



## Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2021 CD33 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: **Elizabeth Adams**

Candidate Email Address: **team@elizabethadams.nyc**

Campaign Contact Name: **Astrid Aune**

Campaign Contact Email: **Astrid@elizabethadams.nyc**

Office Sought: **Council District 33**

Candidate Phone Number: **415-747-4584**

Campaign Contact Phone: **530-400-0509**

Name of person filling out this questionnaire:  
**Elizabeth Adams**

Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) If elected, what would be your top priority in your first term?

Something that has been fundamentally clear to me working on local policy issues - both from the outside as an advocate for Planned Parenthood, and from the inside as a Legislative Director for District 33- is that the way politics is done is fundamentally wrong. The NYC City Council is a legislative body with an incredible budget and authority, and yet it lacks the political courage to bring meaningful community input into the legislative process. 2021 will usher in a monumental shift in representation at a time when New Yorkers need bold and active leaders.

In that spirit, the first priority of every incoming Council Member should be recovery for the New Yorkers who have been hit hardest by the pandemic. Recovery is an umbrella term that means putting a halt to short-term, nibbling around the edges political thinking and using the recovery budget to build long-term investments in tenants and workers, small businesses, and imaginative resilient infrastructure planning. Thinking of policy like homelessness, healthcare, and education in isolation limits the ability of that policy to be effective. Criminal Justice Reform is also education and healthcare policy.

2) What personal and/or professional experiences do you believe make you uniquely qualified to run for City Council? Attach resume or CV if desired.

I am an advocate, educator, and lifelong tenant. I'm the daughter of a UFT union household. I grew up in DOE public schools and worked in bars and restaurants. This city raised me to believe that we can always do more for our neighbors, and that value is needed now more than ever. I've dedicated myself to serving our communities and fighting for a more equitable future for our most vulnerable populations. After years working as an advocate at Planned Parenthood, I went to work as a Legislative Director in the City Council because I wanted to understand how to make our government work better for our communities. I saw what was happening across Brooklyn and New York, and I wanted to gain the tools to better meet our city's needs.

Running for City Council is personal to me. I see rent stabilization, the same protection that afforded my family security and affordability growing up, being stripped away from families daily. I see the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic shuttering local businesses. Wealthy corporations have harmed our waterfronts and compromised our environment. The city is behind in providing the support our families need to get through this crisis. As both an advocate and a public servant, I know both how to fight hard for issues I care about and work from within the government to enact legislative and budgetary change.



I have continually centered communities in my approach to organizational change and I am running to build a different local governance system and be a different kind of Council Member, who prioritizes participatory governance over transactional politics.

3) List all of your endorsements, including but not limited to elected officials, unions, political clubs and community-based organizations.

Brooklyn Young Democrats, State Senator Alessandra Biaggi, State Senator Jessica Ramos, 21 in 21, TA President Vivian Legions, Berry St - S 9th St Houses, head of North Brooklyn Open Streets Community Collective.

4) What, if any, groups or industries will you not accept campaign contributions from? If any, please note specifically whose money you will not accept.

Our campaign is not taking any money from real estate developers, police unions, or private utility companies. We have actively and pre-emptively returned donations that come from sources that do not align with our values or vision for the district, and asked fellow candidates to do the same.

5) How do you propose helping NYC recover from the COVID pandemic and resulting economic recession, particularly given the projected shortfall in city revenue?

Building a recovery is going to require a multi-level fight to raise revenue and spend according to our values. During the pandemic, we saw our neighbors step up to form Mutual Aid networks, organize community compost and distribute PPE to schools and essential workers. Our government needs to catch up to that model of community care that New Yorkers have already made a habit.

The first thing is to join the coalition of state legislators to push for revenue-raising taxes on the extremely wealthy. While our governor wants to wait for the federal government, our communities simply cannot afford it. There's precedence for a wealth tax and a pied-a-terre tax. It is not true that there is no money, we just must refuse to leave it on the table.

Additionally, we need to assess whether or not the money we do have is being spent in a way that reflects a path to recovery for our city. This comes down to a serious conversation about what makes New Yorkers truly safe and healthy. We need to divest from policing. I would shift school safety, domestic violence calls, mental health calls, and homeless outreach away from NYPD and significantly reduce the current budget. These issues require community support and civilian programs, not police. It is time to reimagine and reconstruct what real community safety means for everyone.

Another critical example would be the choice - because it is a choice - to source our energy from out of state (and in some cases out of country) sources. The alternative of creating local, clean energy jobs and a publicly owned utility system, broadband system, and land bank would allow for us to make necessary moves on building climate resilience and economic recovery for front-line communities.

I refuse to submit to an austerity mindset. Austerity politics have never pulled any economic system out of a recession, and New Yorkers desperately need a ground-up recovery.

6) What measures would you take to improve educational opportunities for all students in NYC? How do you plan to ensure that all NYC children are able to attend high-quality, integrated schools? Do you support



D15's integration plan as it has been implemented? What changes, if any, would you make to the current D15 integration plan?

Segregation in the school system has resulted in unequal funding and resource allocation across schools, and addressing school seats is core to providing more dollars to schools. I would propose a school equitable budget commission that examines the capital needs of our schools and ensures highest needs are prioritized.

As a Council Member, I would work with PTAs on addressing unequal PTA funding and share programs to bring more revenue to schools. The Mayor has done a poor job of equity planning, and school resources have been a challenge.

Since starting in my role in the Council office, I have been working with parents leaders in CEC 13 and 14 on diversity and integration planning. Each school district is different, and a community process is critical for creating plans that work, but we need every district to take on this work, and commit to the value that equity and inclusion are core to young people's wellbeing. Diversity planning also requires learning and resources, and every school district needs the grant support and equity learning to take on a process with the investment and backing it requires. We cannot continue to set schools up to fail in this critical work -- schools have been underfunded and neglected for a long time, and that right now as we figure out how to reopen schools in a way that is safe and equitable, it is especially important that we are not repeating/continuing the failed policies of the past.

NYC must fully implement the recommendations from the DOE's School Diversity Advisory Group and commit to diversifying staffing, so that students are better represented in their teachers. I was appointed by the Mayor to a Citywide Task Force on Sexual Health Education, for my work on improving wellbeing in school, and believe the DOE should partner with CUNY, community organizations, and social work/health programs to build a pipeline of racially diverse and inclusive teaching staff. I also support ending the current Gifted and Talented programs, which have created divisions in schools' resources and track students from an early age.

We need trauma informed support and guidance counselors in every school, not armed guards. Our current approach relies on punitive responses, instead of healing and restoration. NYC needs greater investment in restorative justice programming and social and emotional learning. Some schools have 30-50% of students living in temporary housing, yet lack counseling and assistance resources needed to support students' wellbeing. Ending the school-to-prison pipeline requires we critically examine our approach to school safety. Measures like dress code violations are also punitive and harmful to Black students and girls of color and should be ended. I support [#SolutionsNotSuspensions](#) and the [#SchoolsGirlsDeserve](#) campaign and believe we should not be suspending students so young, which can have incredibly harmful effects that directly contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline. Addressing inequity in school safety requires building a foundation of anti-racism starting with the youngest grades, so that every child can feel safe in school.

7) How would you have handled the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 academic year? How will you prepare for a second wave of this pandemic? How would you propose to ensure that the needs of highly vulnerable children with special needs, who are homeless, come from poor families, and/or live in households without adults who could aid their learning are not left further behind when remote learning has to be relied on?

Families were failed by our government throughout this process and so the urgent needs of our public schools coming out of this pandemic cannot be understated. Communities have become divided because of a loss of trust and faith in the system and we will have a lot of work to rebuild for the health and wellbeing of our students and addressing the inequity in our public schools that has gone on for too long. We urgently



need Council Members who intimately understand the complexities of our public school system to provide concrete solutions, and to use their positions to bring transparency and hold the administration accountable, to begin to re-establish trust between the city, teachers, and families. I am a proud alumna of the DOE public school system, a former english language learner educator, and a daughter of a UFT representative. I am committed to fighting for the resources each student, teacher, and family needs to thrive, not just survive.

We need equitable education and investment in our public schools. The pandemic has exposed the severity of this need. To keep schools open during the pandemic, we need to follow the guidance of what teachers and parents have been calling for months ago. We need to provide remote capabilities for every student to be able to access effective schooling; allow families to opt-in to in-person blended learning regardless of deadline, ensure testing in schools every week, expand & invest in outdoor learning infrastructure support and afterschool programming, and provide every student with an IEP with the services they need to learn.

We have to acknowledge the needs of different students, especially different age groups and students with IEPs or non english speaking households, and recognize that in-person learning is a vital part of our public school system and must be the goal. Remote learning has been necessary and teachers, students, families, and school administrators have done an incredible job this past year in making this work, but this is not a long term solution and nothing replaces in-person for the education and emotional well being of our children.

Trauma-informed learning and mental health support must be central to plans for the coming year. Young people are facing the effects of isolation and dramatic change, and deserve real support -- yet the administration continues to follow outdated protocols around testing, failing to acknowledge how much curriculum and staffing is upended regularly for students.

I support the Alliance for Quality Education's fight for Foundation Aid to secure full funding for our public schools and would work with colleagues in Albany to retrieve funding. We also need to do more to provide educational opportunities for the jobs of tomorrow and increase investment in vocational education. The Navy Yard has a STEAM program partnership with high schools that I would like to see expanded and which would support job training and equitable resource allocation.

8) Do you support allowing non-citizen New York City residents to vote in City-based elections? Why or why not?

Yes, wholeheartedly. Universal municipal voter enfranchisement is common practice in many European cities, and it is far beyond time for it to be enacted in New York - a city where roughly 40% of residents are foreign-born. Noncitizen New Yorkers pay taxes and are impacted by legislation - documentation should not be a barrier to representation. We are leaving out so many people who comprise our city from the political process, it is wholly undemocratic.

9) Do you support any campaign finance reforms for NYC? If so, please describe.

Publicly-financed elections have been a game-changer in terms of who is able to run for office and who gets a say in our political system. The 8:1 match makes it possible for a small-dollar in-district donor to have a greater say in their elected leaders, helping turn residents into active voters and voters into the leaders candidates listen to. It is still challenging to run as a political outsider and middle-class candidate. I was glad to see the bill pass to allow campaign funds to cover childcare and would like to see campaign funds able to cover more candidate service needs.



10) Now that the State government has passed the Reproductive Health Act, what steps would you have the Council and City Hall take to increase reproductive healthcare access, including maternal healthcare, and to do so equitably?

I am running to bring an intersectional feminist approach to the City Council. I went to work for Planned Parenthood of NYC because I was a longtime patient and I wanted to fight for access to the care that was so critical for me in my own life. I started volunteering in the recovery room because I believed in providing access to compassionate care, regardless of ability to pay. I soon got more involved in advocacy and began working at PPNYC. My time there is what awakened my political activism. I saw the ways that my personal experiences around healthcare access were intimately tied to employment and housing, and that the injustices women face in accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare extend to barriers accessing childcare, public benefits, and employment and that is what I will fight for in the Council.

There is a lot I am committed to doing locally to improve access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Some concrete actions we can take to expand access to care:

1. Increase funding in public hospitals for maternal care and abortion care. Provide full spectrum doulas for every person who wants one -- doulas have been proven to help reduce maternal morbidity and provide critical emotional support for people's health and wellbeing. H+H has also reduced abortion care services and limited scope of practice over the years. We need a more integrated investment in the range of healthcare services for women and pregnant New Yorkers and public hospitals should be where we start.
2. Ensure sexual and reproductive health care services are available at every middle and high school School-based health center (SBHC) and expand SBHCs across NYC public schools. We need to meet young people where they are, and schools are where students spend a majority of their time. Part of expanding reproductive healthcare is also normalizing it, and it is important that young people are supported in establishing their own relationships with healthcare providers, so they can feel empowered in knowing what is best for them and having trusted and informed sources to turn to in their life.
3. Invest in and implement comprehensive sexual health education in every school at every grade -- and mandate lessons be taught on where and how to access confidential reproductive care and minors rights about healthcare.
4. Establish a reproductive healthcare program for youth in foster care, the Children's Center, and for runaway homeless youth, who often lack regular access to no-cost providers and services, and are not consistently informed of their rights.
5. Expand the Council initiative to provide low-to no cost abortion care for New Yorkers. Each person should have the ability to create the family and life that is right for them, regardless of income, immigration status, or insurance.

11) The MTA is facing a significant revenue shortfall and many parts of the city lack access to reliable public transportation. What measures would you implement and/or enforce, to promote safe, efficient, and accessible transportation options for mass transit users, pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers in Brooklyn?

District 33 is the entryway to Brooklyn for many people and accessible transportation is key to making it function. Yet, years of disinvestment in our subway system and a lack of commitment to open public space have made it harder for New Yorkers to safely and efficiently commute each day. COVID-19 exposed just how far behind our city is when it comes to innovative public transportation planning. When our city asked essential workers to continue working and keep our communities safe, elected leaders shut down the subways overnight, reduced buses, and were slow to implement protected bike routes for safe transit, impacting people already hard hit by the pandemic. I've worked closely with community members and city officials to implement Open Streets and protected bike lanes across the District, but we need large-scale planning around our public spaces and we need to start thinking about long-term changes. There are streets in the District that could permanently be blocked off to cars, which would allow for neighbors and local





businesses to safely move outside and make our streets more accessible. Other cities are transitioning these temporary improvements into permanent solutions, making an aggressive transition from social distancing transportation to low-carbon transportation. New York should follow suit.

2019 was the deadliest year for bicyclists in decades -- New Yorkers are looking for more ways to safely move around our city, and we need to upgrade our infrastructure to make it possible. I support a street master plan, as enacted in the Council, but with design improvements that let us build truly dedicated bike and bus lanes that don't become parking lots for cars and trucks. The success of the 14th Street dedicated busway shows us what is possible when we invest in public transit options. I would work with DOT to bring dedicated busways to the 33rd District. I am also a strong proponent of the Make Meeker Move campaign, which would activate vacant space to address our bike path and green space needs, improve pedestrian safety, and create needed opportunities for parkspace or vendors.

We also need to upgrade our subway system. I grew up riding the city's subway, and with 21 subway stations within or on the edge of the district, it is one of the most subway-rich districts in the city outside of Manhattan. The subway is essential to New Yorkers, yet ridership has declined with inconsistent service and station changes. Under Andy Byford, the MTA started a Group Station Manager program, and as a Council Member I would commit to jointly holding periodic public meetings with Group Station Managers in the 33rd District. This would increase public engagement and accountability around subway functionality like signage, working fare machines, construction management, plans for accessibility, cleanliness, and more. I would also expand the city's Fair Fares program and continue to advocate for a permanent full car G train from Brooklyn to Queens. New Yorkers depend on the subway and deserve to have it work for them.

12) How would you ensure fairness in employment, salary, workplace conditions, and promotion? What is your position on strengthening and increasing access to union membership? What do you think about the unionization push by City Council Staff?

I played an active role in organizing the Association of Legislative Employees, and if elected, would quickly recognize the union in my own district office. I come from a union household, and firmly believe that workplace organizing is the most accessible form of democratic organizing available to people.

There are a few things the Council can do not just to expand worker protections, but also to better enforce some of the existing protections that exist. The Department of Consumer and Worker Protection needs improved funding and capacity so they can investigate violations of paid sick leave and unfair scheduling practices. Additionally, we must vehemently protect Just Cause.

13) How would you ensure that underserved communities receive fair and equitable treatment from city government? What policies do you support that would level the playing field for historically marginalized groups?

Equity has to undergird all of our policy planning and implementation. The City's rollout of programs for vaccines, Open Streets and PPE showed a complete lack of equity planning and is one of the major failures of this mayor. Bike lane and public transit infrastructure has to be grounded in fairness, yet repeatedly Black and Brown communities are served last. That is a governance process shift that needs to change.

In terms of policy, NYC also needs to commit to a reparations model, which is long overdue. I support investment programs like baby bonds, that get to the importance of addressing generational wealth gaps and provide opportunity for financial restructuring. I also support UBI, but it cannot come at the expense of a



social safety net. The pandemic showed the failures of our social services system in caring for communities -- the next council and mayor needs to prioritize building a true social safety net that removes current barriers in access to care and benefits through HRA.

14) What policy and practice changes are needed for NYC government to ensure sufficient quality housing that actually is affordable for existing residents in Brooklyn neighborhoods?

As a lifelong renter, New York City's housing challenges are extremely personal to me. Under the guise of increased affordable housing, District 33 has seen significant luxury development, oftentimes not affordable enough for long-standing residents. The current approach to affordable housing is not sufficient. We give tax breaks to developers to build affordable housing that's not actually affordable, when we need to be putting our tax dollars into creating new government housing.

We need to invest in housing programs that we know work. We cannot just keep relying on private development -- we need to look to our public land and public space. We should use city owned-land to require 100% affordable housing at deeply affordable rates. And we should significantly expand community land trusts and social housing, which are scalable models, and require comprehensive planning to assess where our needs are greatest and where the rate of return is highest. There is available city-owned land and the city should examine each site for efficacy.

Our city currently has zoning without planning -- which has led to unaffordable housing, poorly conceived development and displacement of communities. We need comprehensive planning, which would assess citywide needs, borough needs, and neighborhood planning needs and allow us to correct some of the wrongs of the past. We would have a better assessment of things like school, environmental, and infrastructure needs, because we could create a continual process of planning and updating community needs. This is particularly important for the 33rd district, where we need overdue infrastructure planning and also an understanding of fair share for providing low-income and supportive housing. It is time to overhaul the city's affordable housing program to reflect actual affordability, according to the city's needs, rather than affordability on developer's terms.

15) What policies would you pass or enforce to ensure public housing/NYCHA repair, upkeep and security, and access to alternate housing and services when lacking essentials such as heat, gas and hot water? What is your position on "privatization" of public housing/NYCHA, and on City government sale of public housing "open areas" (outdoor seating & recreation plots) and air rights to private developers?

Our city has failed to live up to its responsibility to provide adequate housing conditions for public housing residents. Over the past few months, I've spoken with residents in the District who lost access to gas and water, and had their calls for more regular cleaning and safety precautions go unanswered - all during a global pandemic that demands people stay home. Some developments are still waiting for Hurricane Sandy repairs to be completed, without infrastructure needed to protect against the next impending environmental disaster. District 33 is a waterfront district that requires significant green infrastructure -- and public housing must be central to our plans for sustainability and resilience planning.

Mayor de Blasio has failed to commit to NYCHA, the largest housing provider in New York City. There is still FEMA recovery funding owed to NYCHA, which the Mayor should push for, he's leaving money on the table. The city budget also needs to prioritize investments in NYCHA to a much greater degree. I hear from constituents regularly in buildings that have gone months without gas, or had nonfunctioning boilers. Lead poisoning is still a major issue for families. This is unacceptable. Public housing is a public good and we need to ensure safe housing conditions for everyone.



I talked with NYCHA residents during the RAD conversions in the district and the concerns that residents raised then have come true. I am calling for a halting of any more conversions until there is real tenant involvement & decision making. This Mayor has given crumbs to NYCHA over the last 8 years and tenants deserve better.

I am interested in proposals for new NYCHA funding structures, however, first and foremost we need new leadership. De Blasio put forth a plan in 2015 that has gone mostly unfulfilled. I would use the Council's budgetary power to hold the next mayor accountable on NYCHA investments in quality of life issues needed such as heating and hot water, and mold and lead. New York City can and must invest significant capital funding for NYCHA projects and train and hire tenants from NYCHA developments in the process. Both the City and State are overdue in providing billions needed. I would refuse to vote on a Council budget that does not provide significant investment in public housing.

16) Given the City's Covid and post-Covid economic crisis, how would you approach your role in addressing the city's carceral system, including the plan to close Rikers?

New Yorkers continue to face abuse and violence on Rikers Island daily and we need to do everything we can to close it as soon as possible. During the Close Rikers campaign, I focused on decarceration, including advancing legislation to set up a mental health diversion program pre-arraignment. A major role of mine was advocating for the Council's Points of Agreement, where I helped secure millions of dollars for cure violence programs, housing for formerly incarcerated individuals, and a restorative justice fund. Community investments like these are needed to build a different justice system. We have proven models that work to keep communities safer than jails and prisons and end the cycle of recidivism. But they require investment and commitment from all levels of government, which the Mayor failed to meaningfully commit to.

Fundamentally, a \$9 billion dollar plan to build jails is unjust. Since the passage of state reform and early release measures during COVID-19, it is clear that four borough jails are not needed or justified. We can close Rikers and the Barge without building something new in its place. We must instead redirect those funds to capital projects sorely needed for our communities, including for NYCHA and temporary and permanent housing for New Yorkers, which is integral to addressing underlying conditions that contribute to incarceration.

We also need to cut the NYPD budget by at least \$1 billion this year with continued policy changes to increase divestment in policing going forward. I would shift school safety, domestic violence calls, mental health calls, and placard abuse enforcement away from NYPD. These issues require community support and civilian programs, not police. It is important to note that the call to divest requires that we not cut funding for austerity's sake, but to reimagine and reconstruct what real community safety means for everyone. This call to action requires that we provide the meaningful investment Black and brown communities have long been denied, and I would continue to look to the leadership of Black-led organizations and community justice groups for my understanding of community reinvestment and deeper reduction amounts.

16) Describe your vision for public safety in New York City? What, if any, functions would you like to see removed from the police department? What agencies assume the functions removed from the NYPD?

I believe in decarceration and restorative justice over incarceration and policing, and community safety that is truly safe for every one of us, and which has been denied for Black and Brown New Yorkers for too long. I am committed to advancing legislation that prioritizes restorative justice and provides access to housing, education, and healthcare for people over the cycle of incarceration and will work to challenge the Council to





push beyond reform to breaking down systems that continue to use punitive measures as the default response.

During my time in the Council, I have helped enact legislation that supports community alternatives to policing and decriminalization. I drafted legislation to decriminalize marijuana in ACS cases and protect new parents from discriminatory drug testing -- which has caused harmful policing of communities of color and separated families, and I am currently working to pass NYC's Fair Chance in Housing Act, which I partnered with criminal justice advocates to draft. I focused on housing and ACS, because they are spaces where a carceral approach also needs to be reformed. As a result of significant organizational advocacy, ACS and NYC Health and Hospitals finally agreed to stop drug testing new mothers without their consent. I am proud of this step forward, but it should never have been allowed, and it is clear there is much more work to do.

As a Council Member I would focus on ending our current reliance on policing, including in mental health crises, sex work, and domestic violence; holding officers accountable for disciplinary records; and addressing housing discrimination against formerly incarcerated individuals -- all of which the Council has an important role in changing. During this year's budget cycle, I helped secure the removal of NYPD involvement in homeless service outreach. We need to decouple police involvement from social service response needs -- mental health calls can and should be done by social workers and healthcare providers.

Personally, I have family members who have struggled with addiction and mental health and I know that services and support are always needed over policing and incarceration. It is time to end the drug war, which has disproportionately harmed Black and Brown New Yorkers, and invest in public healthcare and community services, not policing. We need to move beyond just legalizing marijuana to full decriminalization and investment in communities. I would prioritize harm reduction investments and would like to bring an overdose prevention site to the 33rd District, which has a high rate of opioid usage.

17) Do you support changes to the ULURP process and to other NYC zoning mechanisms? If so, what specific changes do you support?

I have worked on land use proposals for the District and have seen the process firsthand. The process should be reversed - community stakeholders should have a hand in defining what local, borough, and city needs are, and developers should respond accordingly. I support a comprehensive planning overhaul, which is long overdue in NYC. Reforming our land use process is critical to addressing housing inequity, and as a district that includes more affluent neighborhoods, discussions must include considerations of housing integration and fair share.

Community involvement is important to land use, but right now projects are reactive to developers proposals. I support a comprehensive planning overhaul, which is long overdue in NYC and allows us to update unaffordable development that is still coming online in district 33. Planning is legislatable, the Council needs to exert more legal power, which I believe it has ceded too much to the Mayor. Comprehensive planning would allow us to go back to old rezonings, look at what's happened, and make changes for the future. We have not built the infrastructure we need for the coming waterfront development and it lacks resiliency planning which is irresponsible and needs to be changed imminently.

We should not approve developer proposals without conducting thorough racial impact studies. The current EIS process also fails to factor in secondary displacement. I have watched rezoning proposals push for greater luxury housing in neighborhoods without addressing infrastructure, public space, and deep affordability needs outstanding from previous rezonings: there is a major lack of accountability in our current CEQR/ULURP process.



18) Do you have a plan to reduce and prevent homelessness in Brooklyn and NYC? Explain your plan.

The housing crisis is urgent: citywide, almost 80,000 New Yorkers are experiencing homelessness, over 70% of whom are families with children. As the Legislative Director for the Council's Chair on General Welfare, I have advanced legislation to improve housing access for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness through greater rental assistance and increased supportive housing and services citywide. The shelter census has continued to increase in the last 10 years along with the cost of rent. We need more ambitious ways to house homeless New Yorkers, by taking a housing first approach -- currently housing is the last step for someone trying to get out of homelessness, when it should be the first. This must include building and converting more dedicated permanent housing, and vouchers that work and are up to fair market rent. The NYC Council should also pledge to bring supportive housing into every district.