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2021 Environmental Questionnaire for New York City Candidates

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the New York League of Conservation Voters Questionnaire.

To ensure your responses address the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please consult [NYLCV's 2021 New York City Policy Agenda](#) when answering the questions.

The New York League of Conservation Voters is the only non-partisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy, and open space through political action. This questionnaire is designed to elicit your views regarding what environmental, public health, clean energy and transit, and environmental justice groups consider to be the most important issues of the day. Responses may inform NYLCV's educational and legislative programs and actions NYLCV takes in the election cycle.

Responses should be considered public. Although NYLCV may choose not to publicize the responses to every question, verbatim responses may be reproduced and distributed publicly. If so, your responses may be shortened, if necessary, but will not be edited in substantive ways. If you choose to refer us to a position paper or website, please indicate exactly what text you would like us to cite. For candidates choosing not to respond to the questionnaire, NYLCV will note as much in its public materials.

NYLCV and its partners in the environmental policy arena believe that New York's voters are determined to make the environment a voting issue this year. Candidate positions on issues such as protecting public health, building a clean energy future, and mitigating climate change will help voters decide how to cast their ballots this election cycle. This questionnaire is one of the primary ways the public will get this information.

Here are a few guidelines:

- ☒ Questionnaires are due **Friday, February 26, 2021.**
- ☒ The completed questionnaire is mandatory for endorsement consideration and must be submitted via e-mail as a Microsoft Word file to: politics@nylcv.org
- ☒ Questions or extension requests may be directed to Joshua Klainberg (jklainberg@nylcv.org)
- ☒ After receipt of the completed questionnaire, candidates will be invited to participate in a formal interview with a local Chapter Board.
- ☒ Candidate endorsements will be made by the NYLCV State Board on April 29, 2021.

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.

In 2013, I was a young professional working and living in Washington, D.C. when my mother first started exhibiting signs of Alzheimer's disease. As the only child of a single mother, I spent an entire year traveling back and forth every weekend to tend to my mother's needs, until I was finally able to return home to Brooklyn to care for her full-time. It was through this caregiving experience that I was called to public service, knowing that working families like mine shouldn't have to struggle as much as we have to ensure that our loved ones can age in place. My family has been in this community for three generations, and I want to ensure that families like mine can raise a family, have a good job with good wages, and age with dignity at home.

I hold many intersectional identities as a queer Black woman and caregiver for my mother, and we are not single-issue people. I have long advocated for the rights of women, communities of color, immigrants, seniors, the LGBTQ+ community, and other marginalized communities -- social justice is housing justice, is immigrant justice, is environmental justice. The dual crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and irreversible climate change have laid bare the gross inequities that made both catastrophic for communities of color. We must enact policies that ensure resilient infrastructure, food sovereignty, and remediate intentional systems that

inflict chronic health conditions on Black and brown communities. At the start of the pandemic, I started Greater Prospect Heights Mutual Aid and have organized neighbors over the last year to ensure that basic needs of our neighbors were being met. As the fragility of our food system was revealed and immigrant workers quickly lost wages and faced the brunt of the recession, I am proud that our grocery program continues to support undocumented Black immigrants in our community.

ISSUES

Each year, NYLCV works closely with New York's leading environmental, public health, conservation, energy, environmental justice, and transportation organizations to identify the most pressing priorities on fighting climate change, conserving land and water, and protecting public health. These issues drive NYLCV's advocacy work throughout the legislative session, influence the bills we select for NYLCV's Environmental Scorecards, and informs the decision on the candidates we choose to endorse. To ensure your responses are in alignment with the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please review [NYLCV's 2021 New York City Policy Agenda](#) when formulating your responses.

Please indicate your level of commitment to, and if applicable your recent personal and professional activity concerning, all the policy priorities of our partners per the following issues:

Top Priorities

Transportation isn't only the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in our state—it is also a major source of air pollution, causing respiratory and other public health issues. This is particularly the case near New York City's many major highways where too often, these communities are low-income and communities of color.

2. Encouraging the Shift to High Efficiency, Low Emission Forms of Transportation (p. 3)

We must continue to ring the alarm about sustainability and infrastructure issues disproportionately impacting NYCHA residents, and the poor air quality in low-income neighborhoods across the city that experience high congestion along with an influx of commercial vehicle traffic. In my district, it is our NYCHA residents who live closest to the BQE, which we know is by design. I am proud that my very first endorsement was from the NYCHA tenant leaders in my district, because they know that I always have and always will stand with them in the fight for non-hazardous living conditions and a Green New Deal for NYCHA.

I will also continue to advocate for the transition to one hundred percent renewable energy at the city level, including continuing to reduce the city's reliance on vehicles for travel by expanding bike lanes and safe cycling options for all New Yorkers. Additionally, I support the implementation of congestion pricing, which will provide up to \$1 billion in revenue for the

MTA to make repairs and upgrades; and I know that New York City must convert its entire bus fleet to 100% electric vehicles, considering MTA buses overwhelmingly serve, are stored in, and used by Black and Brown New Yorkers - the entire fleet must contribute to our city's overall vision for climate and environmental justice, as well as expanded access to mass transit.

More than ever, New Yorkers realized the value of our parks and open spaces in 2020 as our cultural institutions were closed and we had to practice social distancing. Open green space is one of the City's most valuable environmental assets but also contributes to the well-being of our residents and our economy.

3. Conserving New York City's Parks and Natural Areas (p. 3)

Access to parks and green space is not only an environmental equity issue but also a racial justice issue. Right here in the 35th District, we see that Black and brown communities have far more limited access to green space and community gardens, whereas gentrified parts of our district are in close proximity to Prospect Park and Fort Greene Park. Once in office, I would commit capital dollars to the expansion and rehabilitation of green spaces and community gardens in partnership with the neighbors of our district, as I've already done with the mutual aid organization I started, where we partnered with community gardens to provide fresh food to neighbors in need.

Reaching the City's Zero Waste goal by 2030 will require work from all New Yorkers—cooperation of city officials and private industry, and buy-in from the public. Stimulating behavioral change is critical to meeting this goal, as is ensuring the City has programs in place that promote waste reduction, diversion, and sustainable waste management.

4. Common Sense Waste Management (p. 3)

I believe we need to reinstate and expand organics collection—including curbside pickup, drop-off sites, and expanded support for community composting opportunities. We also need to reduce the city's reliance on single-use plastics to build on the accomplishment of taxing the use of single-use plastic bags and banning the sale of single-use plastic beverage bottles on city property. I will advocate for scaling back single-use disposable plastics from dine-in services and encouraging the use of reusable materials where possible. Ineffective routes for recycling, compost, and sanitation collection result in collection trucks driving thousands of unnecessary miles, meaning more pollution and greater carbon emissions. In the Council, I will fight for funding for a recycling, compost, and sanitation route overhaul and working with sanitation and collection experts and community activists to create a plan that works for both the City and impacted communities.

Combating Climate Change

The time to act on climate is now. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report makes it clear that we must make radical changes in short order to avoid catastrophic climate change. We will work to advance policies that decrease emissions from all sectors, prepare us to meet the unavoidable impacts of climate change, reduce waste, and foster a strong green economy. We must also ensure the changes we make to tackle climate change benefit disadvantaged communities and provide for a just transition.

5. Energy and Infrastructure (p. 5)

We need a Green New Deal locally, not just nationally. In the 35th District, I will advance local solutions that directly address these challenges informed by current science, including but not limited to expanding options for community solar; reinstating and expanding organics collection including curbside pickup, drop-off sites, and expanded support for community composting opportunities; continuing to reduce the city's reliance on vehicles for travel by expanding bike lanes and safe cycling options for all New Yorkers; and implementing a fund to support buildings to more quickly comply with Local Law 97, which requires large buildings to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050.

Though the city recently divested \$4 billion in pension funds from fossil fuel company securities, our pension fund continues to invest in or do business with companies that propagate dirty energy infrastructure—from major banks that lend to these companies to their asset managers. I will work with the next comptroller to identify ancillary companies involved in the dirty energy sector and work to divest from these holdings. I am proud to refuse all campaign donations from the fossil fuel industry and the industry's financial enablers.

To achieve 100% renewable energy, we must start now to move away from our reliance on dirty energy. As such, I support decommissioning existing fossil fuel infrastructure—like the 16 operating peaker plants in New York City that are located primarily in communities of color and disproportionately harm Black and brown New Yorkers—and oppose any new fossil fuel infrastructure, like the North Brooklyn Pipeline that will bring fracked gas to our borough and jeopardize the health and safety of members of low-income communities.

As a council member, I will work to support the Renewable Rikers Act, a recently passed bill that would transfer the island's ownership to the Department of Environmental Protection and retrofit the island with green infrastructure. I will push to amend the proposal to ensure the jail is actually closed and that all solar constructed on Rikers is used for community solar and to guarantee that the project will provide jobs and on-the-job training to those who were previously incarcerated on the island.

6. Transportation (p. 5)

In addition to the implementation of congestion pricing (with its associated benefits to the MTA budget), and the conversion of NYCT's entire bus fleet to one hundred percent electric vehicles, we need to mitigate subway pollution. Recent studies have shown that New York mass transit commuters suffer the greatest amount of air pollution of any major city, breathing in more than seven times the safe level. One Manhattan subway station had a pollution level that was 77 times higher than above-ground pollution—similar to pollution found during a building demolition or near a large wildfire. As New Yorkers of color and lower-income New Yorkers are more likely to use our mass transit system, especially during the pandemic, this is not just a health and safety issue, it is an environmental issue. I will work with the MTA/NYCT to advocate for regular data collection at all stations and push for a strong mitigation strategy that prioritizes the most heavily polluted stations.

7. Resiliency (p. 6)

We must invest in municipal green infrastructure. As communities of color in coastal and low-lying areas become more vulnerable to rising sea levels and stronger storms—and suffer from heat island effects due to rising temperatures and a relative lack of parks and trees—the importance of investing in green infrastructure grows. We saw the impacts of Superstorm Sandy on low-income communities. During the storm, 80,000 NYCHA residents lost power, heat, and hot water, and power was not restored for many until more than two weeks after the storm. I know investments in our collective sustainability and resiliency are disproportionately needed in Black and brown neighborhoods, where they could produce tens of thousands of high-quality jobs in trades like community solar, home retrofitting, and wind turbine assembly. Our City must commit to meeting the resiliency needs of various coastal and low-lying areas to reduce flooding, whether by creating raised parkland, flood walls, floodgates, or other green infrastructure. I will work with community organizations—like UPROSE, WE ACT, Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, and the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance—to introduce a five-borough resiliency bill to develop a citywide resiliency plan for our City's entire coastline.

8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

Environmental racism has impacted the health and well-being of communities of color, who have carried the burdens of highways, waste transfer stations, transportation depots and the like for far too long. As written, New York City's fair share laws effectively allow communities that tend to be wealthier and whiter to avoid the siting of city facilities in their neighborhoods. I will advocate to overhaul the city's fair share laws in the Charter mandate that all communities across the five boroughs take on the responsibility of hosting sites for city facilities, and change

conversations that frequently allow NIMBY sentiments to prevail, moving the prevailing question from *whether* a facility will be sited to *when* and *how* it will be sited.

Further, I support obtaining funding for a recycling, compost, and sanitation route overhaul and working with sanitation and collection experts and community activists to create a plan that works for both the City and impacted communities.

Protecting People and Natural Resources

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution. We will promote policies that provide access to healthy air and water, protect our open spaces, and improve the well-being of all New Yorkers.

9. Parks, Natural Areas, and Active Waterfronts (p. 9)

We need to rehabilitate and expand green space and community gardens. Access to parks and green space is not only an environmental equity issue but also a racial justice issue. Even within the 35th District, we see that Black and brown communities have far more limited access to green space and community gardens, whereas gentrified parts of the district are in close proximity to Prospect Park and Fort Greene Park. I will ensure that I commit capital dollars to the expansion and rehabilitation of green space and community gardens in partnership with the neighbors of our district and does so through an equity lens. As the founder of Greater Prospect Heights Mutual Aid, I worked with local community gardens to get fresh, organic foods to neighbors experiencing food insecurity. As a council member, I will ensure partnerships like these have the resources they need to sustain and grow. The city needs a comprehensive citywide resiliency plan for the City's entire coastline to confront and mitigate the effects of climate change on low-lying areas, including raised parkland, flood walls, floodgates, and other green infrastructure.

10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

Since its inception, our city has enacted racist laws and policies that place the burden of unhealthy living conditions on the backs of Black and brown New Yorkers. These New Yorkers have had to deal with brain damage in their children from unmitigated lead paint or lead in their water supply, asthma from toxic fumes spewing from peaker plants, and the flooding of their homes due to stronger storms as a result of climate change—all because lawmakers have ignored them, intentionally restricted their ability to buy homes in safer neighborhoods, and refused to acknowledge the impact of these policies. We must completely rethink how our city approaches environmental protection and climate change mitigation to ensure environmental justice for the Black and brown communities that have borne the brunt of the inequities and tangible harm for

generations while also in the midst of a growing climate crisis that could place parts of our city completely underwater.

11. Reduce and Mitigate Heat Vulnerability (p. 9 – 10)

There are countless older Black and brown homeowners in the 35th district who would benefit from uniform energy-efficient retrofits for their homes to help reduce their emissions, save money on their utility bills, and support their eventual transition to clean energy. Existing heat and hot water systems in NYCHA developments create at worst dangerous and at best uncomfortable conditions for nearly all residents in the colder months of the year. NYCHA residents deserve access to reliable, non-stop heat and hot water without worrying about their health and well-being while staying at home.

12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

I want to end municipal investment in the fossil fuel industry; even though the city recently divested \$4 billion in pension funds from fossil fuel company securities, our pension fund continues to invest in or do business with companies that propagate dirty energy infrastructure. I will work with the next comptroller to identify ancillary companies involved in the dirty energy sector and work to divest from these holdings. To achieve one hundred percent renewable energy, we must start now to move away from our reliance on dirty energy.

I also fully support enforcing and expanding the Waste Equity Law, which took effect in 2020 and reduced permitting for transfer stations in four over-burdened neighborhoods by as much as fifty percent. I will also coordinate with MTA/NYCT to advocate for regular data collection at all subway stations and push for a strong mitigation strategy that prioritizes the stations experiencing the heaviest air pollution.

13. Clean Water for All (p.11)

We must completely rethink how our city approaches environmental protection and climate change mitigation to ensure environmental justice for the Black and brown communities that have borne the brunt of inequities and tangible harm for generations while also in the midst of a growing climate crisis. I commit to using the Council's oversight power to push for DEP to implement a formal, transparent reporting process that includes a public comment period with an opportunity for community engagement.

14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

We need to strengthen food sovereignty citywide. The pandemic has surfaced the fragility of New York City's food systems. Before COVID-19, nearly 1.2 million New Yorkers were already food insecure, which accounted for what the Food Bank of New York City defines as a "meal gap" of more than 201 million missing meals across the five boroughs. Mutual aid organizations across New York City have filled crucial gaps since the beginning of the pandemic, especially for Black and brown New Yorkers who have been hit the hardest by not only the pandemic but also by the economic instability that has resulted. The city has tremendous power over food procurement and therefore a stake in food sovereignty. Despite advocacy organizations' attempts at providing direct relief to undocumented workers, many undocumented folks are disconnected from services and do not otherwise qualify for SNAP or other forms of relief. I support the creation of a supplementary food voucher system for New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity who are left out of SNAP. I also support connecting mutual aid grocery efforts and support shared infrastructure at scale, contracting with food providers owned and operated by people of color and immigrant communities who can provide food recipients with culturally relevant food options, and expanding community fridges managed by non-profit organizations, mutual aid groups, and trusted local providers to ensure New Yorkers have the right to healthy, sustainably produced, and culturally appropriate food.

We need to end food apartheid. It is not mere coincidence that predominantly Black communities within Harlem, Brooklyn, and the South Bronx are home to New York City's food deserts. In these same areas, where income levels are below average, food deserts are linked to higher rates of diabetes and lower rates of physical inactivity. Simply put, we must create an equitable system of food access for all communities, especially the Black communities that have suffered for generations from a lack of access to high quality, healthy food products. To start, I support working with city agencies to identify the top twenty food deserts in our city and work with Black-owned supermarket owners to partner with treated community-based organizations that serve the Black community, providing them with sufficient seed money to open up grocery stores that cater to their neighbors' needs. I believe the city should work to locate these supermarkets in a centralized location for each food desert to ensure ease of access for the communities, provide resources for the promotion and advertising of these new locations to local community members, facilitate dialogues with local community groups to identify partnerships between various nonprofits and these supermarkets (e.g., fitness and healthy eating initiatives), and conduct a periodic analysis of food access in the City to determine whether new food deserts have appeared.