

Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2022 Federal Candidate Questionnaire

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Office Sought: U.S. House of Representatives,

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

1) Why do you seek an endorsement from CBID?

I am serving in Congress and seeking the CBID endorsement for reelection because, for me, policy is personal. Unlike many of the people we are used to seeing in our politics, I don't come from money or from a political family. Growing up poor, black, and gay I never imagined someone like me could run for Congress, let alone get elected.

I grew up in Section 8 housing and on food stamps. I was raised by a young, single mom who still had to work multiple jobs to provide for our family. She got help raising me from my grandparents; my grandfather was a janitor and my grandmother cleaned homes. When day care was too expensive, my grandmother took me to work with her. I know what it is for a working family to struggle and rely on government assistance to survive.

These experiences are why I fight for racial and economic justice with such urgency in the halls of Congress, not just when it is convenient or politically expedient.

Watching my mom navigate government bureaucracy to keep us housed and fed means I understand how important it is not to sacrifice the robust social safety net programs in the Build Back Better Act, whose universal child care provisions I co-authored. It means that while some of my colleagues push to means-test programs like affordable child care and tuition-free community college, I understand that in practice means-testing most often means excluding the most vulnerable poor, who aren't able to jump through the required hoops to prove their eligibility.

The right to protect fundamental, constitutional rights is also personal for me. That's why, one year before we saw Justice Alito's draft opinion purporting to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, I introduced the Judiciary Act with Reps. Jerry Nadler and Hank Johnson, which would add four seats to the Supreme Court.

And, having experienced housing insecurity myself growing up, when the rest of Congress had gone home on August recess, I rallied at the Capitol steps with Reps. Cori Bush and AOC in a successful effort to get the White House to extend the CDC's eviction moratorium to prevent as many as seven million people from being evicted from their homes.

Too many of my colleagues – including some Democrats – are willing to make compromises on the backs of those most vulnerable. I am in Congress, and running for reelection, to put those communities first. I would be honored to have the Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats as a partner in this campaign.

2) If elected, what would be your top legislative priority?

If New Yorkers re-elect me to Congress, they can count on me to continue fighting for them every day. I have been a progressive champion during my time as a representative thus far, and will continue fighting for the progressive priorities that NY10 demands.

Saving our democracy from the fascist threats of the Republican Party will continue to be my top priority in Congress. It is the most urgent issue of our time because if we do not have representative government, the broadly popular progressive legislation we want to see become law (for example, climate action and investments in affordable housing) will continue to be blocked in Congress. I will continue my leadership in Congress fighting to defend our democracy and protect the fundamental right to vote.

I have been a vocal advocate for passing H.R. 1 and other essential legislation to combat the erosion of our democracy and expand the right to vote. After the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*, I introduced the Inclusive Elections Act, a bill to restore Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, which bars states and localities from adopting election laws that disparately challenge the voting rights of people of color. The text of the Inclusive Elections Act was included in the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and passed the House, and was included again in the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act, which passed the House in January 2021.

I also introduced the Right to Vote Act. The bill would provide the first affirmative guarantee of the right to vote in federal law, requiring federal courts to treat the right to vote as the fundamental right that it is. This bill was also included in the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act, which passed the House in January 2021.

In Congress, I have also led the charge to restore balance to a Supreme Court that has shown itself time and again to be hostile to democracy itself. I, alongside Reps. Jerry Nadler and Carolyn Maloney, introduced the Judiciary Act of 2021, legislation to restore balance to a GOP-packed Supreme Court by adding four justices. This bill has changed the national dialogue on the future of our legal system and built a coalition for court reform—including advocates for climate action, gun control, and reproductive justice—that is unprecedented in modern times.

The fight to restore and expand our democracy has faced setbacks, but it is a fight to which we all must remain committed.

3) Do you support the right of a pregnant person to choose to terminate their pregnancy? Have you always? If not, please explain why your position has changed.

I unequivocally support the rights of pregnant people to make their own choices with their own bodies. Simply put, abortion is health care and I believe health care is a human right. I have never believed otherwise.

4) With *Roe v. Wade* at risk, do you plan to ensure adequate funding and legal protection to guarantee the right to accessible abortion and health services? If so, what actions will you take?

The far-right, 6-3 majority on the Supreme Court has put *Roe* at imminent risk and in doing so, endangers the lives of millions of people who are already marginalized by our society and government. I proudly voted to pass the Women's Health Protection Act in the House, in order to codify the right to an abortion, and now the Senate must abolish the filibuster to do the same. Moreover, I have and continue to support robust funding for reproductive health services through the appropriations process.

I strongly oppose the Hyde Amendment and have actively worked to get rid of it during my term in Congress.

I also believe that we must expand the Supreme Court by adding four seats in order to restore balance and return power to the people. This is why I introduced the Judiciary Act of 2021 along with Rep. Jerry Nadler more than a year before the catastrophe now in front of us. I have been adamant about the threat that this far-right, partisan Court poses to fundamental rights and marginalized people and I will not stop fighting.

5) What is your position on the building of new oil or gas projects? What is your vision for expanding the nation's supply and transmission of renewable energy? Do you support the vision of a Green New Deal?

I have already been hard at work in Congress combatting the climate crisis. I am a co-sponsor of the full Green New Deal Package and myself introduced the Fossil Free Finance Act to eliminate the financing of fossil fuel investments. And I stood up to President Biden by leading a bicameral letter urging him to reconsider his Justice Department's opposition to *Juliana v. United States*, a potentially transformative case in which 21 young people seek to vindicate their right to a safe climate system. I believe we must end fracking and the development of new fossil fuel infrastructure altogether.

To achieve the reduction in carbon emissions that science requires, we need to invest in sustainable infrastructure, and transition America to 100% renewable energy. Doing so would create 20 million good-paying jobs and provide for a just transition for frontline workers and communities. This is why I am committed to passing the full Green New Deal.

6) What health care reforms or plans do you support?

I believe health care should be treated as a human right, not as a privilege reserved only for those who can afford it. I cosponsor the Medicare for All Act. I also cosponsor the Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Act, which would allow the government to negotiate the price of prescription drugs on behalf of Medicare recipients and decrease the cost of prescription drugs for everyone.

7) Do you support repealing the Senate filibuster? If so, how will you use your platform to push for this reform?

I have forcefully used my platform at every opportunity to rally support for abolishing the Senate's Jim Crow filibuster, which is blocking progress on so many legislative issues of critical importance. Despite what some conservative Democrats have suggested, it is obvious that there are not any Republican Senators, let alone ten, willing to put country before party and get work done on critical issues such as saving our democracy.

8) Voter ID laws, poll taxes, and limitations on polling sites and early voting are all examples of voter suppression tactics. What will you do to protect voting rights and elections, including but not limited

to cosponsoring legislation?.

As stated in my answer to question #2 above, I am a proud co-author of the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act and other essential legislation to combat the erosion of our democracy and expand the right to vote. After the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*, I introduced the Inclusive Elections Act, a bill to restore Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, which bars states and localities from adopting election laws that disparately challenge the voting rights of people of color. The text of the Inclusive Elections Act was included in the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and passed the House, and was included again in the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act, which passed the House in January 2021. I also introduced the Right to Vote Act. The bill would provide the first affirmative guarantee of the right to vote in federal law, requiring federal courts to treat the right to vote as the fundamental right that it is. This bill was also included in the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act, which passed the House in January 2021.

9) What steps do you support to reduce gun violence in the United States?

I was 11 years old when Columbine happened. As afraid as I was back then, I never imagined mass shootings would become the new normal. Gun violence is an epidemic in this country, and Americans deserve to live without fear of violence in our schools, movie theaters, nightclubs, synagogues, churches, and mosques.

I'll always put the safety of our communities first, which is why my campaign does not take a dime from corporate PACs or the gun lobby, and why I'm proud that I earned an "F" rating from the NRA. I support common-sense policies like universal background checks, a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and a mandatory buyback of all assault weapons in the hands of civilians. I also support allowing civil liability for manufacturers, distributors, and sellers of firearms who negligently market or provide their products to people who should not have them. I am proud to have helped pass the Protecting our Kids Act, a bill that raises the legal age to purchase semi-automatic rifles to 21. This bill also bans high-capacity magazines and straw purchases, as well as takes measures to prevent gun trafficking—a critical step toward eliminating the iron pipeline that traffics so many of the illegal guns found on the streets of our city. I have also worked with my colleagues to pass Lucy McBath's red flag bill and the Active Shooter Act. Moreover, last year, I helped pass legislation in the House that would enact universal background checks and close the Charleston loophole.

Almost all of these bills will require abolishing the filibuster in order to pass them in the Senate, and I am proud to be a vocal leader in support of getting rid of the filibuster. Moreover, because the far-right, 6-3 majority on the Supreme Court has expanded the Second Amendment beyond recognition, I support passing my legislation to add four seats to the Court.

10) What actions do you support to protect our immigrant neighbors?

I would not be here today had my paternal grandfather not immigrated to New York City from Kingston, Jamaica generations ago. Immigrants are the backbone of our society, from our economy to our personal relationships. Immigrants are our family members, friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

I support creating a fair pathway to citizenship for our undocumented brothers and sisters, revamping our visa system, and codifying DACA in order to protect our young people. That's why I'm a cosponsor of the Bicameral U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021. This bill would provide millions of hardworking, undocumented

immigrants with a pathway to earned citizenship, including Dreamers, Temporary Protective Status (TPS) recipients, and essential workers who have made enormous sacrifices during the pandemic; prioritize family reunification and keeping families together; and bolster the country's long-term economic growth. The bill would also equip the country to responsibly and effectively manage the border with smart and effective investments, address root causes of migration that force people to leave Central America, and restore the United States' commitment to human rights. I am also proud to have helped pass the American Dream and Promise Act in the House, which would protect our Dreamers by putting them on a pathway to permanent residency. I also believe we must reform our immigration court system to provide the capacity to process asylum claims and hear all immigration cases. Furthermore, I have pushed to overrule the Senate's parliamentarian in order to allow key immigration provisions to be included in Build Back Better (BBB) so that we can enact real change to our broken immigration system. More recently, I helped lead the successful effort to get the Biden Administration to end Title 42.

11) What steps do you support to reform our criminal justice system?

I am committed to dismantling systemic racism, including by ending mass incarceration, reforming policing, and pursuing a legal system that fosters true public safety. That is why I have championed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act since the day I took office. This bill would ban chokeholds like the one Derek Chauvin used to murder George Floyd, ban no-knock warrants like the one that contributed to the police killing of Breonna Taylor, restrict police use of military-grade equipment, and make it easier to hold officers accountable for misconduct in court. Not only does this legislation reform policing, it also would contribute to ending mass incarceration by prohibiting discriminatory racial and religious profiling and investing in community-based approaches to public safety.

I recognize that the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is the beginning, not the end, of this vital work. So I have been proud to support the People's Response Act and the People's Justice Guarantee as well. The People's Justice Guarantee is a resolution that lays out a framework for the future of public safety. The People's Justice Guarantee calls for expanding restorative justice, decriminalizing poverty, eliminating money bail, and abolishing the death penalty, life without parole, and solitary confinement. The People's Response Act is a bill introduced by Rep. Cori Bush to support public health approaches to community safety.

12) What policies do you support to ensure fairness in employment and workplace conditions, as well as strengthening and increasing access to unions?

My grandfather was a janitor, and my grandmother cleaned homes. I was raised by a single mom who had to work multiple jobs just to put food on the table. I understand the struggles facing American workers because I've lived them myself, and those principles have guided my work in Congress.

Although the cost of living in this country is soaring, wages have remained stagnant for decades. I'm proud to have voted for the Raise the Wage Act this Congress, and I support raising the federal minimum wage to \$15/hour, permanently indexed to inflation, for all workers. Although New York has seen some increases in recent years, this is simply not enough for families across New York City which ranks among the most expensive places to live in the country.

I know that our country is strongest when we have a vibrant middle-class, and that's why we must enact labor laws that protect all of our communities. All workers deserve the right to negotiate for proper pay, safe

working conditions, and the benefits they deserve. I support the power of workers to organize and bargain collectively, and I proudly helped pass the PRO Act in the House, which ensures working people can organize without fear of retaliation. The PRO Act would end misleading “Right to Work” laws and close tax loopholes that encourage jobs and investments to be outsourced. I’m proud to be supported by a number of local and state labor unions, who know I am fighting for them. That also means treating our essential workers with the dignity they deserve. I support hazard pay, providing the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they need to work safely, and instituting labor protections that will outlast this pandemic.

13) What would you do to ensure access to affordable and quality housing for everyone in Brooklyn and nationwide?

Above all, NYCHA must remain affordable and become more habitable so that tenants aren't displaced or live in squalid conditions. No one should be living in the horrible conditions that have been seen in NYCHA—from a lack of heating in the winter to mold and vermin infestations. These things are simply unacceptable. The federal government must step up and fully fund NYCHA so we have the funding for repairs and rehab. At the same time, Congress must exercise its authority of oversight to ensure that HUD resources for affordable housing, whether in NYC or elsewhere in our nation, are used effectively and efficiently, not to enrich developers but to ensure that people have safe and reliable housing. This is something that I have already done and will continue doing. That is why I support the Green New Deal for Public Housing and voted enthusiastically to pass \$65 billion for public housing in Build Back Better, which can be used to clear NYCHA’s maintenance backlog. Moreover, I cosponsor the Homes for All Act, which would provide affordable homes for everyone, and support federal investments sufficient to provide Section 8 and public housing to everyone who needs it, eliminating waiting lists. The housing crisis is not just a “policy issue” to me—I have lived through housing insecurity and I know how critical it is that our government truly invests in bold and sustainable solutions to ensure that housing is actually a human right in this country.

14) What, if any, groups or types of people will you not accept campaign contributions from? If so, please note whose money you will not accept.

I will never, and have never, accepted money from corporate PACs. That is why I am the only candidate in this race endorsed by End Citizens United, which works to get big money out of our politics, end unlimited and undisclosed money in politics, and protect and expand the right to vote.