FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 7, 2020

Easy-to-Use Website Shows Who Funds Oakland Candidates and Ballot Measures

Local civic hackers empower Oakland residents with timely, accurate, and useful information about the role of money in local elections.

October 7, 2020 — Oakland residents concerned about big money flowing into local elections, particularly big money from outside of Oakland, have an innovative tool -- www.opendisclosure.io -- to help them gauge potential influence over local candidates, including incumbent officials. Volunteers from civic tech group OpenOakland in partnership with the Oakland Public Ethics Commission (PEC) released a new version of their campaign finance website October 5th updated for the November 2020 election. OpenDisclosure is a nonpartisan tool developed to give all Oakland residents equal access to campaign finance data. The website puts information on the funding sources and spending patterns of local campaigns at voters' fingertips in easy to understand graphs and charts they can view on a computer or mobile phone.

OpenDisclosure is updated daily with data imported directly from the city's campaign finance database and includes a notification system that sends subscribers alerts about new campaign reports, summaries of how much money candidates raised locally and from out of state donors, as well as top spenders on local ballot issues.

The 2020 release adds new features to increase transparency, including a search function that makes campaign donation records easy to search and sort and allows users to seek campaign donors by name across multiple campaigns and elections. The site shows funds donated to both political candidates and ballot measure committees and provides clear summaries of money raised and spent as well as financial trends for each election.

"Over half of campaign contributions to Oakland candidates in the last three elections came from donors outside of Oakland and there is substantial research indicating that non-constituent donors have more influence on policymakers than constituent non-donors, so knowing the source of campaign money matters," said Whitney Barazoto, Executive Director of the Oakland Public Ethics Commission and lead author of the Commission's recent report, Race for Power: How Money in Oakland Politics Creates and Perpetuates Disparities Across Income and Race. "The OpenDisclosure app shows these key data points clearly so we can all see what's happening in campaign fundraising and spending."

The OpenDisclosure team hopes Oakland residents will use the information on the site to inform their decisions at the polls and to hold their politicians accountable. "When you know where an elected official got election money, you may have better insight into why they make the decisions they make," said Karen Ivy, a volunteer on the project.

OpenDisclosure is a project of OpenOakland, a non-profit organization and part of the Code for America network.

# # #

OpenDisclosure was created to raise awareness, promote electoral accountability, and increase civic engagement in Oakland.