



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2022 State Candidate Questionnaire

Name of Candidate: **Samy Nemir Olivares**

Office Sought: **Assembly District 54**

Email Address: **samy@samy.nyc**

Phone Number: **(929) 285-9623**

Name of Person(s) completing the questionnaire: **Samy Nemir Olivares, Katelin Penner**

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

1) Why do you seek an endorsement from CBID?

I've been watching the work of CBID closely for years now, and I know that CBID has been an incredible resource in fighting for progressive legislation across our state, while also pushing to reform the Democratic party in Brooklyn. As an organizer and a candidate, I want to work alongside this wonderful organization to work for progressive change in our city, our borough, and our state.

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

Housing: My district is undergoing a housing crisis, as gentrification is rapidly pushing up rents across North Brooklyn, including in the 54th Assembly district. Many long-term residents are being displaced, and many more can barely make the rent each month. To keep families in their homes here in North Brooklyn, our office would fight for legislation like good cause eviction in New York, which would prevent tenants from being kicked out of their homes unless landlords have a legally acceptable reason to evict them. The tenants who live in my district are majority working-class Black and brown community members, so fighting to keep them in their homes must be a key priority. But my office would do more than just fight for legislation; we would use all tools and organizing tactics available to expand tenant organizing and rights. This includes hosting town halls, tabling in major parks and public spaces, door knocking and making robocalls to not only provide services and distribute resources, but also to build an infrastructure of volunteers and future leaders that can assist our office in this work. It would be a space to train new volunteers to become leaders in the community and movement while supporting tenants as government staff is very small and limited in the first years.

On the other hand, our office would have a strong constituent services staff and program that would be trained to support tenant and housing issues and work closely with housing and legal organizations to better serve them. Our office would support the development of tenant unions across our district, and would hold tenant support meetings to help tenants in Bushwick, Cypress Hills, and East New York build power against their landlords. Our office would provide technical support for the formation of tenant unions and would connect tenants to legal services as need be. Ultimately, I am hopeful that in the Assembly, I could not only help to pass strong pro-tenant legislation, but also work on the ground in my community to protect and build up power for tenants against the strong force of the real estate industry, greedy landlords, and scrupulous developers through legislation, enforcement, the development of tenant unions and the use of collective action.

3) What measures would you support to improve educational opportunities for all students in New



York State.

In my district, public schools are underfunded, and privately run charter schools are growing rapidly, taking away funding from students. The public university system in New York City, CUNY, where many students in my district go for college, is also strapped for funding, and many working class students can no longer afford tuition. This is why, as an elected official, I will continue to work with the local Community Education Councils, students, parents and teachers to fight for rapid and equitable dispersion of the money owed to our public school students through the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, as this money will help us finally recommit to investing in K-12 public schools. I will also continue my work to advocate against charter school expansion in New York State - public money and public resources must be allocated towards our public schools! In terms of CUNY, I will work alongside CUNY students and staff who have proposed a host of state level bills known as the New Deal for CUNY to ensure that CUNY is made tuition free, that opportunities for students are expanded, and that staff and faculty. I also will fight hard for huge improvements to our childcare system, including pushing for Senator Jabari Brisport's universal childcare legislation to ensure that all kids have access to early childhood development opportunities. In addition, one of the key original bills I would push for is the implementation of Universal Afterschool programs across the state. I believe giving all students access to afterschool programs would help working class families make ends meet by helping to eliminate childcare costs, while, at the same time, improving access to enrichment programs in fields like the arts and athletics. I also would fight to support universal free breakfast and lunch at public schools across the state to ensure no child goes hungry. These programs all will help working-class Black and brown families access high quality public education and childcare, reducing financial stress on many working-class folks here in New York City.

4) NYS previously passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. What are your priorities and what level of funding would you support to implement this Act? Do you support the Climate Can't Wait package?

I strongly support the Climate Can't Wait package, and a \$15 billion dollar investment in CLCPA. I also strongly support the Build Public Renewables Act! This bill radically transforms the energy system by mandating that New York State will, through either purchase or eminent domain, get ownership of all facilities and assets of every single private energy and gas utility across the state, allowing us to publicly and democratically control our energy grid. True, democratic, public ownership of utilities will both help to address environmental ruin while also protecting New Yorkers from unnecessary blackouts, brownouts, and service fees.

I'm also enthusiastic about the measures in the Utility Democracy Act that ensures that our new, public utility is democratically run, such as creating democratically elected utility boards to oversee the operations of NYPA and its subdivisions. Also, since utility rate cases will be determined by this democratically elected board, rates should be gradually brought down statewide.

5) How do you propose getting same-day voter registration and universal absentee voting approved



by voters in NY?

As red states across the country continue to restrict voting rights, New York State had an incredible opportunity to expand upon voting rights this year, but the Democratic party failed to adequately invest in voting rights on our ballot. This year, the Democrats need to invest in making our state a voting rights haven by actually working to pass proposals like no-excuse absentee voting and same day-voter registration. I strongly support the reintroduction of these bills, and would actually fight to get them passed so that our democratic system can work better for all people.

6) **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 do not accept money from police unions, developers, corporations/corporate PACs, or the fossil fuel industry. I'm proud to be powered by the people!

7) **Do you support the work of the state's Public Finance Commission? Do you support any campaign finance reforms in NY State? If so, please describe.**

Yes, but I believe the Public Financing system must be implemented more expeditiously - we should not have been forced to wait until 2024 for a fair way to finance our elections. As we saw from the 2021 City Council elections, public financing helped us elect the most diverse city council in history - for the first time, the City Council will be majority women! This was a huge victory for so many communities across the city who are now going to be well represented for the first time, as working class people were able to run for office for the first time due to public financing and donor matching. Since the New York State Legislature has such a corrupt history, trying to take big money out of our state politics is a meaningful and important goal. That's why I'm not taking campaign contributions from fossil fuel companies, corporations, or big real estate developers, but my own actions cannot change the entire state. Public financing is a great way to change the way we run politics in the state, and I strongly support fighting to implement it at the state level!

8) **The Supreme Court has ruled that state legislatures can gerrymander political districts along partisan lines. How and by whom should political districts be drawn?**

I support having a new, truly independent body, draw new legislative district maps, in a way that takes in public input in a fair and good faith way, and is composed of set of commissioners that can represent the needs of the people and not solely who appointed them, using defined criteria such as equal population, Voting Rights Act compliance, communities of interest, and compactness. No more than one third of the commissioners should be from one of the two major parties. The process should start with enough time to really bring in community input, and do so transparently with civic organizations, focusing on underrepresented communities.



9) Now that the Reproductive Health Act has passed, what is your next priority in increasing reproductive healthcare access and gender equity?

While New York is not considering the same draconian laws as many other places in the US, we still have work to do to expand reproductive healthcare here in the state. To expand abortion rights in New York State, we must pass legislation to allow for the public funding of abortion care, so that low income people can access abortions and other forms of reproductive care regardless of ability to pay. We also must pass legislation that requires insurance companies that operate in New York to cover abortion care throughout the State. I also support having the state of New York play a more active role in protecting abortion rights across the country. I think we could do this by creating a fund at the state level that would help support and provide financial resources to people seeking reproductive care across the country who need to come to New York so that they could continue to access what they need.

10) What actions would you take to promote safer and more efficient transportation options for pedestrians, cyclists, mass transit users, and drivers in New York?

We need to actually *invest* in public transit so that people can use it safely and efficiently without having to deal with long delays, accessibility issues, or transit deserts. Our district is home to the decrepit and embarrassingly abandoned Broadway Junction, one of the largest transportations hubs in the district. I will be a champion for accelerating ADA improvements for all subway stations in the city, so that our elderly and disabled neighbors can use subways without having to worry about their safety and mobility. I also plan to advocate aggressively for the Interborough Express, which would help connect many folks to new subway stations throughout the city.

I also will be a champion for expanding bike lanes and bus networks; it's too hard to get to places in Queens, Central Brooklyn, and South Brooklyn from Bushwick or Cypress Hills! More streets going north-south should have bike lanes. Some good transit improvements in terms of bike lanes would be extending the bike lane along Jefferson Avenue north of Knickerbocker Avenue, as well as creating a northward and southward bike lane in Central Bushwick near Gates Avenue. Cypress Hills/East New York also could use serious expansions to the local bike network. I would support creating new bike lanes, including possibly one on Arlington Avenue if local residents are amenable, as well as adding more north-south bike lanes further east into the neighborhood.



I also want to invest in bus lanes in the district. Many of my neighbors rely on public transit exclusively, and deserve a fast way to get from point A to point B. However, traffic can make this difficult, and make our buses slower.

Getting cars off the street makes our communities greener and safer. Broadway in Bushwick/Bed-Stuy is an extremely dangerous street for pedestrians and cyclists – the intersections on this street can be very scary for folks to navigate! By making basic street safety improvements, we can actually get more people to feel comfortable walking or biking to places instead of driving, a change that meshes nicely with other climate solutions by reducing the amount of carbon that is emitted into our atmosphere. This also includes collaborating with City Council members to partner in the retainment and expansion of open street programs, protected bike lanes expansion and other measures.

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

I am highly concerned about the minimum wage across the state, and would like to make the schedule of increasing minimum wages outside of New York City. It is horrendous that any municipality in New York State currently has a minimum wage of under \$15 dollars, and the current schedule of wage increases for upstate workers is happening far too slowly. The current minimum wage upstate, which is currently only \$13.20 an hour, is nowhere near what folks need to make ends meet, forcing people to take on multiple jobs in order to rent an apartment and pay for medication or groceries. In New York City, one of the most expensive places to live in the United States, the situation is similar; it is quite nearly impossible to make ends meet in the City on a 15 dollar an hour wage. I support making minimum wage adjustments to keep wages on par with inflation and productivity growth so that the minimum wage remains a living wage for years to come. I am hopeful that I can work on meaningful wage legislation in the Assembly, and will fight hard for a dignified wage for all New Yorkers.

I'm also a huge supporter of the One Fair Wage bill. The fact that a worker receives tips is not an excuse to pay said worker a non-living wage, and makes a worker reliant on an inconsistent source of income to make ends meet. A 15 dollar minimum wage should be the absolute floor for workers across New York State, and it is past time to close the tipped minimum wage loophole. Raising the tipped minimum wage, a practice which is more likely to impact women, people of color, immigrants, and other marginalized working class folks, will help us push towards economic justice in New York State, and I look forward to fighting for this bill in the Assembly.

Lastly, I strongly support efforts to pass legislation that would establish clear criteria to determine if workers are classified as independent contractors or employees. This pandemic has proven that many bosses will do anything in their power to shortchange workers and prevent them from



accessing what they deserve. What we saw recently in California, where Uber spent billions on a ballot initiative to keep working class drivers from accessing benefits, could easily happen here in New York, as Uber, or a wide variety of other companies, could easily try to buy off state legislators to get them to pass legislation that actively misclassified workers, keeping thousands in undignified labor conditions. We **MUST** say no to this. A5772 would make it clear that employers in New York State can no longer skimp on labor protections for workers that have been left in perilous circumstances for years, and would establish clear standards around what an independent contractor actually is. This bill will protect thousands of workers across the state, and I look forward to advocating for it.

12) What would you do to ensure access to affordable and quality housing for everyone?

I will be prioritizing the passage of Good Cause Eviction, which I believe is one of the most important bills the State Legislature has to advocate for in 2022, especially as the eviction moratorium expires in under 2 weeks. Rents have been rising rapidly despite the ongoing pandemic, and so many tenants are inches away from facing eviction, especially people whose homes are not protected by existing rent regulations. Evictions are cruel, and inhumane, and passing Good Cause Eviction will reduce the number of people that are violently removed from their homes by preventing evictions from taking place unless a landlord has a documented reason to do so. It also will prevent rents from rising excessively, by largely preventing many landlords from raising rents above 3 percent. This policy will offer countless families protection against housing insecurity, especially as eviction proceedings threaten so many of our neighbors. Good Cause Eviction legislation is the best way that we can work towards actually protecting all tenants from being unjustly forced out of their homes in New York State. Passing Good Cause Eviction would be one of my top priorities in the New York State legislature. I will be a fierce fighter for Good Cause Eviction as an Assembly Member, and look forward to working in coalition with housing organizers to pass this policy.

13) What are your views on criminal justice reform issues, such as (but not limited to) police accountability, and ending solitary confinement?

As a legislator, I will absolutely support policies to shift power away from police and towards our communities. For example, I strongly support Daniel's Law. This bill, which is in the state legislature. This bill would reduce use of police officers as first responders to people experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. Instead, if passed, Daniel's Law would allow social workers, mental health counselors, peers and other health workers to become first responders during these crisis situations. I also support reinvesting in community safety instead of investing solely in policing – fully funded childcare, access to affordable, healthy food, safe, deeply affordable housing, and high quality schools do an incredible amount to keep our communities safe by ensuring all people have what they need to get by. Allocating some money away from policing and towards our communities will, in my opinion, actually help keep our communities safe!



I also support legislation that moves to keep people out of prison and get those who are already incarcerated out of the prison system as quickly as humanly possible. A priority for me is supporting parole reform. I believe that passing both Fair and Timely Parole and Elder Parole would help heal the wounds of a deeply evil system by preventing people from serving unnecessarily long sentences. Fair and Timely Parole would create new standards pushing the Parole Board, an inherently regressive and outdated institution, to evaluate a person for who they are today and who they can be in their communities, and not for the crime or conviction that led them to prison, which often occurred years to decades in the past. These changes to our parole system will allow people to return home to family members and loved ones instead of remaining in prison for a longer period of time, helping folks to live dignified lives. At the same time, passing Elder Parole would begin to offer a meaningful opportunity for release to elderly New Yorkers to reconnect with their families, communities, and have a chance to make positive contributions outside of prison walls. Elder Parole also will work towards guaranteeing that no one dies in prison, a deeply important and moral goal for our state to strive towards. Passing both of these bills must be a key portion of our agenda to release the population of prisons and jails in New York State! This is something my mother as a social worker for incarcerated people advocated for during her career and I grew up listening and believing in it, so it's an issue close to me. We need more forms of rehabilitation and diversion. I also support efforts to divert resources from policing from NYC budget and reinvesting them in our communities, including the plan of Invest in Our New York campaign of divesting at least \$1 billion from criminalization and investing in housing, social and health services.

14) Do you support the New York Health Act?

1000%!!! The New York Health Act is the best way to keep our city and state healthy. Providing people, regardless of immigrant status, income, or any other factor, with universal, free healthcare, will make our state a safer and healthier place to live. The New York Health Act is one of my top legislative priorities and I look forward to fighting for this legislation, which is one of the core policies for my campaign.