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2019 Environmental Candidate Questionnaire for New York City Public Advocate Candidates

Campaign Contact Information

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PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please share your accomplishments or experiences that indicate your commitment to advancing a pro-environment agenda. These experiences may be professional or personal.

I am proud to have received the endorsement of the NY League of Environmental Voters in 2018 and the EPL Environmental Advocates rating of 100% on my legislative record in 2017. I have been a vocal advocate for a transition to 100% renewable energy. The two sectors that contribute the most greenhouse gas emissions are transportation and buildings. That is why this year, I was proud to co-sponsor a state bill to tax the highest carbon emitters in the state. I am also a committed supporter of the Million Solar Strong Campaign -- a movement of leading industry, environmental, clean energy and community organizations -- with the bold new goal of powering one million New York households—including 100,000 low-income households—with solar by 2023.

As a child of the South Bronx, representing the 79th Assembly District, which is home to 21% of NYCHA residents, I am outraged that the City has failed to protect the environmental health of NYCHA residents, has lied about conditions and failed to take real responsibility and aggressive steps to deal with devastating environmental health issues. I will not stand for it.

No one, no matter your color, income, or immigration status, should be threatened by the irreversible effects of lead paint poisoning. It is unconscionable that in an age of the lead-filled water crisis in Flint, Michigan, lead poisoning in our city's public school drinking water is yet another disaster. According to the CDC, there is absolutely no safe level of lead- so there is no question that we need to get the lead OUT NOW- out of our water, out of our paint in older buildings, out of our soils in playgrounds and day care centers. We should protect our children, especially when the impacts fall disproportionately on young black and Latino children and lead exposures may have long-term developmental effects.

That is why last year, I co-sponsored a bill to create NYCHA-based health centers to provide basic health services, such as lead and mold exposure testing and respiratory related illness services, for residents living in NYCHA buildings.

As your Public Advocate, I will demand renewable energy, jobs for our neighbors in a sustainable energy economy and I will hold the city responsible and fight for the people until justice, care, and attention is afforded to all New Yorkers. I will fight for environmental justice so that communities of color are not the only ones burdened by the city's solid waste infrastructure and ensure that low income communities, which are more likely to be vulnerable to extreme weather conditions brought on by climate change, receive investments for infrastructure that will help keep them safe, while sustaining the environment. I will support the work that Tish James started to investigate corporate polluters who conspire with federal officials to mislead New Yorkers about the risk of climate change. I will fight to protect workers and consumers from toxic products that lead to asthma and disease. I will make sure our bike lanes are safe and accessible to decrease the negative impact that car emissions have on our city air.

ISSUES

Please indicate your level of commitment to, and if applicable your recent personal and professional activity with respect to, the following issues:

(To ensure your responses address the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please review NYLCV's 2018 NYC Policy Agenda when formulating your responses.)

2. Energy and Infrastructure

As a proud supporter of the Million Solar Strong Campaign, I see renewable energy as central to our survival as a planet and as central to economic justice in communities. Jobs and justice are central to my platform and I believe strongly that powering one million New York households with solar will generate jobs, reduce and stabilize utility bills, stimulate local investment, cut harmful air pollution, accelerate an equitable transition to our clean energy future, and counter the Trump Administration's destructive rollbacks on environmental policy.

I support the Mayor's Roadmap to 80 x 50, but I want to speed it up and make it 80 x 30. We have made a lot of progress, but we need greater focus on more complex solutions, pursuing solutions that expand Councilman Constantinides' geothermal energy bill, focusing on wastewater plants, and district heating and cooling in NYCHA neighborhoods.

I also 100% support a carbon tax on the biggest polluters. If big companies are making money by dumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, then as economists tell us, let's put a price tag on it that pays the public back for the harms the carbon causes and create the incentives for big business to invest in green solutions, not greenhouse gases.

Additionally I support investments in battery storage for buildings so that Solar and renewables can be even more effective solutions to reduce greenhouse gases. To maximize our renewable potential we need to harness the future of energy storage. I plan to work with the DOB and the FDNY to find safe and replicable safety measures for batteries for residential and commercial buildings.

I will work tirelessly to ensure increased safety measures be made so New Yorkers can have safe and reliable renewable energy stored, for clean, dependable and resilient energy and I am committed to investments in low-income communities so that they are able to get access to renewable energy alternatives and get jobs in the sector, like WE ACT's Solar Uptown.

As a city where two thirds of our residents are people of color, almost forty percent are foreign born and almost half struggle to meet basic needs, I am also going to demand that we support low-income communities to be able to participate in environmental sustainability, the innovation we need, and community-driven solutions. From NYCHA to community solar and resiliency projects, we need more of the City's strategies to include the communities most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change.

3. Resilience

I support increased grey and green infrastructure development, restrictions to new construction development in FEMA Flood Zones, and sound investment in microgrid and building's battery storage capabilities. Of course, renewables are important - but we need it to be stored and self-resilient. When we look at what hurricanes did to Puerto Rico and Florida's grids, where citizens were left without power, it is clear that without proper planning, there can be major public safety, health, and environmental hazards.

4. Solid Waste

We have a solid waste emergency. Studies have shown that asthma and air quality around marine transfer stations is poorer than in other parts of the city. I have a five-point plan to reduce solid waste that I will execute as Public Advocate:

1. Improve recycling through a funded and organized campaign to educate residents on how to correctly recycle.
2. Fine landlords, management companies, stores, building managers if they disregard these rules.
3. Tax or ban single use plastics, which pollute our waters.
4. Increase our composting program - especially in our less-wealthy communities.

5. Call on the City for a plan to invest in waste to energy systems.

5. Clean Air

The air quality of New York City has improved dramatically over the past two decades, but so much still needs to be done, especially in low-income neighborhoods where asthma in our children remains all too common. We need to replace boilers, improve housing materials that have been compromised through years of managerial and environmental neglect, and invest in more vegetation where ever possible due to their filtration abilities. NYCHA is a priority for new boilers, eradication of rats and other factors that increase asthma in public housing.

Through congestion pricing, we can decrease the number of cars on the road while funding much needed improved transportation services. This will help achieve New York State and New York City's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050. After London passed congestion pricing in 2003, the city saw a 15% reduction in traffic, and a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

6. Clean Water

The City's water system is the largest in the nation and one of only a handful not required to spend money on a filtration system. Most of New York's water pollution stems from Stormwater Runoff, we need to systematically change our dependence on MS4 systems and invest in more green infrastructure construction, from bioswales, rain gardens, gravel pits, trees, even waterfront restoration, particularly in vulnerable communities.

Earlier this year over 1,100 schools have found lead in our children's drinking water. This is UNACCEPTABLE. My office will work with the SCA, DDC, DOE and DOH to find any and all contaminated piping systems and have them changed immediately. I will also work tirelessly to audit and hold those legally accountable for the NYCHA lead crisis, I will ensure that the abatement of toxic pollutants is completed by year's end and will use the legal powers of my office to hold those officials who should've been trusted with the personal and environmental well-being of our citizens and children are held accountable for dishonesty, corruption and incompetence.

7. Sustainable Food Systems

Three million New Yorkers live in food deserts, and a majority of these individuals live in lower-income neighborhoods and communities. As Public Advocate, I will use discretionary funds to increase the NYC Green Cart program in communities with the most food injustice. I will also work to create a liason function between community boards in food desert districts with Farm School NYC, to connect low-income residents with food, the planet and good health. Finally, I will use the power of the office to advocate for the importance of increasing food literacy, sharing information about healthy and smart food choices, and environmental

sustainability regarding how we consume food.

8. Mobility

On congestion pricing, I support the MoveNY Campaign but I want to be heavily involved in the writing and implementation of the ruling to ensure it does not disproportionately hurt outer borough citizens.

In terms of the MTA, I believe the Public Advocate should have a seat on the MTA board to fight for greater transit equity and to be sure our resources and investments are being spent where our residents need it most.

I believe e-scooters and e-bikes should be legal and I also support electrifying our bus fleets in NYC. We have over 5,000 public buses in NYC; the City has decided to research this issue over the past few years, but I think it is time to make a commitment to phase in a cleaner bus fleet. Recently California passed legislation to operate 100% zero-emission bus fleets by 2040. The full implementation of the regulation is expected to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 19 million metric tons from 2020 to 2050, which CARB said is the same as taking 4 million cars off the road. Mass transit agencies in California promised to roll out 1,000 electric buses by 2020. The agencies, which are required to submit plans on how they will make the transition, will only be allowed to purchase zero-emissions buses starting 2029.

9. Parks, Waterfronts and Natural Areas

Green Space is so important and affects many areas: resiliency, stormwater management, pollution control, and increased biodiversity. All new developments need to invest in green space in surrounding areas, roofs, and spaces.

The parks department budget is less than 1% - that is a disgrace, parks lower crime, improve health, improve community and foster appreciation for the environment I hope to work with the Council to improve those numbers.

I would also like to talk to engineers, hydrologists and city planners about creek and stream restoration wherever possible. This is an often overlooked but remarkable option for biodiversity, cleaner water, improved air quality and economic development.