



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2021 CD39 Candidate Questionnaire

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

The most pressing issue and top priority in my district is the remediation of the Gowanus Superfund Site and the Gowanus Rezoning.

While the rezoning's goal is to create more affordable housing within a wealthier neighborhood in the City, the proposal as-is failed to center and has excluded NYCHA residents, low-income tenants, immigrant-owned businesses, and Black and Brown families facing displacement. The current proposed rezoning area excludes NYCHA's Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens, and Warren Street Houses, all in great need of infrastructure improvements. Although the developments are not in the 39th district, the rezoning proposal should have included these NYCHA buildings to ensure that infrastructure upgrades can be made as part of the rezoning deal. The residents of Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens, and Warren Street Houses, who are predominantly BIPOC and working-class, have been deprived of proper utilities and no rezoning proposal should go forward until the voices of NYCHA residents are centered. There is an affordable housing crisis in my District, and our communities are not centered in the land use planning process. As a former tenant organizer and domestic violence survivor advocate, I have seen how the city fails to provide truly affordable housing options to survivors of gender-based and intimate partner violence, and how domestic violence continues to be the leading cause of homelessness and housing insecurity.

I would like to see (1) the concerns and feedback of NYCHA residents incorporated more thoroughly in the rezoning plan, particularly around adequate funding, (2) a racial impact assessment to determine levels of displacement for BIPOC, immigrant communities, (3) more immediate solutions to combat, mitigate, and adapt to the impacts of climate change - working with local environmental groups on how to achieve net zero combined sewage overflows, and releasing the required environmental impact statement earlier to ensure the community has more time to give feedback.

All of my advocacy and organizing will always center communities most impacted - I am learning from and listening to two organizations advocating with frontline communities: the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) and the Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC). Many conversations and feedback have shaped my platform and recommendations about the Gowanus Rezoning. Communities most affected by environmental racism are disproportionately Black and brown, working class, and/or disabled folks.

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.

After 9/11, the Patriot Act and expansion of Homeland Security Departments across the United States brought on a wave of targeting and surveillance upon Muslim community organizations, campuses, and mosques. Young Muslim women across CUNY campuses were entrapped by undercover FBI officers, while families who did not speak English or know their rights were actively disenfranchised and deported at alarming rates. In the wake of this racial and xenophobic violence, I co-founded the Muslim Writers



Collective which cultivated a powerful space for organizing young Muslims across NYC and the US to share their stories and strategies for resilience and joy. Needless to say, raised security concerns and threats impacted our organizing. Carceral surveillance is an everyday reality for Muslim Americans like me, and even more so for Muslim women activists and organizers at the forefront of issues impacting our communities.

While building Muslim power across our City, I spearheaded CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities' Public Housing Organizing Project where I organized working-class, limited English proficient Asian immigrant public housing residents. I primarily organized Bangladeshi residents at Queensbridge Houses, which led to the creation of a Bangladeshi tenants association headed by Bangladeshi women tenant leaders who taught me the Bangla proverb, 'doshor lathi eker bojha': the easy work of ten is difficult for one. They taught me movement accountability. We leaned on each other to get through some of the most brutal moments in NYC's housing justice movement and celebrated our wins, including when my work at CAAAV amounted to the first-ever report released on Asians living in public housing and our fight for language justice.

Between 2014 and 2016, I fought locally alongside The Kensington Stewards, a neighborhood association I co-founded, to transform an empty lot into the public Avenue C Plaza. Avenue C Plaza became one of the few viable open spaces for the Kensington community, especially for immigrant women and families, to utilize and enjoy safely. Within the district, particularly within Kensington and Borough Park, the lack of public parks and open spaces prevents community gatherings and children from playing. To activate the plaza with positive and inclusive programming for youth and families, I helped build a coalition of local arts organizations, which includes groups like Arts & Democracy, Casa Cultural, and the Bangladeshi Institute of Performing Arts. Through our work in the Kensington Cultural Council, we host community iftars, youth-led trainings and workshops, and solidarity rallies for community safety. Avenue C Plaza is a place of resistance, and I get to witness our youngest community members build friendships and create together.

One notable project I took on in Kensington was helping a Bangladeshi woman escape from a domestic violence situation. I worked to ensure that she had access to culturally inclusive resources by connecting her to Asiyah Women's Center and Sakhi for South Asian Women and crowdfunding for a survivor security fund to ensure she was financially able to leave her situation. My advocacy around this case was covered by the New York Times. Some male leaders in my community wanted Ms. Zahan to return back to her abusive situation, but in less than a week, my district and friends all over helped raise over \$5,000 for her survival fund so she didn't have to return.

In response to the uptick in anti-Semitic hate crimes in District 39, I continue to build with my Jewish neighbors. Pre-COVID, I'd been leading street outreach across Kensington and Borough Park in Bangla, Spanish, and Yiddish with neighbors across D39, Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM), Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ), the NYC Commission on Human Rights to reinforce safety for all communities under attack. This moment calls for deeper conversations around community safety and ways to intervene and de-escalate hate crime incidents without over-policing.

Between 2017-2020 I worked at District 39 Council Member Brad Lander's office as the Director of Organizing and Community Engagement. As part of my portfolio, I led Participatory Budgeting which has led to critical and creative reinvestments in our schools, streets, and parks conceived of and voted on by the people in my district, and is one of the few ways all New Yorkers, regardless of age or citizenship status, are able to meaningfully engage in civic life. Participatory budgeting is not an excuse for austerity budgets and is not perfect - and like other forms of democracy can unintentionally amplify the voices of more powerful, affluent, and white populations - but I have been intentional about centering marginalized voices in the PB process, and transferring power to youth and women of color in my district.



In my capacity as PB lead, I've transformed the district's Participatory Budgeting volunteer leadership infrastructure by recruiting and onboarding youth and women of color leaders. As a result of these intentional additions, ideation and final projects reflect the needs of youth, women, and often marginalized Muslim women, like the 10-week self-defense workshops facilitated by Malika, an organization led by Muslim women, and peer-to-peer workshops to destigmatize reproductive and sexual health for middle schoolers at MS 442. I organized and hosted our district's first-ever in-Bangla neighborhood assembly for idea collection and recruited community members to join as volunteer budget delegates. In Cycle 8 and under my leadership, over 7600 constituents voted in PB, our highest voter turnout in D39 history!

I have also worked closely with the School Construction Authority and schools in the district to secure funding through participatory budgeting to repair our school buildings. As a part of this participatory budgeting project, I have worked alongside students and parents in advocating for their needs to create an accessible, equitable, and inclusive education system.

My immigrant and language justice work also set me apart from other candidates. I've been leading a biweekly, Bangla-equipped legal clinic and political education workshops in partnership with CUNY Citizenship Now! for free for community members in Kensington. Providing language accessible and free legal services is one way to show up for immigrants in the wake of Muslim bans and deportations. I'm committed to continuing this service both as a means to get vital immigration-related information (like when a judge blocked changes made by the Trump administration to fee waiver rules) to my community in Bangla and challenge voter suppression by helping community members on their path to citizenship or bring them into the campaign to fight for noncitizen voting access in municipal elections.

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

I am proudly endorsed by New York Communities for Change (NYCC), Run for Something, Women of Color for Progress, 21 in '21, and TREEage.

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 am not accepting campaign contributions from any law enforcement groups, real estate groups, and fossil fuel groups, and have publicly committed to doing so.

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

One of my first priorities to increase revenue as Council Member will be to defund the police by 1 billion dollars and reinvest funding into other agencies such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Department of Homeless Services (DHS), and Health + Hospitals -- agencies that will need the most resources to help New Yorkers get through a global pandemic. Despite countless protests and calls to action from Black and brown activists and organizers this summer, who have called for these specific cuts, the City Council failed to listen to their constituents and passed a budget that gave the NYPD a substantial amount of funding. While other agencies in the City like the Department of Education have had to make deep cuts to staff and resources, the NYPD was able to hire 900 new cadets in October.

We also absolutely need to tax the rich to generate revenue, and we need public pressure to do so. I will work to build broad coalitions with my colleagues in the State and to work on a resolution in support of a pied-à-terre tax for the City's millionaires and billionaires, which would provide an estimate of \$390 million of annual revenue to the City. I will also work with the State to create a "mansion tax" that would bring an



estimated revenue of \$300 million annually.

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?

Quality education should be close to home, integrated, and rooted in community. Rather than focusing efforts onto piloting different combinations of screens and lotteries, we should address the systemic inequities throughout our public school system. Redistricting, instituting culturally responsive pedagogy, recruiting and retaining teachers of color, and capping PTA fundraising or distributing unequal fundraising are all tangible steps the City Council can take to make the City's K-12 public education system more equitable and inclusive. We need to better and desegregate our schools by changing the admissions process. Black and Latinx teens make up almost 70% of high schoolers in NYC, but only 10% of spots at specialized high schools. Admissions screens are discriminatory. The current screens are perpetuating and exacerbating segregation because they focus on arbitrary and classist metrics like tardiness, which alone weeds out over 40% of Black students and almost 40% of Latinx students. Other screens, like absences, standardized test scores, and ELA scores, largely disadvantage low-income students, students of color, and students who speak English as a second language. To achieve real equity and a desegregated public school system, I support eliminating standardized admissions exams and screens from the admissions process for our public schools.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, I will work to support students who've been left furthest behind during remote learning, including children from households that speak languages other than English. This summer, I spoke with immigrant parents in my district to ask about their experiences with remote learning. I had a Bangladeshi mother tell me how she was frustrated with the remote learning experience because she wanted to communicate with her children's teachers but could not because she didn't speak English. She told me that she wished the schools did more check-ins in Bangla. Our City's immigrant families deserve better. As a City Council Member, I will work with schools in District 39 to provide more language accessible resources, translators (when needed) and outreach so that more families can be involved and participate in critical school decision processes such as town halls on school reopening. I recently wrote an op-ed about how immigrant families in Kensington have had issues adjusting to remote learning and how their kids have been coping with learning and surviving through a pandemic. While the need for remote learning is crucial in the midst of a pandemic, it is also important that the City's response must incorporate responses from our immigrant neighbors and residents. Our City needs to do better outreach to immigrant students and their families; households should not be limited to online outreach such as email and social media. It is important that the City also utilize media such as postal mail and notices on ethnic media.

I am a fan of the D15 diversity plan, and want increased oversight on the demands to ensure that the demands are being met equitably. The D15 Diversity Plan reminded us of the need for connecting classroom curriculum to the lived experiences of diverse student bodies. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) is facilitative, cooperative, emotionally affirming, and participatory. It is a method of community building (empowering students and parents alike), and a more equitable education model, through affirming the strengths inherent to racial, cultural, and socioeconomic differences within the classroom. The goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to "produce students who can achieve academically, demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order" (Gloria Ladson-Billings). The DOE currently implements some CRP strategies, but CRP should be creatively monitored, accept student feedback, and feature facilitated workshops between school teachers and community members to develop best CRP practices and school wide curriculum resources. It is crucial to ensure that all courses provided to our students follow a culturally responsive pedagogy that is inclusive of



all identities and histories. For example, sex education should be inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities and culturally informed, history should incorporate more narratives about Black, Indigenous, Peoples of Color and LGBTQ+ folks. Physical education should also be more inclusive of abilities and body types.

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?

I will work to support students who've been left furthest behind during remote learning, including children from households that speak languages other than English. This summer, I spoke with immigrant parents in my district to ask about their experiences with remote learning. I had a Bangladeshi mother tell me how she was frustrated with the remote learning experience because she wanted to communicate with her children's teachers but could not because she didn't speak English. She told me that she wished the schools did more check-ins in Bangla. Our City's immigrant families deserve better. As a City Council Member, I will work with schools in District 39 to provide more language accessible resources so that more families can be involved and participate in critical school decision processes such as town halls on school reopening. I recently wrote an op-ed about how immigrant families in Kensington have had issues adjusting to remote learning and how their kids have been coping with learning and surviving through a pandemic. While the need for remote learning is crucial in the midst of a pandemic, it is also important that the City's response must incorporate responses from our immigrant neighbors and residents. Our City needs to do better outreach to immigrant students and their families; households should not be limited to online outreach such as email and social media. It is important that the City also utilize media such as postal mail and notices on ethnic media.

The City must be a champion for families in remote learning and help to bridge the digital divide. As Director of Organizing, I have helped parents fill out requests for remote learning devices, and interface between educators and parents about household concerns. If elected, I would hire an education director in my office who takes a lens of equity and ideally speaks other high-need languages in my district such as Bangla and Spanish.

Our schools must be properly funded in order to provide resources - from digital devices to specialized support. Our City's public school students are living through an educational crisis, and without intervention, that crisis will only accelerate already unacceptable racial and class disparities. My first priority in education will be to push back against proposed cuts to NYC Department of Education (DOE) schools and CUNY. Our response to this crisis cannot be more austerity. As a Council Member, I will fight for a City budget that reallocates funding from NYPD to DOE and CUNY. This includes examining our City's capital budget, and prioritizing capital dollars to our city's crumbling schools, rather than new police vehicles and precincts. Recognizing that more than 40 percent of NYC DOE's budget comes from state and federal government, I will also advocate at the state-level to push for raising taxes on wealthy New Yorkers to fund public schools, while pushing on our federal delegation to increase local and state aid to New York City as we enter the long recovery from COVID-19.

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

Yes, non-citizens should by default have the right to vote in City elections. They should also run for office and be elected to lead. Barring undocumented residents from voting only reinforces the violence of national borders. I believe all New Yorkers, regardless of citizenship status, should be able to make decisions on a government who will make policies that will shape their lives.



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

I will support any reform that will allow more candidates to run for public office - particularly candidates who are parents, working class, disabled and New Americans. This also means equitable care for campaign staff, particularly guaranteed healthcare and pay for staff, volunteers, and interns.

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?

All New Yorkers, regardless of citizenship status, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and size, deserve access to inclusive and safe sexual and reproductive healthcare and outreach. The City Council needs to expand access to reproductive healthcare in the City. As Council Member, I will advocate for more funding and investment of our City's public healthcare system and allocate more money from the Council budget to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Health and Hospitals Corporation. Budget allocations to these two agencies need to go toward funding programs and initiatives such as the NYC Cares program and community health clinics.

Expanding access to sexual and reproductive healthcare also means ensuring that care is culturally informed, language accessible, and free of medical bias. Implicit and explicit biases are baked into our medical system - particularly against women of color, immigrants, and multilingual patients. I will work with medical staff at public hospitals and community health clinics to provide workshops to help eliminate medical bias, and the City should work with community partners on a medical bias curriculum for all students at the CUNY School of Medicine. All outreach regarding sexual and reproductive healthcare must be culturally informed to provide political education to neighbors and to help deconstruct stigmas around topics such as abortion, birth control, and STIs/STDs. To ensure language accessibility, the Council can work with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to fund interpreters and translators at hospitals and clinics, and conduct outreach in other languages, centering access for deaf and blind patients.

When tackling the issue of maternal healthcare, the Council must acknowledge that there is a gap in treatment when it comes to accessing maternal healthcare, especially for Black folks. We need to ensure that Black folks and other folks who have been historically marginalized by the healthcare system are listened to and heard throughout their pregnancy. As Council Member, I will ensure that pregnancy healthcare is culturally informed, language accessible, free of medical bias and anti-Black sentiments. To do this, we need to ensure that all staff at public hospitals and community health clinics are educated on anti-Blackness, and increase pipelines for Black students to enter and thrive in the medical field.

Furthermore, I recognize that pregnancy and facing medical bias can be stressors for a person and I want to ensure that folks who are pregnant, especially Black folks, have access to mental health care during their pregnancy and post-pregnancy. As Council Member, I commit to expanding mental health care access for all New Yorkers and will work to ensure that outreach and accessibility to these services are centered around Black folks and other historically marginalized groups.

Expanding reproductive healthcare also means repealing laws that criminalize sex work. When these laws are repealed, it will ensure that sex workers feel safe to access sexual and reproductive healthcare so they are able to stay healthy for themselves and feel safe while working. If I am elected to the Council, I will work to advocate for the repeal of municipal, state, and federal laws that criminalize sex work such as the "Walking While Trans" law and I will advocate for laws that will protect sex workers.

Finally, I will ensure that our public schools have a sex education curriculum that is both comprehensive and inclusive of all identities and backgrounds. The curriculum needs to include 1) an inclusive understanding of



all cultural identities, sexual orientations, and gender identities, 2) a deconstruction of stigmas surrounding STIs and STDs, and 3) a conversation about boundaries and consent beyond “no means no.” Through my work leading Participatory Budgeting (PB), in Cycle 9 constituents in my district voted to fund peer-to-peer workshops to destigmatize reproductive and sexual health for middle schoolers at MS 442. The MS 442 project was led by 8th grader Zoe Alperin from start to end with close support from me and our PB Youth Committee (the only one that exists among participating PB districts!).

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?

Transportation accessibility is personal for me as a Lupus survivor and a person with disabilities. While navigating Lupus as a 17 year old, I applied for Access-A-Ride and was denied. This rejection meant I had no choice but to use our inaccessible public transportation and go up and down the stairs of subway stations without elevators and escalators as a disabled woman or pay for car service before ridesharing apps like Uber and Lyft were created. Due to prohibitive rule, I had to wait a year before I could reapply for paratransit. However, when I re-applied and was approved for Access-A-Ride, I witnessed a new slew of challenges with the unreliable service. I stopped using AAR and was forced to map out every station with elevators to get around the City. I couldn't fathom why it was so complicated to obtain basic and critical City services, like public transportation, that would have made getting care at hospitals and a chance at continuing my education in college easier for my survival. It's as if the City didn't want me to survive.

Subways and buses are not accessible for most New Yorkers. District 39 has above ground subway stations with steep stairways and it is important to advocate for more accessible entrance ways. We need to ensure our stations are equipped with elevators and other infrastructure to increase accessibility such as elevators at the 7th Avenue Station. In addition, it is important to also decrease transportation deserts within the district. As Council Member, I will work with the Department of Transportation and other agencies to bring back the B71 bus to bring more transit options into transit desert pockets. Accessibility also means decreasing the cost of public transportation - I realize this is near-impossible through the role of City Council alone, but economic justice is central to my transit advocacy.

Additionally, we need to look into greener solutions to transit, especially as we are in the midst of a climate crisis. Biking is an amazing green alternative; however, it is not accessible for all. As someone who has both arm and hip replacements, biking in the district and the City overall can be dangerous and falling and collapsing is a huge fear of mine. I was too afraid to bike on our streets because the City does not have adequate bike lanes, some streets are unpaved and others are known death traps. As Council Member, I aim to make biking more accessible and safer for all New Yorkers. I will work with the DOT to construct protected bike lanes throughout the district, particularly in Borough Park, a Priority Bicycle district, or area with high incidents of bicycle injuries or fatalities. In addition, I will work to fund bike shares and community education that is language accessible and culturally informed around biking. Bike cooperatives and cycling community education was a huge reason why I gained confidence in cycling in the City.

Making streets more pedestrian friendly also means revitalizing our plaza programming, working with urban designers to implement traffic calming mechanisms like street trees, increasing open streets programming, and decreasing the presence of police in our streets and public spaces. This also means supporting food and drink vendors (financially and legislatively), block parties, plantings, community art, seating, and safe access to play spaces. Pedestrian friendly streets are also safer for drivers, and more careful planning will ultimately decrease congestion and traffic incidents.

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?

On fairness in employment: a central facet of my campaign advocacy is my platform to protect gig workers throughout the City. While I recognize that worker reclassification efforts have to happen at the State and Federal levels, the City has the power to extend many benefits to independent contractors, not limited to Just Cause, paid sick leave, and minimum wage. For example, workers in the taxi industry (including for-hire vehicle and rideshare drivers) are the backbone of our City, and providing continued support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic despite our City failing to protect drivers with health and pension funds, or even basic PPE. Especially because private tech companies like Uber and Lyft deny workers' protections (like healthcare, strong anti-harassment and discrimination policies, and paid sick leave) through refusing to recognize drivers as employees, City Council must protect the health, safety, and well-being of taxi workers and all gig workers during COVID-19 and beyond. I am committed to working with colleagues in the State and Assembly to provide gig workers with labor protections and benefits through reclassification as employees, not independent contractors. I will also advocate to provide independent drivers with healthcare and pension funds. I will work to expand access to legal resources for my independent worker constituents, particularly through my constituent services arm, focusing on Know Your Rights events, and in partnership with folks already doing this work, like New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA).

On strengthening and increasing access to union membership: As Council Member, I will support union organizing through advancing policies such as creating a workers' bill of rights that covers gig and independent workers, and includes protections for undocumented employees. I will push for legislation creating legal protections for workers that protect them from retaliation and harassment from employers for organizing or joining unions. I will also call for Council hearings on job safety, particularly during COVID-19, and use those hearings to push for increased staffing, training, fair scheduling, and other measures to make sure New Yorkers are returning to safe work environments. I will also leverage my visibility as Council Member to put pressure on union-busting employers. I will stand outside storefronts in solidarity with workers. I will also work with my colleagues in the Council and organize sign-on letters to support our constituents and labor allies. I will also mobilize my office's constituent services arm to host workshops on union organizing for constituents, with Know Your Rights trainings and lessons learned from successful union fights within our District.

On City Council unionization: During my time in the City Council, I joined my first union, the New York City Council Union - Association for Legislative Employees. Together with my colleagues I fought for City Council staffers to be unionized. I've learned how challenging it is to do so, and as Council Member I will fight to protect my staffers' right to be unionized.

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?

First and foremost, it is crucial for the City Council to center those who have been historically impacted by racist and unjust policies. The Council has a unique role in the City as it is a legislative body and the point of contact for direct and grassroots constituent services work. It is the most constituent-present role among the other citywide roles wherein the Council Member is directly on the ground within the geographical area of the district. This makes the City Council a more community-based role and therefore, the Council has an important role to be radical advocates for constituents of their district in legislative matters. We need to ensure that we actively speak to and work alongside community advocates and local grassroots organizations and incorporate their recommendations when creating policy.

Secondly, we have to expand opportunities for civic engagement for underserved New Yorkers through



expanding language access. Language access is crucial to ensure that all New Yorkers get the resources and services they need and allow them to actively participate in civic life, such as being able to engage at Council hearings, community board meetings, and town halls. As Council Member, I'm committed to continuing language accessible services and legal aid both as a means to get vital immigration-related information (like when a judge blocked changes made by the Trump administration to fee waiver rules) to my community in Bangla and challenge voter suppression by helping community members on their path to citizenship or bring them into the campaign to fight for noncitizen voting access in municipal elections. Additionally, as Council Member, I aim to make PTAs and Community Board participation more accessible by paying folks for their involvement, providing an option for remote meetings/voting, and providing childcare.

"Leveling the playing field" for historically marginalized groups also means opening the pipeline for more BIPOC, working class, and immigrant New Yorkers to work in government and eventually run for office. The most impactful way to open up the pipeline is to pay all government interns and to provide staff, especially BIPOC staff a living wage. Unpaid internships and low salaries often deter BIPOC, working class, and immigrant folks from seeking these positions yet, government internships and jobs are a way to influence change within the government while gaining skills, connections, and experience to run for office. As Council Member, I commit to paying my interns and paying my staff a living wage.

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?

Relying on private developments and Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) to create affordable housing has not been effective. The current MIH policy and other affordable housing mechanisms do not allow many New Yorkers, especially working class New Yorkers, to have access to permanent, safe, affordable housing. As City Council Member, I will ensure that the City uses a social housing model through the use of community land trusts (CLTs) to create truly affordable housing and to prioritize the preservation of our public housing stock, especially our NYCHA developments.

In order for housing for all New Yorkers to be truly affordable, it must be social, de-commodified, and center true democratic resident control. Community land trusts (CLTs) best represent social housing for the City. We must effectively utilize vacant lots and vacant/foreclosed buildings in the City to create CLTs run by community members. CLTs are a promising way of investing back in Black, brown, Indigenous communities, and working families - as they aim to provide long-term homeownership and generational wealth. The Council can provide much needed long-term and stable funding to CLTs, recruit diverse homeowners, help organize residents to learn about their rights as homeowners, and require cooperatives/CLTs to reveal their rationale behind rejections to ensure non-discriminatory practices. In addition, as Council Member, I would propose abolishing the Giuliani tax lien sale law to ensure that sales of foreclosed properties do not prioritize private developers and instead, properties can be considered as spaces for CLTs. Additionally, I will also work with my colleagues in the State Legislature to implement a 100 percent affordable housing plan through the use of social housing that is bought and managed by the State.

CLTs are also a way for the City to create permanent housing for those who are homeless. It is crucial that the City focuses on creating permanent, supportive housing for those who are homeless rather than creating more temporary shelters. To ensure that folks are able to pay for rent and utilities, the City should work with local nonprofit organizations to provide grants for folks who are displaced such as homeless folks and folks who were formerly incarcerated. These grants can be used to ensure that folks can meet rent payments and not be evicted.

The Council is central to ensuring that the land use planning process is more inclusive and accessible to the local community. Local communities must be centered in the land use planning process. As Council



Member, I will be advocating for a community-led comprehensive planning process so that individual ULURP actions could instead be first and foremost measured against whether the application furthers the community's vision for the neighborhood. I will ensure that the ULURP timeline is extended and fight to ensure that the process focuses more on listening to the voices of community members and no longer relies solely on the voices of the Community Board, the Borough President, and the City Planning Commission. I will work to ensure that accessibility is expanded for more community members to engage in the planning process by expanding language access or providing child care during the meetings. City Planning should also have more community-driven racial impact, environmental impact, and public health impact studies, with the inclusion of a community impact statement. The City's planning process must include voices of local grassroots organizations in the planning and feedback process.

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?

The City must work to improve the infrastructure of NYCHA buildings. While Participatory Budgeting (PB) has provided a tiny funding stream to repair NYCHA buildings and should continue to be used, the funds that are currently available through PB are simply not enough to address billions of dollars of immediate improvements that are needed. Capital funding allocated to NYCHA should be increased with an accountability and watchdogging process to ensure repairs are actually made.

I oppose the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program and privatizing NYCHA. These are short-term solutions focused on minor infrastructural improvements rather than preserving and sustaining permanently affordable housing. Using RAD and other means to privatize NYCHA to improve NYCHA buildings affirms and uplifts a predatory and capital-driven real estate market. They are solutions that do not prioritize affordability and resident control of NYCHA. NYCHA and other public housing should not be privatized, especially in the midst of an affordable housing crisis in New York City.

Instead of RAD/privatizing NYCHA, the City should take advantage of other funding streams, such as taxing millionaires and billionaires. Putting public housing on the market does not guarantee that these homes will remain affordable and public for New Yorkers in the long run, especially as the housing market becomes increasingly competitive. RAD and privatizing NYCHA is reminiscent of how many of the City's Mitchell Lama units were converted into private housing. To ensure we have true affordable housing, the City needs to work towards more social housing that is equitable, tenant led, and affordable for New Yorkers.

As Council Member, I will be working closely with State and Federal elected officials to allocate and secure funding for improvements in NYCHA developments. Although there are no NYCHA complexes in my district I will always oppose RAD and the privatization of NYCHA and stand with public housing residents.

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?

There is a particular urgency around closing Rikers, as conditions become increasingly unsafe and inhumane throughout the COVID-19 crisis. I am in support of all efforts to decarcerate our city and end mass incarceration. I am in favor of closing Rikers, and there should be no new jails in New York City. An effective decarceration plan would include ending over-policing, expanding transformative justice practices, investing in anti-racist housing programs, and reorientating mental health crisis responses away from the police.

I strongly believe in ending mass incarceration, and know that City Council is a promising space for that fight.



Mass incarceration is a plague that has disproportionately impacted Black and brown communities. As Council Member, this means working with allies in the State Senate and Assembly to release incarcerated folks from prison, through expanding compassionate early release, repealing laws that criminalize poverty, and ending fees associated with the criminal-legal process. Ending mass incarceration means amending the City Charter to repeal the section governing the police department and its duties, reducing the size of the police force, demilitarizing the police, breaking the police union's power, and ensuring that police union contracts do not include provisions to prevent police oversight.

Ending mass incarceration also means ending the conditions that cause crime, through fully funding desegregated and inclusive education, removing police and exclusionary discipline from schools, ending food deserts, funding inpatient and community-based drug treatment services, and more.

17) 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 lifelong Brooklyn resident, I have seen the disproportionate consequences of the criminal justice system on Black and Brown communities. While I was a student at Brooklyn College, an undercover police officer spied on and surveilled Muslim students on campus. This incident is an example of unjust policing that I have witnessed as a part of my upbringing in Brooklyn. As an alum, I continue to work with the Brooklyn College community in their Anti-Racist Coalition, which was created to challenge systemic injustices towards Black and Brown students on campus. I was involved as an activist with CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities in New York and in 2014, I worked with the organization to condemn the actions of police officer Peter Liang for his involvement in Akai Gurley's death in East New York.

My policy platform for criminal justice reform focuses on methods for (1) defunding the police, (2) disbanding the use of jails, and (3) redefining community safety. As Council Member, I will defund the police through amending the City Charter, reducing the size of the police force, strengthening the civilian complaint review board, and breaking the police union's power. I will disband jails through pushing for compassionate early release, repealing laws that criminalize poverty and further endanger survivors of gendered violence, and working with the District Attorney's office to end fees associated with the criminal legal process. I will reimagine community safety by uplifting Participatory Budgeting as a means of community control, removing exclusionary discipline from public schools, working with CUNY schools to cut ties with the NYPD, supporting transformative justice and de-escalation for situations of domestic and interpersonal violence, and helping formerly incarcerated folks transition into their communities safely.

I support defunding and demilitarizing the NYPD, and reallocating funds towards critical community needs. In my first year in office, I will push for at least \$1 billion in cuts to the NYPD's budget: this number comes from organizers and groups who have been leading the charge around decarceration for years. Specifically through freezing new hires, cancelling new cadet classes, and cutting budgets for surveillance infrastructure that's already been shown to target Black and brown New Yorkers. The NYPD keeps police officers who have brutalized and killed New Yorkers on the force, while taxpayers continue to pay their salaries and pensions. As we divest from the NYPD, I will prioritize reallocating funding to expand mental health services, youth programming, affordable housing, and invest in our public schools and colleges. I will also push to fund new initiatives such as a Citywide Interpretation Fund and a Survivor Security Fund (I'll discuss these proposals in more detail below). Specifically, this means pulling money away from surveillance technology used to separate families and deport community members to militarized equipment used against protestors to school safety officers. In NYC public schools, there are more SSOs than guidance counselors, social workers, and nurses combined. The activities I would immediately shift away from the NYPD are 1) intervening in immediate mental health crises, 2) responding to homeless services, 3) enforcing traffic laws,



4) resolving neighborhood quality of life issues (ex. noise complaints, loitering, etc.), 5) dealing with situations in school involving disputes and discipline, and 6) de-escalating situations of domestic violence. These changes would shift funds away from the bloated NYPD budget and into other crucial agencies and public services deeply in need of more funding. I support removing police from schools, mental health responses, homeless outreach, domestic violence, child welfare, and other social services. By expanding the NYPD's role in the city's social services, we are facilitating state violence and the escalation of conflict—rather than remedying any problems at hand. Funneling these tasks to the notoriously opaque NYPD also limit the public's ability to shape how we build and deliver public services. Allowing the NYPD to have any role in the social sector simply puts our collective resources towards the perpetuation of violence, racism, and classism — without ever getting close to addressing the root causes of instability and poverty.

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

The City's current land use approval process is exclusionary and does not take into account marginalized voices, specifically BIPOC voices, immigrant voices, and voices from the working-class. An example of this is the make up of community boards, which are predominately white, able-bodied, and working 9-5 jobs. Community Boards have a lot of accessibility issues that do not allow more community members to attend and actively participate. I briefly served on Community Board 12, which did not have a working website nor share regular updates, which impacts the public's attendance in meetings. In addition, the ULURP timeline is not reflective of the planning and negotiations needed to make a thoughtful decision for the community and its people. Local residents, who are on these boards and attend these meetings, are doing the work on a volunteer basis and may not have the time and resources to devote to planning sessions like private developers do. This results in a lot of land use decisions being approved without careful planning that is considerate of community needs.

As it stands right now, ULURP is a system that forces neighbors to react to individual proposals from the Mayor and corporate developer interests instead of providing communities the opportunity to proactively plan for what THEY want to see in their communities. I will be advocating for a community-led comprehensive plan so that individual ULURP actions could instead be first and foremost measured against whether the application furthers the community's vision for the neighborhood.

As a Council Member, I will ensure that the ULURP timeline is extended and that the process is more community-focused, not just relying on the voices of the Community Board, the Borough President, and the City Planning Commission. I will work to ensure that accessibility is expanded for more community members to engage in the planning process such as expanding language access or providing child care. City Planning should also have more community-driven racial impact and environmental impact studies, with the inclusion of a community impact statement. The City planning process must include voices of local grassroots organizations in the planning and feedback process.

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

Housing is a human right and the City needs to do more to tackle the homelessness crisis. In District 39, one out of every 15 K-12 students experienced homelessness over the last five years. Many families in the district were already on the brink of homelessness before the pandemic: in 2017, one in four households were severely rent burdened, and nearly a quarter of workers are in low-wage occupations. As housing gets more expensive across the city, my district's residents have not seen their wages increase, nor have they seen enough truly affordable housing available in the district. At a time where there are 80,000 New Yorkers who are displaced from their homes and more who are at risk of becoming homeless, it is clear that the City has not been taking sufficient steps to ensure that homeless New Yorkers have a pathway to permanent



housing. By focusing on the creation of temporary and often dilapidated shelters and the encouragement of luxury real-estate development, the City has not adequately ensured that there are pathways for permanent housing. Access to safe and stable housing is a human right. Furthermore, domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness in NYC, and survivors in shelters are overwhelmingly women of color. I approach homelessness with a lens of gender justice because of my survivor advocacy in Kensington: housing instability and precarity forces survivors to stay in abusive households.

My long-term vision to end homelessness is to create permanently affordable housing for all New Yorkers. We can achieve this vision by having the City target the creation of permanent and supportive housing for homeless New Yorkers over the creation of shelters. This can be done through working with local nonprofit organizations to provide grants for folks who are displaced such as homeless folks and folks who were formerly incarcerated. These grants can be used to ensure that folks can meet rent payments and not be evicted. In addition, I would work to promote the use of Community Land Trusts to prioritize Black and Brown home ownership and to expand the reach of NYCHA eligibility to ensure that more folks qualify for public housing. I will also work with my colleagues in the State Legislature to implement a 100 percent affordable housing plan through the use of social housing that is bought and managed by the State.