



Queens Central Democratic Club
Candidate Endorsement Questionnaire 2021
New York City Comptroller

Thank you for applying for the Queens Central Democratic Club (QCDC) endorsement. If you have any questions about this document or the endorsement process, feel free to email us at qcdcny@gmail.com. Please email us the completed questionnaire by Friday, March 5.

Full Name:

1. What is the single most important issue to you as a candidate for elected office? Why?
 - As Comptroller the chief job I have is a fiduciary responsibility to make sure that NYC's public pensions are protected and getting the best returns. When I think about why I am in this race it is because of people like my 90-year-old mother was a Cuban Jewish immigrant who came to this country not speaking a word of English. She went on to become a Public School teacher and proud UFT member and now is relying on her pension.
2. How would you use this position differently from your predecessor?
 - As it stands the Comptroller only needs to audit each department once every four years; this is not enough. My administration will increase the frequency of our audits.
3. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from for-profit corporations, corporate PACs, real estate developers, corporate lobbyists, and professional landlords?
 - no
4. Do you support reducing the NYPD budget? How would you work with the Mayor and City Council to reflect your position?
 - I am proud of the record that I built over my career to reforming the criminal justice system. I voted for all and was a co-prime sponsor of many police reform bills in Albany. I believe that we need to increase community policing and invest in sensitivity training. As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Corrections, I've led the efforts to reform our corrections system and helped to launch programs that provided important alternatives to incarceration. Like all departments in my purview, I will audit to make sure NYC's money is being put to the best use.
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5. What is your plan to address the massive deficit crisis the City is facing?
 - We are facing the worst fiscal crisis in NYC history. I have called early on for increasing new revenue streams from legalizing marijuana and sports betting, you can read my [op-ed here](#). As well it is important to target NYC's outside contracts. Currently, 19% of the city's \$92 Billion budget goes toward outside contracts. It will be a top priority of my office to audit these contracts. We know that there is waste in those contracts and much of that funding can be redirected back into the city - and in many places, we can be using city employees to do the work better than any contractor.



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- 6. Do you support taxing millionaires and billionaires? What specific tax policy changes would you call on the New York State legislature and the Governor to implement in order to increase City revenue?
 - This is not a situation we can just tax our way out of. We need all of the above strategies including rooting out wasteful spending and creating new revenue streams for the city.
- 7. The New York City Pension Fund is in part funded through investment in oil and gas companies, and pipeline manufacturers. Do you support divesting in fossil fuels? If so, how much divestment would you target by the end of your term in 2025? What are other types of assets that the City currently holds that would you divest from?
 - I applaud the efforts of the pension funds that have already divested from fossil fuels. As Comptroller, my chief concern is a fiduciary obligation to NYC's pensioners and I will explore all options to make sure New York City's retirees get the best returns and consult with each of the pension boards to make sure everyone gets a say in how they invest their retirement.
- 8. How would you leverage the City's economic power and priorities to encourage an agenda of socioeconomic justice?
 - Throughout my career, I have championed legislation to close the wealth gap. In the Comptroller's office, I will be a watchdog against wage theft and strengthen the prevailing wage department. Moreover, my five-borough office plan would create community economic empowerment centers. These places will provide the resources to improve financial literacy, provide access to financial institutions, and increase access to economic opportunities that will help to close the inequality gap in the long term.
- 9. How will you use your role as sole trustee of the NYC Employees Retirement System to vote shares and influence corporate actions?
 - As a trustee, among others, of NYCERS, I would take into account the needs of the trustees and work with them to ensure that the fund is getting the best return on investment. NYCERS, along with TYS, and BERS have already divested from fossil fuels.
- 10. In January 2021, New York City announced intentions to terminate business contracts with Donald Trump after the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. How will you improve City procurement and contracting to ensure the City does not do further business with fascist right-wing interests?
 - As I mentioned above, my administration would increase the frequency of its audits to crack down on abuses as well as cut down on outside contracting especially when we can be using city employees to do the work better than any contractor.
- 11. What is your plan to increase women and minority-owned business representation and investment in City procurement and contracting?
 - As a Council Member and Assembly Member representing Queens, the most diverse county in the country, I know firsthand how truly wonderful the power of diversity is. The merging of cultures, languages, cuisines, and religions is what makes New York City



so unique and has been a major key to our city's success over the years. Unfortunately, too many ethnic and racial minorities are locked out of economic opportunities. From communities that are underserved by banks with no access to financing and capital to groups of people who have typically been left out of government contracting, I recognize that the Comptroller's Office can be doing so much more to improve this situation.

As Comptroller, I will establish a New American, Diversity & Inclusion Task Force that will examine and correct the shortcomings regarding access to capital and financial services for underserved communities, improve contracting opportunities for Minority and Women-Owned Businesses, and enhance the ability of immigrants to build careers and businesses by opening up opportunities and eliminating roadblocks to success. Additionally, the office of the Comptroller employs 760 people. As I have my entire career, I am committed to making sure that the office reflects the diversity of our City.

12. How will you use your position as Comptroller to implement a small business recovery plan?

- I will open offices in all five boroughs that will serve as community economic empowerment centers. These places will provide the resources to improve financial literacy, provide access to financial institutions, increase access to economic opportunity, and provide necessary resources to small businesses as they recover.

13. What economic policies do you support to address the affordable housing and homelessness crisis in New York City?

- As Comptroller, I will use a key tool in the fight to build affordable housing for middle-class families: The city's own pension portfolio through the existing Economically Targeted Investments Program. Using our \$240 billion pension funds, we can partner with the private sector to incentivize middle-class affordable housing construction, creating much-needed housing, thousands of jobs, and a strong rate of return on the city's investment. Guaranteeing the financial health of this affordable housing construction will unleash untold potential, allowing the city to build the affordable housing we need across the five boroughs.

No program regarding increasing, improving, and maintaining affordable, livable housing would be complete without a long-term mechanism in place to properly audit NYCHA. With too many NYCHA buildings plagued by inadequate structural repairs, mold, and very infamously, lead paint, I will ensure thorough and continuous auditing and investigating of NYCHA to ensure the health and safety of residents and the proper use of our tax dollars, potentially saving lives, as well as millions of dollars in the process.

14. The future of Rikers Island will have tremendous social and economic impacts on the city, what is your position on what should be done with Rikers Island?

- I support the closing of Rikers and the opening of four Borough-based jails



15. How would you use your position as Comptroller to address increasing income inequality within New York City?

- Throughout my career, I have championed legislation to close the wealth gap. In the Comptroller's office, I will be a watchdog against wage theft and strengthen the prevailing wage department.

Moreover, my five-borough office plan would create community economic empowerment centers. These places will provide the resources to improve financial literacy, provide access to financial institutions, and increase access to economic opportunities that will help to close the inequality gap in the long term.

16. What is your position on the BDS movement?

- Do not support

17. How will you use your position to initiate a city-wide conversation about race and racial injustice?

- As the representative of one of the most diverse districts in the City, I am deeply sensitive to racial injustice. I will, as I have throughout my entire career, stand up and be an ally. I will, in addition to programs like the New American, Diversity & Inclusion Task Force and my five Borough office plans, use my bully pulpit as one of 3 Citywide elected officials to call out racial injustice.

18. When filling out your ranked-choice ballot, which candidate will you rank second and why?