



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2021 CD39 Candidate Questionnaire

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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?

As a proud public school parent, my top priority is our public schools. After decades of underinvestment, we need to reinvest in our public schools with a focus on equity and prioritization of schools in communities that have been neglected or ignored, largely communities of color. While equity includes schools with greater needs getting greater funding, it goes well beyond money. It includes universal access to childcare, free before and after school programs, and an equitable distribution of teachers. Data shows that teacher effectiveness is a big factor in student success and that teachers typically become more effective as they gain more experience. In NYC, the percentage of new teachers in the highest needs schools is far greater than in lower needs schools, and this needs to change.

We not only need to invest in the physical plant of our schools, but we must also heavily invest in our children. Remote learning has not worked for a large number of students. This is less about academic achievement than it is the harm done to our children's emotional development and mental health. Furthermore, many students, especially in communities that were hit hardest by COVID-19 will be returning to school having experienced real trauma. It is more important than ever to make sure that every school is staffed with social workers, mental health counselors, guidance counselors, and other childhood development and education professionals.

Finally, one of my major focuses will be ending the school to prison pipeline once and for all.

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 have fifteen years of service to the communities that make up the 39th Council District. I was a Trustee of the Park Slope Civic Council for a full three year term, served on the District Committee for Brad Lander's participatory budgeting initiative for two years, and was the volunteer coordinator for the Shabbat morning kids program at Congregation Beth Elohim. I served on the parent advisory board at Beth Elohim's Early Childhood Center for each of the three years my son was a student and now that my daughter started school there, I currently sit on its school reopening task force. I have been volunteering with the CAMBA men's shelter since 2015 and have worked on pedestrian safety issues with organizations like Transportation



Alternatives and Families For Safe Streets. Since 2018, I have been the Democratic District Leader for the 44th Assembly District.

In my role as a Trustee of the Park Slope Civic Council, I worked with the 14th Street Block Association to oppose the proposal to turn the Pavilion movie theater into luxury condominiums. I saw how landmarking and historic preservation are a vital tool against bad developers and bad development. As a civil rights and criminal defense attorney for the last 15 years, I have seen firsthand the systematic abuses committed by law-enforcement, particularly in the Black community. I understand the root causes, big and small, of the NYPD's unaccountable misconduct and brutality. As someone who owns a small business, and represents several small businesses in Park Slope and Windsor Terrace, such as Slope Cellars and Krupa Grocery, I know the thin line between profit and failure. I have both seen and experienced the ways that the City makes it hard for small businesses to survive, from escalating rents to excessive fines and fees. As a public school parent, COVID-19 has really crystalized for me all the ways that the City does not work for families, especially those with young children, and exposed the harm that remote learning is doing to our children.

I am fortunate that through these experiences I have built a broad base of support in all areas of the district. From the Park Slope Civic Council, to the synagogue, to the work I did fixing dangerous conditions on the Ocean Parkway bike lane, I have a deep network in the Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, and Kensington areas. Since long before I ever thought of running for office, I have had lasting and meaningful relationships with members of the Boro Park Hassidic community. As District Leader, I have been fortunate to work with and learn from a large and vibrant Pakistani community. Through my work with the WFP and my involvement in the fight over the closure of Long Island College Hospital, I have the support of notable community leaders in Carroll Gardens.

With CBID's support, I will have a broad and diverse coalition of reform Democratic organizations, grassroots, issue based organizations, and community leaders standing behind me. This is a winning formula in District 39.

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

Brooklyn Young Democrats and District Leader Julio Pena.

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.

I do not accept money from real estate developers, the fossil fuel industry, the charter school industry, or police unions.

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



COVID-19 has decimated the economy. Jobs are disappearing and remote learning responsibilities have caused hundreds of thousands of parents, overwhelmingly women, to leave the workforce. This crisis has exacerbated racial and gender disparities, with Black and Latino women and families hit the hardest. Our small businesses are devastated.

First and foremost, we must demand that the State legislature pass a tax hike on the 1% of the richest New Yorkers, institute a pied a terre tax, and a tax on unrealized capital gains.

A stable job that provides good benefits, job security, and paid leave, should be available to anyone who wants to join the workforce. Thousands of good jobs are lost through NYC's practice of "contracted-out" private consulting. The City pays a premium for these private contractors because, in addition to paying all executive salaries, these companies have to make a profit for their shareholders. I would go through the City budget with a fine tooth comb, find these outsourced deals and advocate to bring them back under the City umbrella. To the extent that some "contracted-out" private consulting remains, I would support contracting reform that makes it easier for local firms, small businesses, and MWBEs to win City awards.

NYC's "Green New Deal" was a great start to slashing climate pollution in buildings by requiring upgrades to high energy efficiency. This law will create thousands of well-paid, union jobs through 2030. Now it is time to expand the law to apply to medium and smaller buildings, creating even more good jobs and further reducing pollution.

As a plaintiff's side employment lawyer, I have been fighting for the rights of employees for close to two decades. We need to protect and expand employee rights, especially while the pandemic is still raging. To protect workers during a time of crisis, we need to make sure to provide hazard pay to frontline workers; to provide flexible leave policies; and, to enact policies that make it easier for parents to return to work. Vital workplace protections should be extended to workers in the gig economy. This includes benefits like unemployment insurance and sick leave. We need to expand workplace protections for pregnant women and new parents and provide a minimum of 12 weeks maternity or paternity leave.

Small businesses are the driving force of New York City's economy. If they can't stay open, people are out of work. We need to pass a bill to control rent for small businesses. We need to focus regulatory enforcement on the most vital health & safety enforcement, and avoid putting additional financial pressure on businesses through excessive fines. We need to institute initiatives and pass legislation reducing the biggest liabilities of restaurants, bars, and venues, including a moratorium on sales tax and finding ways to reduce water bills (one of the largest liabilities in this industry).

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?

COVID-19 has illuminated even further the inequities in the New York City public school system. Historic neglect of schools in lower-income communities, predominantly communities of color, resulted in schools that were ill equipped to provide a safe learning environment during the COVID-19 crisis. Thus, the students who needed in person education the most and the students most impacted by the digital divide, were among



the least likely to return to schools that they did not believe could keep them safe. These students were abandoned by New York City.

In order for our schools and our children to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic will require an unprecedented increase in school funding, which must be distributed with the goal of rectifying the historic underinvestment in schools in communities of color.

It is more important than ever to put equity at the center of school policy. While equity includes schools with greater needs getting greater funding, equity goes well beyond money. Equity includes universal access to childcare, after school programs, and enrichment programs. It means an equitable distribution of teachers. Yet, in NYC the exact opposite has been true. The highest need schools actually receive less funding per student than the lowest need schools. Likewise, teacher effectiveness is a big factor in student success and not surprisingly, teachers typically become more effective as they gain more experience. Yet, in NYC, the percentage of new teachers in the highest needs schools is far greater than in lower needs schools.

We need a comprehensive review of our school funding and teacher allocation formulas to ensure that we prioritize funding for schools in communities with historically marginalized students. In addition to funding, incentives should be offered to encourage experienced teachers to teach in schools with greater needs.

The same is true for multi-language learners (“MLL”). To be eligible for Title 3 funding a school needs a minimum of 30 “current” MLL. A student who demonstrates proficiency through testing no longer qualifies as a “current” MLL and becomes a “former” MLL. “Former” MLLs still receive services and support, but are not counted toward the 30 student minimum. Therefore, I would advocate eliminating the minimum threshold to get title 3 funding. Furthermore, I believe that every school should have at least 1 full time MLL teacher and the number of MLL teachers in a school should be proportionate to the minutes of MLL instruction required by students in the school.

I strongly believe that it is essential that we restore arts curriculum to every school. As long as the City refuses to restore the music and performing arts to the school curriculum, after school programs are the primary provider of arts education. These programs are also very expensive. As a result, the kids and parents who need after-school programs the most can least afford it. Therefore, I support free after-school programs for all NYC public school students.

Disparity in fundraising and involvement of PTAs creates a two-tiered education system. For example, PTA funds can be used to hire cluster teachers and conduct after school activities. Thus, students in wealthier areas get enrichment programs not available in less affluent areas. One way to address this disparity is to change PTA fundraising rules. One potential approach is to have a centralized pool of funds raised by all PTAs in a given district to be equitably distributed to all schools in the district. A similar approach would be to adopt a “buy one/give one” rule. Under this approach, if a PTA wants to purchase a tent for outdoor learning, for example, it would be required to also purchase the same for a school in the district that has fewer financial resources.

The school to prison pipeline is the single most destructive force in education, especially in New York. It is an issue I have worked on for a decade. New York City must stop treating normal adolescent defiance as a crime.



Rather than police officers, schools should have staff, or access to professionals, with training in adolescent psychology and child development; who have received training in cultural competence and implicit-bias; and/or have training in interpersonal communication, conflict avoidance and de-escalation.

New York City must end screened admissions in middle school and high school and eliminate the SHSAT based admissions process for NYC's specialized high schools. I support the D15 diversity plan. There is currently only one year of data, but that data shows that in the first year there was a 55% decrease in economic segregation and 38% in racial segregation in D15. This model achieved a better result than the slightly less ambitious model used in District 3 and I would continue to support it as is.

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?

My son is a first grader at PS107. His kindergarten year was cut short when COVID-19 hit. In my family, I became the parent responsible for supervising remote learning (and still am). I know from that experience, and from research, that remote learning simply does not work for the vast majority of students, particularly elementary school students, multi-language learners, students with special learning needs, and students in unstable home or living environments.

I was one of the leading voices calling on the Mayor and Department of Education to create a short term plan to partially open schools and a long term plan to provide full-time in person education for the students who need it the most -- elementary school students, students with special learning needs, English language learners, and students in unsafe or unstable living environments.

The first step should have been for NYC to do comprehensive planning to create a school reopening plan that (i) implemented strong safety protocols, with a guaranteed budget for PPE and other virus mitigation tools to keep our teachers, staff, students, and communities safe; (ii) reduction in class size; (iii) finding additional teaching space; (iv) addressing the teacher shortfall; and (v) increased funding. The City failed, and continues to fail, to do any semblance of the required planning and its effects have been felt throughout the school year as rules and metrics have repeatedly changed, robbing parents and students of any sense of consistency.

One of the biggest failures of NYC's school reopening plan, and its response to COVID-19 in general, was the failure to provide information to people in a language they could access. When the Mayor first announced his school reopening plan, I was one of the first elected officials to host a town hall with the Department of Education. The 44th Assembly District has a large number of Bangla, Urdu, and Russian speakers. When the DOE refused to provide live interpretation of the town hall, I organized simultaneous interpretation in each language.

COVID-19 is not going away any time soon. and NYC must start planning *yesterday* to ensure full-time, in person learning for all students come September. The best way to ensure the needs of children with special learning needs, unstable or unsafe living conditions, come from poor families, and/or live in households



without adults who could aid their learning is to have a school reopening plan that prioritizes getting them in school full-time.

We must improve the existing shelter system to be more accommodating for families with school-aged children. Shelters should have libraries, spaces and programs for physical activity, after-school programming that provides safe child supervision allowing parents to work full time, and high speed internet services.

Finally, there has rightfully been a lot of focus on the failure of the City to get remote learning devices to all students who needed them and this must be addressed. However, while a tablet may be sufficient for the work expected of younger students, they lack the same capacity as a computer and are not sufficient for the school work older students are expected to do. Thus, there must be an emphasis on getting students the right technology they need to succeed.

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

There are legitimate arguments on both sides of this issue. There is value in requiring someone to become a citizen and declare allegiance before being given the right to vote. However, there are over 20 million immigrants in this country who are not yet citizens and many have no path to becoming a citizen. It is not justifiable to deny the right to vote to people who want to become citizens, and would, but for the country's ridiculous immigration laws.

To become a naturalized U.S. citizen an immigrant must permanently reside in the U.S. for a minimum 5 years. I think that is a good guidepost for granting non-U.S. citizens the right to vote.

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

New York City's campaign finance laws are a model for reducing the influence of money in politics. The matching funds program not only means that campaigns can be powered by small money donations, but because of the cap on spending, there is a hard stop to fundraising. This allows candidates to focus less on money and more on reaching voters.

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?

With a new, firm anti-choice majority in the Supreme Court, it has never been more important for New York City to commit itself to provided access to safe, legal abortion and quality maternal care.

We need to ensure that every New Yorker has access to reproductive healthcare. This requires the ability to communicate with people in a language they can understand and with cultural competency. It also requires increased funding for NYC Health and Hospitals.



Currently, City employees are entitled to free birth control with their healthcare. I believe free birth control should be required to be provided by all health insurance.

Finally, we need to address the striking perinatal mortality disparities here in New York City where Black women are far more likely than White women to die from pregnancy related causes. One contributing factor is that many medical students, residents, and doctors still believe stereotypes about Black patients, such as having higher levels of pain tolerance, thicker skin, and being more difficult to deal with. We need to make sure that all medical professionals receive implicit bias training. The City has an obligation to ensure that pregnant women have access to pre and postnatal care, access to Doulas, and public hospitals must make affirmative efforts to meet women where they are to ensure the health and safety of women both before and after birth.

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?

New York City cannot function without safe and efficient transportation. Yet, we suffer from dangerous street designs that cause unnecessary crashes with fatal consequences and our indifference to the conditions of our sidewalks too often make it impossible for the disabled, elderly, or strollers to get around our City. Our mass transit is inaccessible to thousands of New Yorkers, and our biking infrastructure is poor.

We need to eliminate the traffic behaviors that put bikers and pedestrians at risk such as midday truck deliveries, double parked trucks, and the constant obstruction of bike lanes. We need to expand the use of red light and speed cameras to slow down traffic, and we need to make our sidewalks & crosswalks safer and more accessible, especially for people with mobility issues.

The Covid-19 pandemic has opened the door for a comprehensive overhaul of our streets and sidewalks. Streets are being used for restaurants, for play spaces, and for education. This is a unique opportunity to fundamentally change our streets. We need a comprehensive plan to expand the amount of open streets that are in one cohesive network instead of randomly strewn throughout the City. We need to turn some open streets into permanent play spaces and make them entirely car and bus free.

Finally, we need to ensure public transportation is 100% accessible for everyone. I will fight to build elevators at subway stops in District 39. I will also work to significantly reform access-a-ride transportation services.

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?

To provide fairness in employment, we must protect workers in the gig economy and provide greater predictability and protection for hourly employees. That is why I support legislation expanding NYC's paid sick day requirement to cover gig workers. I support legislation that would prohibit on-call scheduling and



require advance notice of work schedules.

We must address the factors that drive the gender pay gap. Men and women are funneled into different jobs based upon antiquated gender norms. Women work in fields such as home health aides and child care that pay less and offer fewer benefits compared to the fields largely dominated by men. Women are driven out of the workplace or forced to work less than full-time hours because of societal expectations regarding childcare responsibilities. Finally, there is straight up discrimination.

All workers, and the economy, will benefit when the antiquated view of childcare as a women's issue is relegated to the dustbin of history. We need policies that create more and more affordable early childcare, and before and after school programs. We need to support initiatives that increase educational attainment by women in the subjects that will prepare people for the jobs of tomorrow.

Unionization will go a long way toward addressing many of these issues because workers collectively have far greater power to insist on better working conditions, wages, and benefits. I pledge to stand in solidarity with workers in NY attempting to unionize. That means joining strikes, organizing protests, writing op-eds, drafting worker protection legislation, passing regulatory protections and holding employer oversight hearings.

Given my strong belief in the power of union, I would voluntarily recognize the union for City Council staffers.

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?

Our recovery from COVID-19 should be centered on historically marginalized communities. This means providing the resources necessary for M/WBEs to survive the pandemic and investing in a green economy in low income and communities of color. This has led to higher rates of asthma in low income and Black and Brown communities, and aided the disproportionate number of deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic compared to wealthier White communities. To tackle climate change and climate resiliency we need to invest in renewable energy, housing infrastructure, and public waste management while prioritizing investment in low income communities and communities of color.

If New York City is to truly be a sanctuary city we need to enact policies that protect immigrants and cripple the ability of ICE to operate in this City; That means keeping ICE out of all public buildings, including courthouses; forbidding agencies from inquiring into a person's immigration status or sharing this information with immigration officials; and, supporting organizations that shelter, feed and protect immigrants. We must expand the right to counsel in immigration and housing court.

We need to make sure our infrastructure, transportation, and government building are accessible to everyone, regardless of physical abilities. This means more than just elevators in the subway and improved access-a-ride. It also means paying attention to the importance of our sidewalks. For example, whenever it snows, the plows clear the streets by burying the crosswalks, many of which remain buried. This impedes the



ability for thousands of people who are in wheelchairs, pushing strollers, or mobility issues, to get around out City. As a City we must put an equal emphasis on pedestrians as we do drivers.

I am a big believer that the government must meet people where they are. This means taking affirmative steps to reach people and make sure they can take advantage of government resources. Providing resources without maximizing the ability of people to utilize them is a waste.

The 39th Council District is very linguistically diverse. Outside of English, Spanish, and Chinese, there are thousands of constituents who speak Bangla, Yiddish, Russian, and Urdu. Yet, New York City did almost no outreach about COVID in those languages. These communities were then hit hard by the virus. As Democratic District Leader in the 44th Assembly District, I was one of the first elected officials to host a community forum with the Department of Education about the Mayor's original school reopening plan. When the DOE refused to provide interpreters for the event, I organized community members to provide simultaneous translation in Bangla, Urdu and Russian. I have also been fighting the Board of Elections to provide increased language access at the polls.

The next City Council and Mayor must formulate a blueprint for ensuring people with limited English language proficiency are given essential information in their native language, especially during times of crisis. That means bringing together trusted stakeholders from different sectors, including elected officials, religious leaders, non-profits, and non-English media, to ensure that essential information is being delivered to people with limited English proficiency.

Almost all meetings, whether town halls, community board meetings, or political or civic group meetings, occur in the evening. This excludes many people, such as people who work an overnight shift, parents without childcare, and people who cannot get around at night, from civic participation and receipt of vital information. In the months before the Presidential election, I hosted a weekly, midday phone bank, specifically to create an opportunity to volunteer for people who can't do so in the evening. As a Council Member, I will hold meetings on various days, at various times of day, to ensure that all people have the opportunity for civic engagement.

Finally, a City Council Member must be responsive to every community in the district and be able to provide assistance and constituent services to all. In a district as large as the 39th CD, having one office and expecting people to come to you, is a disservice to the community. I will open a second office in the Kensington/Boro Park part of the district, staffed with multilingual and culturally competent staff to assist constituents.

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?

District 39 is a microcosm of New York City. We're not building enough quality affordable housing, but when it does get built, it's on the terms of real estate developers. We're squeezing as little affordable housing as possible into buildings whose primary purpose is to make landlords rich. And when housing is built, we're overlooking the needs of the local community and how neighborhoods can address issues that are plaguing the city as a whole such as climate change, racial equity, and our crumbling infrastructure.



Building more housing that is actually affordable will help transition homeless New Yorkers from shelters to permanent housing. We have to act now, because there is a significant risk that Covid-19 will cause thousands of more families to become homeless.

The ULURP process is broken. I believe we need a comprehensive plan that assesses the racial, social and economic impact of proposed projects that will act as a blueprint for addressing issues plaguing the city as a whole, including climate change, transportation, school segregation, and investment in NYCHA.

If we are going to take on NYC's land use history, then we have to ensure that all newly proposed projects promote racial and social equity. This comprehensive plan should be formulated with communities in mind. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed decades of underfunding of our public hospitals, schools, and public spaces in our most vulnerable neighborhoods that have been negatively impacted by discriminatory and predatory policies. We need to ensure the most marginalized of our society are at the forefront of land use conversations and have a greater stake in shaping land use decisions.

I also support a public bank, which would provide an alternative path of funding needed to invest in crucial infrastructure projects and the public good. Currently, New York City banks with for profit banks. If it withdrew a portion of that money and placed it in a public bank, this is money that could be lent, for example, to non-profit developers to build truly affordable housing.

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?

NYCHA has tremendous capital needs and there is no doubt that we need to increase our investment in NYCHA and prioritize basic health and safety measures like getting rid of lead paint and mold and replacing aging boilers and heating systems. I would insist on improvements to the Gowanus, Wyckoff and Warren NYCHA buildings that are part of the Gowanus rezoning.

Public housing must stay public. I would never support the privatization of NYCHA. There is strong evidence that the way RAD is being used is a path to privatization and I oppose that. I would be open to conversation about RAD if there were assurances that public ownership of NYCHA was preserved, but have yet to see anything that meets such a standard. And, of course, any work done as part of the RAD program must include the use of union labor and I would fight to make sure that happens.

We need to listen to NYCHA residents who want to explore alternatives to RAD like tenant ownership models, city capital investment and community land trusts to capture RAD's benefits while avoiding the downsides of the program as currently designed.

The sale of air rights to private developers is part of NYC's wrong-headed approach to housing. It is a giveaway to developers to allow them to build more market rate and luxury housing in exchange for building a paltry number of affordable housing units and a one time infusion of cash. Creating a long-term funding stream for NYCHA is far better than making deals that benefit developers and harm NYC's skyline.



16) Given the City's COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 economic crisis, how would you approach your role in addressing the city's carceral system, including the plan to close Rikers?

As a criminal defense attorney, I have spent a lot of time at Rikers Island. I have gone through the ridiculous, time consuming, dehumanizing process of just getting into Rikers. I have gone to visit clients and ended up being trapped for hours in the visiting room or waiting room when the jail went into lockdown. I have repeatedly seen the violence perpetrated by the Department of Corrections on those incarcerated there.

I have long supported the complete closure of Rikers and support the proposal for four borough-based jails. While this represents progress, it will be meaningless if not accompanied by structural change to the Department of Corrections. We have seen during the COVID-19 crisis, that the Department of Corrections is indifferent to the health and safety of the incarcerated. DOC violence at Rikers Island is so high that the DOC was forced to agree to be overseen by a federal monitor. Still, abuse levels have remained high.

As with the NYPD, much of the problem stems from lack of accountability. Even though DOC disciplinary cases are heard by the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings, the DOC Commissioner still has the final say on discipline, too often resulting in lack of consequences for corrections officers. This has to change and final say on disciplinary decisions has to be with a neutral body.

We need to drastically reduce our reliance on incarceration by rejecting attempts to reverse bail reform and enforcing a defendant's right to a speedy trial. Most importantly, we must significantly increase the use of alternatives to incarceration programs. These successful programs keep people out of jails and provide them with services instead.

I have appeared in drug courts throughout New York City, but particularly in Brooklyn's Screening Treatment Enhancement Part ("STEP"), which was, and is, the national model for treating addiction as a sickness and not a crime, of giving people medical care instead of jail time. As opposed to incarceration, programs like STEP can be transformative. I can tell you about clients whose addictions were so bad that they were close to close to death through the treatment they received at STEP, they walked out of court with a GED, job skills, and a clean slate.

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?

As a civil rights and criminal defense attorney for over a decade, I have seen firsthand the systematic abuses committed by law-enforcement, particularly in the Black community. I understand the root causes, big and small, of the NYPD's unaccountable misconduct and brutality. I have taken on the NYPD in court and won. Based on this experience, I have created a comprehensive criminal justice platform focused on accountability, reallocation of resources, and decarceration.

First and foremost, we need to enact laws that hold NYPD officers accountable for their conduct in the streets and their perjury in the courts. This means removing final say on disciplinary issues from the NYPD Commissioner to a truly neutral body; expanding public access to disciplinary records; increasing public access to disciplinary hearings; and, tracking of, and real consequences for, officers whose testimony is found incredible in court.



We need to structurally change our approach to policing in New York City. This means reducing the role that armed NYPD officers play in enforcement. The vast majority of calls that the NYPD responds to do not involve violent crime and do not require an armed response, such as homelessness and people experiencing a mental health crisis. An armed response should be limited to violent crimes, like rape or an active shooter, and situations that experience has shown often turn violent, like domestic violence calls.

The police should absolutely not be responsible for mental health response, homeless outreach or other areas outside the traditional law enforcement responsibilities. The NYPD is not trained to respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis or treat or assist the homeless. The NYPD's inability to respond to EDP calls without murdering the person experiencing the mental health crisis has been going on for decades. Not only that, but as long as we make the police responsible for these issues, we will keep criminalizing addiction, poverty, and mental health issues.

We need to reassign these duties, and reallocate this funding, to institutions and service providers more equipped to deal with the issue. An armed response should be limited to violent crimes, like rape or an active shooter, and situations that experience has shown often turn violent, like domestic violence calls.

Our policies, including our approach to the NYPD budget, should have as a goal eliminating the stranglehold Pat Lynch of the PBA and Ed Mullins of the SBA have on the City. These two men are the most destructive forces in New York City politics and are the fiercest opponents of even the slightest bit of reform. They are propped up by the most senior, predominantly White and Republican officers, most of whom live outside NYC. Our goal should be to uplift the voices of the newer, largely officers of color, who are from, and live in, the communities they police. Our city will be a better place when these officers get rid of Lynch and Mullins, and take over the police unions.

I believe the best way to do this is to require all NYPD officers to live in, or in close proximity to, NYC. I believe that if this was implemented a large number of the officers who live outside of NYC would retire rather than move into the City. Not only will this result in a police force that better represents NYC, but it will break the control the older, predominantly white, and Republican officers have over the police unions, leading to a fundamental and necessary change in leadership.

We need to eliminate the agencies and institutions that incentive arrests and over-policing. One of the prime examples is the office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. Not only was the Special Narcotics Prosecutor created as part of the racist "war on drugs," but it certainly has no place in a city that has changed its understanding and approach to narcotics and other drugs.

This summer we all were witness to the NYPD using military grade weapons to brutalize peaceful protestors who were marching for justice after the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and using military grade weapons to attack protestors. The use of this weaponry creates violence, it doesn't stop it. We must ban the NYPD's participation in the military surplus programs that provide this equipment and eliminate its stockpile of military grade weapons.

I have long been a vocal advocate for ending the school to prison pipeline. We live in a City that under invests in schools, especially in poorer, typically communities of color and over invests in policing those same neighborhoods. The "need" for police in schools is a direct result of the failure to invest in schools. It



criminalizes regular adolescent behavior and too often ends in violence against children. We need restorative justice in our schools, not armed guards. We need counseling and intervention, not abuse and arrests.

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

Yes. Our land use process is broken. We should shift to a system of comprehensive planning where we start the process with community input and set clear and binding standards to prevent displacement and gentrification. I support the requirement for a racial impact study for all rezonings.

Given the role of community boards in the ULURP process, it is vital that they are diverse in terms of race, age, socio-economic status, and geography. We must also provide community boards with resources, such as urban planners, so that they are equipped to push back on developers.

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

The City's current policies are not working. Not only has homelessness exploded in New York City over the past 7 years – we are on the precipice of another surge as a result of the Covid-19 related evictions on the horizon. Rather than criminalizing homelessness, as is too often the first resort, we need to put people in long term affordable housing. Moreover, when we build more affordable housing and homeless shelters, we should do so with an eye toward equity and must include building in more affluent districts, like District 39.

We must prioritize low-income New Yorkers when we build affordable housing. To transition people living in temporary housing to permanent housing, I believe that at least 15% of new units are set aside for homeless New Yorkers. In addition, I believe we need to increase the amount of money that the City can give each person for their rental voucher.