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## 2019 Environmental Candidate Questionnaire for New York City Public Advocate Candidates

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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.

Fighting climate change has been and will continue to be one of my top priorities. As Council Member for the City's 37th District I sit on the Committees of Environmental Protection, Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, and Transportation where I have consistently sponsored environmentally-conscious legislation. My record on the City Council includes:

- Introducing legislation to ban plastic drinking straws.
- Introducing legislation to ban the sale of single-use plastic bottles at city parks and beaches.
- Securing \$1.5M to purchase cities first electric school buses (working with NYLCV).
- Sponsoring a resolution urging the Governor to expedite the MTA transition to an electric bus fleet.
- Introducing legislation to require green roofs (solar, wind, or agricultural output) on all new buildings.
- Fighting to protect NYC's community gardens and green spaces.

- Creating the city's first website portal dedicated to helping urban agriculture.
- Pushing for better public transportation, such as keeping the planned L Train replacement bus services and bike lanes happening even if the L Train isn't completely shut down.
- Leading the legislative work to legalize electric bikes and e-scooters.

## 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

Meeting the challenge of climate change is an opportunity to upgrade our energy system and infrastructure to be cleaner and more resilient, as well as empowering people to generate their own cheap, clean energy and break free from the utilities that burn fossil fuels. My bill to require green roofs on new buildings (including solar and wind power generation) is a practical way to increase NYC's renewable energy generation so we can shut down fossil fuel power plants.

I introduced Bill No. 1567, studying the feasibility of microgrids. This bill would require the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability to issue a report on the feasibility of developing microgrids in New York City. It is essential to plan proactively for policy and regulatory changes in anticipation of emerging green technology such as battery storage and microgrids.

### 3. Resilience

Climate change is already happening and the effects are hitting us hard. The city's heat and humidity can be mitigated through implementing green roofs across the city. The legislation I introduced requiring new commercial buildings to be partially covered in plants or solar panels, promotes energy efficient building practices, as green roofs filter pollutants and solar roofs encourage renewable energy generation and reduce air pollution.



Overall, resilience should be factored into all infrastructure and housing decisions. We need to make sure we're making investments that will last the long term as the climate changes.

#### 4. Solid Waste

I believe the saying that “there is no such place as ‘away’ to throw things.” A lot of people will say we need to fix the recycling system, but actually we need to reduce the amount of waste we create in the first place. I have been the leading voice in the City Council to phase out the sale and distribution of all single-use plastics, while offering strong alternatives. NYC uses 13 million plastic straws and 27 million plastic bags every day. In order to drastically decrease these numbers I introduced bills banning plastic straws in establishments and prohibiting the sale of single-use bottles at city parks and beaches.

We need to address issues with the rollout of the curbside organic waste pick-up and expand it to all parts of the city. And we need to work with landlords in large buildings to ensure they are providing space and facilities for better waste management.

#### 5. Clean Air

Clean air should be a basic human right. To clean up our air we need to tackle both stationary energy emissions and the transportation sector. I have been the leading voice in City Hall calling for more electric buses, and achieved a \$1.25 million pilot program for them as well as sponsoring legislation to replace all school buses with electric buses.

Rapidly transitioning from burning oil and gas for power to solar and wind, will help us have cleaner air.

Sadly the worst air quality has often been in low-income areas of the city, leading to asthma and other respiratory illnesses. We need to see this not only as a climate and air quality issue, but also a health and equity issue.

#### 6. Clean Water

My green roofs legislation would help reduce runoff and provide a natural way to clean rainwater.

My proposed ban on plastic straws, plastic bottles, and other single uses plastics would have a huge effect on plastic pollution in our waterways.

#### 7. Sustainable Food Systems

Food is where human health and the health of our natural environment come together. I have been the leading voice in City Hall calling for more support for community gardens and commercial-scale urban agriculture. I established the first website portal for NYC urban agriculture and I have stood with the communities of the Nelson Mandela Garden, Elizabeth Street Garden, and other gardens against demolition and development.

#### 8. Mobility

Transportation makes up over 25% of NYC's carbon emissions, and I have taken action to reduce that. By leading the work to legalize e-bikes and e-scooters, we not only help provide clean alternatives to driving, but we can also help solve issues in our city's transit deserts e.g. using e-scooters to get to subway and LIRR stations.

I want to see more dedicated bus and bike lanes and better enforcement of them, so cyclists and buses aren't forced to make dangerous maneuvers.

I would like to see NYC set a date that we will stop selling new gasoline driven cars.

We need to make it easier for small businesses to install electric car chargers on the sidewalk, for their customers to use.

But the number one way we can have a more environmentally sustainable transportation system is by fixing the subway. No other elected official has so far proposed a credible plan to fund the \$40-60 billion the MTA needs. Congestion charging might be good for other reasons, but would only raise about \$1 billion a year. It won't be enough, by itself. Using marijuana revenue would only raise \$300 million a year. I would like to see the \$11 billion annual tax rebates to Wall Street stock trading cancelled, and that money invested in the MTA (and NYCHA) instead. In less than a decade we could once again have a world-class subway system, and after that the continuing revenue could be invested to serve transit deserts and reduce fares.

I do support congestion pricing because I understand it is likely to reduce congestion, carbon emissions, and air pollution. Some people say congestion pricing will hurt low income people but actually the reason we haven't got movement on congestion pricing is lobbying from wealthy people who drive into the city and live in Manhattan. Let's be honest: poor people in New York catch the subway and the bus - they don't drive into Manhattan. If we do get congestion pricing, we need to make sure that 100% of the revenue goes into improving the transportation system.

9. Parks, Waterfronts and Natural Areas

Cleaning up and preserving empty lots so they become community gardens is one of the easiest, most effective ways we can increase the livability of NYC.