all Freedom of Information Law requests and responses like the federal FOIA Online portal. That bill was sidelined by City Hall in favor of the just-launched OpenRECORDS portal, which contains few of the transparency features called for in the council bill.

Despite praise for an important first step, the groups note that the launch version of the Open Records portal is far less transparent than the Port Authority's FOI web page, or the federal government's *FOIA Online* portal: both of which publish the names of requesters, the request, and the agency response. The groups say that for the NYC OpenRECORDS portal to be at all useful as a transparency tool, it will have to equal these sites. The groups also note that journalists submit less than 2% of all FOIL requests in NYC and NYS, and that FOIL needs to work for the entire public.

Lastly, the groups say the new website provides an ideal opportunity for NYC to create a uniform FOIL process, for all agencies, including a written guidance like the U.S. Department of Justice provides to federal agencies.

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