



## 2021: A Vision for New York City

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### Introduction + Commitment

As New York City undergoes one of its most momentous elections in the past decade, NYIC Action calls upon any candidate interested in receiving our support to enthusiastically agree to our vision. As the city with the largest immigrant population in the country, elected officials must hold our values of unity, fairness, and justice in their platforms. We must go beyond the work we have successfully done over the past eight years and build a more just and equitable New York City for all. A city where racial justice is at the forefront of policy, not an afterthought. A city where those with and without status can thrive and have a pathway for upward economic mobility. A city that respects all New Yorkers and provides avenues for success no matter when they first called our city home. A city that puts the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized above the interests of a powerful elite.

In order to be considered for our official endorsement process, you must agree to and adopt our vision. Upon agreement you will be notified of next steps in our process.

### Our Vision

The last four years have challenged immigrant communities in the City to build their resiliency and advance despite countless sustained federal attacks. We recognize that even with a welcome change in the White House, New York's immigrant communities cannot count on the federal government to ensure all of the conditions necessary for a just future for immigrants. We need City elected officials and decision makers to show true leadership, and join us as invested partners in ensuring justice and opportunity for all.

We offer this vision in five issue areas that are critical to immigrant communities in New York City:

- Building Political Power and Guaranteed Civil Rights
- Ending State Support for Detention, Deportation and Mass Incarceration
- Ensuring Economic Justice and Good Jobs
- Quality Education
- Creating Healthy Communities

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## **Building Political Power and Guaranteed Civil Rights**

We live in a democracy, and yet nearly one million New Yorkers can't vote. Immigrant New Yorkers are disproportionately at the front lines during this pandemic, risking their lives to keep us healthy and keep our city functioning. Despite their service to our city, these New Yorkers are often the most politically and financially excluded from participating in our democracy. The opportunity to vote for their elected leaders will lead to greater civic engagement, more accountability and opportunity, and a more just and safe recovery for New York City.

Unfortunately, immigrant New Yorkers, citizens and noncitizens alike, face unique barriers to participating in our democracy. In election after election, an incompetent and corrupt Board of Elections (BOE) has failed to follow through on their mandate, resulting in the disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of voters, mostly immigrant New Yorkers and New Yorkers of color. A lack of accountability has allowed the BOE to make poorly run elections the norm in New York City. The flaws are systemic and institutional. Restoring the confidence of voters requires a radical overhaul.

Lack of language access is one of the most significant barriers that New York's immigrant communities face in accessing critical State services. The only way for New York to have a truly full and equitable recovery is to include our immigrant communities, and without language access that is not possible.

***As a candidate running for public office and when elected,*** I commit to expand democracy so green card holders and those authorized to work in the United States can vote in elections for all city-level offices, for the BOE in its current form to be disbanded, and to invest in a Community Legal Interpreter Bank (CLIB) in order to expand language access and increase the supply of trained, vetted immigration legal interpreters and develop and launch three language services worker-owned cooperatives for those who speak Languages of Limited Diffusion (LLD).

## **Ending State Support for Detention, Deportation and Mass Incarceration**

The over-policing of communities of color is not accidental. Whether it's the NYPD, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), these institutions are all part of a system of repression that goes back hundreds of years and is designed to surveil, intimidate and inflict brutality and cruelty without any accountability. Racial profiling and over-policing in communities of color results in thousands of arrests for minor offenses and a single one of these arrests can have enduring and immense consequences throughout an individual's life, especially for immigrants, both with or without legal status.



In 2014 New York City made a historic investment in funding for immigration legal services that has steadily increased over the last six years. This included the pilot and expansion of the New York City New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, which provides public defender-type services to immigrants appearing before New York City's detained immigration courts, the Immigrant Children Advocates Response Effort to provide representation to unaccompanied children and Central American families, and the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative.

***As a candidate running for public office and when elected,*** I commit to significantly cutting the NYPD budget by at least \$1 billion and redirecting those savings to infrastructure, programs & services that will be crucial to equitable COVID-19 recovery for Black, Latinx and other communities of color. New York City should also ensure continued and adequate funding to ensure all immigrant New Yorkers have access to representation in immigration court.

### **Ensuring Economic Justice and Good Jobs**

Immigrants will be critical in the work of rebuilding the New York City economy in a post COVID-19 world, but only if they are given the protections, opportunity and support needed to ensure economic power. We must make sure everyone can access a good job while continuing efforts to ensure every job is, in fact, a good one.

Immigrant communities, already vulnerable before COVID-19, are especially vulnerable to exploitation, unsafe working conditions and the devastation of an economic downturn that left millions of immigrants and their families with no access to a steady income and unable to access life saving relief from the state or federal government. Moving forward, New York must invest in and protect immigrant workers, entrepreneurs and small businesses owners. One such example of increasing opportunities is to expand access to street vendor licenses.

***As a candidate running for public office and when elected,*** I commit to creating an emergency cash assistance fund for those New Yorkers often left out of the federal relief packages or other assistance programs such as unemployment insurance, including direct cash payments and help for small businesses, and to expand access to food vendor licenses and other small business opportunities in order to create economic opportunity and help for small business development.

### **Quality Education**

Public education has undergone a seismic shift overnight due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We are grateful for New York City's educators and school staff, who have risked their safety to teach youth, support families, and feed the hungry. However, on a systemic level, this unimaginable moment has underscored profound inequities in our school system and then compounded them.



Public schools are straining under the enormous weight of protecting children, teachers and administrators while also educating our youth. Despite this burden, they have been allocated less funding, not more, by our state and local governments. These impacts will be felt for years to come as immigrant families grapple with so many lost lives, lost incomes and lost time in the classroom. Youth will suffer irreparable disruptions at essential stages of their intellectual, social, and emotional development., face increased demands to work, and will need, on an even greater scale, quality programs that respond to these realities to help them catch up. Addressing these challenges in an equitable manner requires skilled implementation and investment that reflects the magnitude of this moment.

***As a candidate running for public office and when elected,*** I commit to enthusiastically investing in Adult Literacy to address the multigenerational root causes of inequitable remote learning; implement the NYIC's Education Collaborative's communications plan<sup>1</sup> alongside adequate language access; provide academic interventions for immigrant students and MLLs/ELLs with gaps in learning due to structural issues; and track these interventions to ensure that they are effective and target youth left behind by remote learning.

### **Creating Healthy Communities**

New York City's ability to protect immigrant residents during and after the COVID-19 pandemic requires a strong and equitable health care system that provides the right services and information in the right places at the right times. COVID-19 has called attention to gaping inequities in our healthcare infrastructure, as immigrant families have had to navigate this crisis with a health care safety net stretched thin by chronic underinvestment and unequal treatment from the state and federal government.

The Administration and City Council have made advances in immigrant health access over the last several years, including through the creation of NYC Care and Council initiatives such as Access Health NYC and the Immigrant Health Initiative. However, COVID-19 has shone a light on significant and pervasive disparities based on immigration status, geography, income, and race/ethnicity. More must be done to close these gaps and create long-lasting health equity in New York City.

***As a candidate running for public office and when elected,*** I commit to ensuring that low-income immigrants have access to safety net programs for health care and other critical services. Programs that are essential for families should not be predicated on immigration status

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<sup>1</sup> Proposed DOE Communications Plan for Immigrants available at:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/10xNJyhHxSjC6hHjYqnJoSrLTv1vCqcyg/view>



or have negative consequences on a person's immigration status, and should be language-accessible to all communities. At minimum, new leadership in New York City should commit to:

- Scaling up the existing NYC Care program through long-term outreach contracts for community-based organizations and a commitment to adding providers outside the Health + Hospitals network; and
- Building upon ThriveNYC efforts to improve access to behavioral health services, including through a permanent Connections to Care program.