

*****Statement*****

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Senator Benjamin Endorses Marti Speranza for City Council

Albany's newest Democratic lawmaker makes early foray into 2017 City Council elections to endorse Community Board 5 member Speranza to replace term-limited Council member Dan Garodnick

In announcing support, Benjamin praises Speranza's leadership in the community, emphasizes need for strong progressive leadership in Midtown Council District that includes Trump Tower

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Democrat Marti Speranza, candidate for the 4th District of the New York City Council, has earned the support of Albany's newest Democratic lawmaker with the endorsement this week of State Senator Brian Benjamin. Benjamin, who overwhelmingly won the vacant 30th Senate District seat in the special election held in May, praised Speranza's newly-released criminal justice reform campaign platform and touted the Democrat as the clear progressive choice to represent the Midtown district at a time of growing concern over the policies of President Donald Trump, whose Trump Tower sits within the district.

"This is a critical time in New York, when progressive leadership is needed now more than ever to unite Democrats and stand up to the dangerous policies of Trump Republicans," **said State Senator Brian Benjamin.** "We need this up in Albany and in our City Council, especially in the district that's home to Trump Tower. That's why I'm proud to endorse Marti Speranza for City Council. Marti has the demonstrated leadership on her local community board, willingness to stand up for the rights of women, immigrants and the LGBTQ community, and the fighting spirit to bring progressive leadership right to Donald Trump's doorstep. Her commitment to advancing meaningful criminal justice reform at the city level is inspiring to see as we push to close Rikers Island as quickly as possible, and I hope to partner with her in the Council on this."

"It's an honor to receive Senator Benjamin's support," **said City Council candidate Marti Speranza.** "The Senator has dedicated his life to public service on his local community board and to making affordable housing available to all families in his professional career. In his short time in the legislature, Senator Benjamin has delivered real results on protecting the character of our unique communities and proposing a path forward on reforming our broken criminal justice system. His is just the kind of leadership I hope to bring to the 4th District as our next Council Member."

Benjamin's endorsement of Speranza follows his landslide victory in the May 23rd special election for the 30th State Senate District, which encompasses Harlem, East Harlem and the Upper West Side. Since his win, Benjamin has received national attention for restoring the numerical majority to the State Senate, and for urging unity between the body's mainline Democratic Party and the GOP-aligned Independent Democratic Conference (IDC). The freshman lawmaker also scored an early

victory recently when a Harlem real estate firm heeded calls by Benjamin and advocates to end the controversial re-branding of Southern Harlem as "SoHa."

The Senator's endorsement also coincides with the release of Speranza's new [criminal justice reform campaign platform](#). The six-point plan outlines the candidate's support for Benjamin's efforts to expedite the closure of Rikers, and advocates for the passage of the Right to Know Act, empowering the Civilian Complaint Review Board, and preventing Immigration and Customs Enforcement from entering city courts and schools.

The plan also calls for preventing the city from awarding public construction contracts to firms tied to private prison operators the Geo Group and the Corrections Corporation of America. The former has been criticized for its operation of a federal immigration detention center in Queens, and has made its way into the campaign for the 4th District. Candidate Keith Powers, Speranza's opponent in the race, is a registered lobbyist who counts the Geo Group and associates of the Trump Organization as clients.

The endorsement comes as Speranza and a crowded field of opponents ramp up campaign efforts in their bid to replace term-limited Council Member Dan Garodnick. The district notably includes the midtown residence of President Trump and his family, which has drawn thousands to protest Trump's dangerous anti-immigrant, anti-choice and anti-environmental policies.

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