



Monday, April 26, 2021

## Citizens Union 2021 Candidate Questionnaire - City Council

Dear Candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for New York City Council!

Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serve the public.

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform issues and your plans for office. The form includes five short sections: serving constituent, elections and voting, police accountability, council rules and procedures, and miscellaneous.

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for city offices, and to issue our preference for the June primary. Read more about the method, principles, and criteria of the candidate evaluation process [here](#).

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**If you wish to be considered, please submit the questionnaire by April 17 and no later than 48 before your interview.**

If you seek our support, we will need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. Given time constraints and the limited capacity of a member-based organization, we may not be able to evaluate all contests or candidates in this election cycle.

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If you cannot complete the questionnaire in one sitting, you can click Save and Continue Later at the bottom of every page.

Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with your responses. Citizens Union will not be able to see your answers unless you submit the form. We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).

For any questions, please email [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)

We thank you very much for your response.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Your Info

**Name**

Billy Freeland

**Running for Council District number**

5

**In which primary**

Democratic

**If elected, which legislative conference will you join (e.g., Democrat, Republican, other)?**

Democrat

**Age**

33

**Education**

Columbia University (BA; Master of International Affairs); NYU School of Law (JD)

**Occupation/Employer**

Attorney/General Counsel - JF Fitness of North America; previously, associate at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

**Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement**

This is my first campaign for public office. I am a community leader, activist, and attorney, and have called New York City home for my entire adult life. Since 2018, I have been proud to be an appointee of the Borough President to serve on my local Community Board, where I have been elected by my colleagues three years in a row to serve as a Secretary and Officer of the Board. This means spending 10-20 hours per month responding to and working with constituents and colleagues on issues ranging from bike lanes and bus lanes to affordable housing to bail reform. I have been particularly vocal on transportation issues and reimagining public space, and have championed and passed resolutions to expand protected bike lanes, open streets, pedestrianize part of the Queensboro Bridge, and create solutions that are climate-friendly, equitable, and progressive. I have co-chaired our Charter Revision Task Force, and have been particularly active in the Transportation Committee and the Health, Seniors, and Social Services Committee. I have long-standing

relationships with other CB8 members and countless stakeholders who attend our meetings. I'm a member of the Lexington Democratic Club, where I have been on the executive committee since 2019. I am also an Alternate Judicial Delegate and member of the New York County Democratic Committee. I am active in the Four Freedoms Democratic Club, where I am a co-chair of a recently formed Racial Justice Working Group.

My campaign for City Council is inspired and informed by my work with marginalized communities and progressive organizations that have been at the forefront of challenging the vast inequities and shortcomings of our political and economic system. Seeking and winning repairs in housing court on behalf of a NYCHA tenant, representing LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, challenging anti-LGBTQ+ Mississippi laws, delivering meals in our community, standing up for delivery cyclists and incarcerated people at Community Board meetings, advocating for progressive prosecutors — these are just a few of the experiences that have helped me appreciate the need to listen and respond to those who are most affected by unjust policies, and to engage with grassroots groups on a daily basis.

## Campaign Contact Information

### Website

[billyfreeland.com](http://billyfreeland.com)

### Twitter

[@billyfreelandNY](https://twitter.com/billyfreelandNY)

### Facebook

[Facebook.com/billyfreelandNY](https://facebook.com/billyfreelandNY)

## Affirmations

**Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?**

Yes

**Have you qualified to receive matching campaign finance funds from the CFB?**

Yes

**Are you willing to be interviewed by Citizens Union’s Local Candidates Committee?**

Yes

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union's endorsements)

**Signature**



**SERVING CONSTITUENTS**

**1. For most New Yorkers, the most important thing that their council members do is provide constituent services. How would you run your office to serve your community needs? Please give specific examples.**

I pledge to have a district office that is responsive, respectful, and effective, and pledge that any constituent request will receive a response within 48 hours. I will also continue Council Member Kallos’ excellent practice of hosting constituents for “First Fridays” and policy nights, and will expand that with monthly constituent meetings on Roosevelt Island and regular constituent office hours on Zoom for those who cannot make in-person meetings. I am committed to transparency and accessibility, including language accessibility, and meeting my neighbors where they are, including in senior housing, public housing, and other community centers.

There is an opportunity for a new District 5 Council member to center the needs of all constituents – not just those who typically participate in politics – while also pushing for transformational change that will help disadvantaged New Yorkers. My campaign for City Council is inspired and informed by my work with marginalized communities and progressive organizations that have been at the forefront of challenging the vast inequities and shortcomings of our political and economic system. I appreciate the need to work collaboratively with those who are forgotten, left behind, or harmed by unjust policies, and to engage with grassroots groups and advocacy organizations.

**2. If you served as an elected official, what did**

**you do to help your constituents during the Covid-19 pandemic? Please be specific.**

While I am not currently an elected official, I have worked to serve my community during Covid-19. I am a community leader, activist, and attorney, and have called New York City home for my entire adult life.

I am a Junior Board member at the Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center and frequently volunteer in the community. During the pandemic, I have delivered and prepared meals, donated Thanksgiving turkeys, and distributed PPE throughout District 5 and at NYCHA complexes. I also formed an online support group for neighbors in need. I joined with community organizations to hand out masks and clean up our neighborhood including the East 86th Street Neighborhood Association, the East 72nd Street Neighborhood Association, and UES Mutual Aid. I recently helped process NYCHA tenants for vaccine appointments, including translating in Spanish for those who needed it.

**3. How long have you lived in the district in which you are running for office?**

I have lived in the district since 2017, and in Manhattan since I moved here for college in 2006.

**4. If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would want to introduce?**

I would want to first introduce legislation expanding the Right to Counsel. Our neighbors, particularly low-income New Yorkers, have been targeted and harassed by landlords for too long. We know that more than 80% of tenants with a housing lawyer are able to remain in their homes in the face of eviction. The "Right to Counsel" law has been a success, yet the income threshold to qualify for this protection is so low that if you make the \$15 minimum wage you do not qualify. It is time to expand this crucial right and provide the funding necessary to guarantee everyone who qualifies can be represented by a lawyer. I will introduce legislation that would at least triple the Right to Counsel income threshold, from 200% of the federal poverty level to 600%. I also support the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition's call to expand the law to cover all types of eviction cases and to educate tenants about their rights. I would also like to expand the law to cover actions for housing repairs. Having successfully

represented a NYCHA tenant who needed more than forty repairs to her apartment, I know both the value of having a lawyer in these cases, and how a landlord failing to perform vital repairs can result in constructive eviction, threatening to push out a tenant who lives in an uninhabitable apartment.

## **VOTING AND ELECTIONS**

### **5. How would you describe the relationship between the City Council and the New York City Board of Elections? How will you use your power as a council member to improve the operations of the NYC BOE?**

The City Board of Elections has long been an example of patronage in government and it has demonstrated an inability to serve many voters, especially those whose first language is not English. Voting is a right, not a privilege – the BOE holds the critical responsibility of making elections run smoothly, but instead it has made voting more difficult and confusing. While the pandemic changed the way our elections were run, we saw unacceptable delays in ballot counting and thousands of ballots invalidated for technicalities.

The effects of this bureaucratic incompetence stretch far beyond inefficient government. It effectively disenfranchises those without the privilege and social capital to figure this system out on their own. I believe the Governor should remove the BOE commissioners and the City Council should appoint a professional, nonpartisan panel of replacement commissioners with relevant expertise in public administration and voting rights. A newly reconstituted BOE should engage in voter education and outreach efforts to reduce the number of ballots that are thrown out, and work to streamline the absentee, early-voting, and day-of voting processes so that more New Yorkers, especially those who can't take time off of work to stand in line at a poll site, can access their right to vote. In the Council, I will use my power to object to nominees and to influence the board's budget to pressure Albany to enact meaningful reforms, including removing the partisan requirement for the Board through constitutional change.

### **6. Do you consider yourself a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting? How will you work to maintain this system and educate voters on how**

## **it works?**

Yes, I support Ranked Choice Voting and understand the importance of educating voters on how their choices will be counted under the new system. 73% of NYC voters (including myself!) indicated support of this system, which gives voters more say in the election and encourages more civil and issue-driven rather than personality-driven races, so I am committed to maintaining this system in future elections. Our field organizing program is actively reaching out to voters and educating voters on RCV through phone calls and relational organizing.

## **7. The next City Council will appoint members to the city's redistricting commission and decide whether to approve or reject the commission's districting plans. In doing so, future council members will be responsible for shaping a fair political map for the coming decade. If elected, what would your approach be in proposing or voting to appoint commission members, and in considering proposed district maps?**

Ensuring a fair redistricting process is essential to upholding the Constitutional principle of "one person, one vote." The last time the City's redistricting commission met, a third of the commissioners were from Manhattan. Two commissioners represented the Bronx, two represented Brooklyn, and three represented Staten Island and Queens each -- meaning Manhattan and Staten Island were overrepresented in the process. If elected, I will support commission members that more equitably represent the five boroughs' populations.

My approach to the redistricting process, including considering proposed maps, will prioritize community representation rather than protecting incumbents. Among other responsibilities, Council Members have the authority to dispense discretionary funding, which can make significant, tangible differences in a community -- that money should be spent in a way that accurately reflects the needs of a Council Member's neighborhood. If district lines are drawn such that tight-knit communities are divided or their voices limited, residents may not be able to work with their Council representative to secure the programs, community centers, and resources they need. While New York City's districting commission supports a seemingly less partisan environment than the

redistricting process at the State level, the commission appointment process can still favor Council incumbents. Some advocacy groups have pointed out that the independent commission clouds the transparency of the redistricting process; I will advocate for making meetings between council members and commission members readily available to the public to improve accountability and increase transparency. I support requiring the Commission to provide formal, written rationales for the drawing of each district prior to any vote on final maps. I will not support new district maps that unfairly limit the political influence of racial and ethnic minorities by dividing communities and neighborhoods.

**8. Now that New York City has implemented Ranked Choice Voting, do you support moving to an Open Primary system (eliminating party primaries and establishing a non-partisan election system)?**

Yes

**Comments**

Maintaining a closed primary system limits some of the benefits of Ranked Choice Voting in a healthy local democracy. The value of encouraging voters to look into all types of candidates based on the issues is somewhat impaired if only voters registered in a certain party can participate at all. One of the benefits of RCV is that voters still have a say in the election even if their first choice candidate does not win -- this is relatively incongruent with a partisan election system that limits voters' influence outside of their top choice. For example, every candidate in my district will be on the ballot in the Democratic primary. The winner of the June primary will more than likely be representing District 5 -- including all voters who are not registered Democrats -- in the next City Council. Those voters also deserve a say in the representative they send to the Council. I believe that our political process should be as open as possible. I've often encountered neighbors in this campaign who say they cannot vote in the primary because, while they lean Democratic, they disdain the two-party system or they prefer to maintain some independence. I think we should respect that, and build a political system that shows that respect by ensuring everyone can participate, regardless of



their views of either major political party.

## POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Citizens Union has been studying police accountability and performance in New York City for more than a decade. In our reports and advocacy efforts we have urged city government to strengthen the accountability of the New York Police Department to the public and create a more cohesive system of police oversight. Previous reports include: [2016 issue brief](#), [2013 position brief on Stop and Frisk](#), [2012 report on the CCRB](#), [2008 policy statement on police misconduct](#). Citizens Union's 2021 agenda for police reform, [published as a report](#) in March, calls for establishing a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, allowing the CCRB to appeal the Police Commissioner's decisions, making the appointment of Police Commissioner subject to advice and consent of the City Council, consolidating agencies with oversight authority, ending qualified immunity, and more.

### 9. Do you support making the appointment of the Police Commissioner subject to the advice and consent of the City Council?

Yes

#### Comments

One way to hold the NYPD accountable is to require the Commissioner-designate to come before the Council and answer questions. This is especially important, given that the City Council passes laws and budgets and ought to have an opportunity to really probe the Commissioner's willingness to implement those policies in good faith, and to be answerable to the Council.

### 10. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the police department? How would you ensure penalties are imposed on police officers that commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing?

The Civilian Complaint Review Board should have final say on police disciplinary decisions. I do not believe the Police Commissioner should have the ability to overrule CCRB findings. Moreover, I think penalties determined by the CCRB should be the final penalty, without the Commissioner overruling. In 2012, the CCRB recommended charges (the most severe penalty) in 175 cases, command discipline in 70 cases, and instructions in 12 cases. Yet the NYPD only sought charges in 7 of those 175 cases, and in 76 cases the officer was not disciplined at all. Similarly, where command discipline was recommended, the NYPD often gave instructions or no discipline at all. The NYPD followed the CCRB's recommendation in less than 10 percent of cases, and provided no discipline in more than 40% of cases. That is wrong, and I believe the best way to ensure penalties are imposed commensurate with

the gravity of the wrongdoing is to remove the NYPD and Police Commissioner from the process.

**11. Do you support consolidating the three bodies that exercise oversight of the NYPD: the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), the Inspector General for the Police Department, the Mayor's Commission to Combat Police Corruption?**

Yes

**Comments**

I support this proposal, because I think it has the potential to create a more powerful check on the NYPD, but I come at it with some skepticism. As the Brennan Center has written, the Mayor's plan "does not explain how consolidating agencies with drastically different track records, budgets and independence into "a new, stronger entity to establish itself as a trusted and robust oversight voice" will do anything other than dilute the effectiveness of all three under the guise of reforming them." I think it is important to have an Inspector General who sits within the Department of Investigation, and remains protected from NYPD Commissioner influence over its budget, subpoenas, or what it investigates. Consolidation must continue to respect that. I would also like to see the CCRB empowered with more funding, more staffing, and more investigatory authority, and removing the NYPD Commissioner from final approval of CCRB findings. I would like to see the Commission of Combat Police Corruption given more funding and authority. I think the Inspector General currently has the ability to really uncover NYPD practices, and I would not want to see that undermined by consolidation. It has to be done right.

**12. Do you support giving the CCRB prompt and full access to footage from body-worn cameras, police officers' employment history and disciplinary records and all other document and materials in the possession of the NYPD relevant to its investigations?**

Yes

**Comments**

For too long, the NYPD has obstructed the CCRB. That must end. There is a long history of the NYPD refusing to make officers available for interviews, declining to hand over key information and videos, and more. We need to pass legislation, and charter reforms where necessary, that require the NYPD to hand over all of this information immediately.

**13. Feel free to add any other policy proposals you support in regards to police accountability, misconduct, and oversight, or to effective policing including functions, training, and community relations.**

The NYPD is the largest and most expensive police department in the United States, and there is very little transparency in how the department spends its billions of dollars each year. I support cutting the NYPD budget. That includes shifting resources -- not just money, but also power and institutionalized lack of accountability -- away from the police. I support adding new community oversight structures to push for transparency and accountability in all police conduct, and requiring that the police department itemize all of its expenses to be honest with the City Council and the public about how it spends its money.

I will vote "No" on any budget that moves money around without reflecting a genuine effort to curtail the power of the police department. I will advocate for reallocating funding away from the police when it comes to homeless outreach, mental health response, school safety, transportation patrol, and traffic enforcement. We have learned from experience that these services don't require police training, they require specialized non-police training. This funding would be more efficiently spent by the relevant specialized City agency. We must also institute an immediate hiring freeze and create a plan to reduce the number of uniformed officers on the force. I will not support efforts to allocate capital funding to build new jails that will simply replace Rikers Island with similarly carceral and inhumane approaches to criminal justice.

We need more restrictions on the use of force and should make it a fireable offense to cover a badge number or fail to intervene on behalf of a person whose civil rights are being violated. We must ban facial recognition software, which demonstrably reinforces racial bias, as well as predictive policing

algorithms, the latest iteration of stop-and-frisk. I also support the complete elimination of cash bail.

## HOW CITY COUNCIL WORKS

One of the first items on the next City Council’s agenda will be adopting its rules of proceedings. Those rules will have a substantial effect on the ability of lawmakers to advance their goals, and can send a signal to New Yorkers about elected officials’ commitment to making the Council more representative, deliberative, accountable, and efficient. In the last decade, the Council took important steps to reform its rules, including a 2014 overhaul by then-Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and a 2018 administrative change by Speaker Corey Johnson. These reforms have made the body more democratic, given members a more meaningful role in the legislative process, ensured greater equity in the allocation of discretionary funding, and made drafting procedures more transparent. Still, more work is needed enable members to function more effectively and independently of the speaker, and to increase public participation.

### 14. Do you support allowing bills with strong support to go through the committee process and put to a vote on the floor without needing the permission of the speaker?

Yes

#### Comments

Requiring the Speaker’s permission to bring bills to a vote on the floor can slow down the legislative process and unduly limit council members’ influence in the policymaking process. Bills with very strong support among the Council at large should not have to be supported by the Speaker to merit a floor vote. I would support a practice, endorsed by Common Cause, where bills with 50% support in the Council should be fast-tracked through the committee process and to the floor for a vote. My vote for Speaker will turn, in large part, on the candidates’ views on this proposal.

### 15. Do you support reducing the overall number of committees so members can participate more meaningfully in fewer issues?

Yes

#### Comments

Good government groups like Common Cause NY have advocated for consolidating City Council committees, arguing that too many committees limits the Council’s effectiveness. While I believe that every committee serves an important function, I agree that spreading Council members too thin can limit their ability to build meaningful expertise on a particular subject area, limit the audience for expert

testimony and public input, and stall bills. If I am elected, I want to contribute meaningfully to the committees of which I am a part while also trusting the expertise and judgments of the committees I do not sit on. The Council, and New Yorkers, would all benefit from more effective committee work. For these reasons, I support Common Cause's call to appoint a task force to develop a better committee structure, including through consolidation.

**16. Do you support making all actions designed to influence any City Council outcome, including the choice of speaker, reportable as a lobbying expense?**

Yes

**Comments**

We need to reduce the influence of outside, outside forces in our politics. This is one step toward that.

**17. The Council Speaker controls the allocation of a large share of the Council's overall discretionary spending, and in 2020 it was reported that the Speaker used this power to "punish" council members who opposed the 2021 budget. How would you balance control and order in the council with reasonable dissent?**

Last summer, some Council Members who opposed the 2021 budget received far less discretionary funding for their districts than their counterparts who sided with Speaker Johnson. Whether or not this was a "punishment," Council Members represent New Yorkers and have a responsibility to raise concerns and dissent where necessary to protect the health and safety of their constituents. In light of the concerns surrounding the budget, primarily the question of shifting resources away from the NYPD and towards other community investments, I believe that the Council Members who dissented did so with good reason and would have voted No myself.

Common Cause NY has advocated for further regulation of the Speaker's List (discretionary funding allocated by the Council Speaker) so that discretionary funding is limited to organizations that serve multi-district populations or operate in multiple districts. I agree that the Speaker's discretionary funding should be limited to citywide

or boroughwide efforts, so that particular council districts do not disproportionately benefit or suffer from these allocations.

**18. The ability of citizens and advocates to make their voices heard in City Hall has been severely curtailed since the council and city government shifted to work remotely. How would you propose to improve community engagement and public participation while using remote technology (in public hearings, meetings, etc.), particularly to ensure equity in participation?**

The option to actively participate in politics – whether registering to vote or providing testimony to the City Council – should be readily available to all New Yorkers. Historically, more privileged groups tend to participate in politics more often. One of my primary goals as a candidate and, if I am elected, a Council member is to amplify the voices and listen to the concerns of my neighbors who all too often are left out of the political and policymaking process. Holding hearings and meetings virtually has caused confusion and transparency problems, especially when it comes to processes dependent on community dialogue like ULURP. It has also blocked community members without wifi or technology access from participating at all. I believe that remote hearings and meetings can actually increase equity if we do it right; I support programs to increase digital literacy and free broadband access in underserved communities and ensuring everyone leading a hearing follows best practices so that every participant’s voice is heard.

We should also leverage this increased focus on remote technology to make real-time information about budgets and proposed bills more readily available to the public. I support improving the City Council website so that New Yorkers have access to more detailed information about the Council’s work, including bill tracking. Interested constituents should have easy access to committee members and bill sponsors to share their support or concerns.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**19. New York City has suffered an immensurable loss from the pandemic and its**

**effects and the city's economy, social life, and culture. What is your path to recovery from this crisis?**

We are in the midst of several intersecting crises revealing deeply-rooted, structural inequities, and our City government must act with appropriate urgency to solve them. My vision is straightforward: we need a New Deal for New York. We need leaders who will take charge against the affordability crisis, climate change, persistent inequality, and systemic racism. We need a government that invests in public transit, public schools, and open space. A government that builds truly affordable housing. A government that supports the small businesses that are the beating heart of our community. A government that embraces climate justice not as a slogan, but as an imperative for survival. A government that seeks to reverse the systemic racism and bigotry that have poisoned our politics for too long.

To get there, it's critical that we reject austerity measures and increase capital borrowing so we can build our way out of this crisis. In addition to the other programs and policies I discuss throughout this questionnaire, I believe we must invest in public housing, a public bank, and universal childcare. I also support programs that directly help small businesses, including a program for "legacy" small businesses (non-chain stores that have been in neighborhoods for a decade or longer).

I support plans to create thousands of green jobs through investments in resiliency infrastructure, renewable energy, and more. As a Council Member, I'll make sure people from vulnerable communities are prioritized for these green jobs, which will protect their rights, pay a union wage, and potentially become long-term careers. Similarly, these investments should be directed towards low-income communities, especially communities of color, disproportionately impacted by climate change, coronavirus, and pollution. In particular, I am excited about the Green New Deal for NYCHA, which will invest in desperately-needed upgrades in public housing. These repairs will make NYCHA units safer for residents and transform the complexes into cutting-edge leaders in green infrastructure. These public investments can also boost the manufacturing and retrofit industries.

To invest in a just recovery for all, I believe we should create a public bank in NYC. Too often, low wages, inadequate credit ratings, and banking deserts combine to prevent underserved New Yorkers from renting or buying homes and otherwise building their way to financial security. Public banks can address these inequities, bringing essential financial services to banking deserts and partnering with credit unions. Public banks can also invest in neighborhood-led development to support minority and women-owned businesses; affordable housing; green, living-wage jobs; community land trusts; worker-owned and financial cooperatives; renewable energy; beautiful parks; and other critical infrastructure—especially in frontline communities of color. Public banks can fulfill the promise of banking, stabilizing our financial system and strengthening our ability to withstand future crises.

Universal childcare will also be one of my policy priorities once in office. We must invest heavily in our childcare system in order to make it accessible and affordable to everyone. The City government should partner with existing providers, set up new facilities in currently empty storefronts, and ensure childcare providers are paid like the educators they are. Childcare should be free for New Yorkers living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, and no New Yorker should spend more than 7 percent of their income on child care.

These are a few policies from the New Deal for New York, a bold suite of progressive policies that holistically address the multitude of crises we now face. As a part of the next City Council, I'll work to desegregate, decarcerate, and decarbonize NYC -- because by leading with bold ideas and bringing communities together, our city can emerge from this crisis a greener, more equitable, and more racially just place to call home.

**20. What experience have you had, if any, with good government and reform issues? (e.g. voting and elections, campaign finance, ethics, police accountability, government transparency and oversight). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.**

Good government and reform have been central to my work as a lawyer, Community Board leader, activist, and candidate for office. As an attorney, I



have been laser-focused on criminal justice reform, starting with my first clemency case (helping who was sentenced to 50 years in prison for drug trafficking) and continuing with cases I have had representing clients caught up in an unjust system (a client beaten by prison guards; a client denied proper medical care in jail; a client prosecuted under the Walking While Trans ban). I've also had the privilege to litigate voting rights cases, including being part of a team in 2018 that sued Georgia to ensure provisional ballots were properly counted. I'm also proud to have been part of a team that sued Mississippi over HB 1523, an anti-gay, anti-trans law that was passed in 2016, and enjoined by the District Court.

At the Community Board level, I am a three-term Secretary of Manhattan Community Board 8. In 2018 and 2019, I co-chaired the Community Board's Charter Revision Task Force, which ensured that the Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island had a voice when politicians were revising the city charter. Among our main requests: improving the land use process to ensure communities were well-resourced and had a voice in the pre-ULURP stage. I also testified before the 2018 Charter Revision Commission. In 2019, I put together a panel to educate neighbors on bail and discovery reform, and I very intentionally made sure the panel included public defenders and a formerly incarcerated person who could speak to the experience of being held pre-trial on Rikers Island for a crime he did not commit.

As an activist, in 2018, I traveled to Albany to persuade state legislators to embrace voting reform, including early voting, and fought disenfranchisement by registering voters serving probation.

As a candidate, I am committed to running a campaign that is based on values and ideas that have shaped me to this point. I am running a grassroots, people-powered campaign that relies on our campaign finance system and that answers to constituents, not deep-pocketed donors. Since day one, I have refused donations from lobbyists, real estate developers, police unions, fossil fuel companies, and Political Action Committees. I believe I am the only candidate in my race to explicitly reject contributions from PACs and lobbyists.

**21. What are the top three campaign promises or goals, and what action will you take to achieve them if elected? Feel free to reference an answer above rather than restate it.**

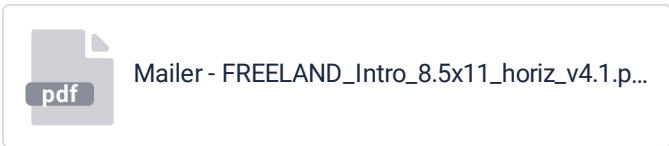
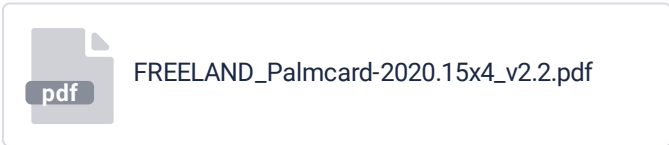
First: Desegregation: The pandemic has laid bare the inadequacies in our institutions and shameful racial disparities in our economy, schools, and healthcare system. Not only have Black and brown populations suffered more acutely from COVID itself, they've also suffered more acutely from the economic fallout. Black and brown New Yorkers are more likely to be low-income, live in public housing, attend struggling schools, or live in neighborhoods that are transit deserts and rank high on the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index. This is not just the literal segregation of one racial group from another; it is the segregation of entire communities from access to opportunity. I am committed to revamping our public services: Changing state and local laws to protect tenants; Reinvesting clean energy resources into environmental justice communities; Extend public transit in outer-borough "transit deserts"; Creating dedicated car-free bike lanes and busways; Ensure all subway stations are ADA accessible; Funding much-needed repairs to NYCHA buildings; Incentivizing the construction of more affordable housing in District 5 and throughout the city and getting real estate money out of politics; Adjusting the Fair Student Funding formula to more equitably serve high-needs public school students.

Second: Decarbonization: We're at a pivotal moment in the fight against climate change. We have only a few years to drastically cut carbon emissions, and it's clear that it's time to completely rethink the way we inhabit our planet. We can't settle for reactionary, short-term solutions that hand more of our scarce resources to the one percent. Instead, we have to reorient our priorities towards creating a more green, sustainable and environmentally and economically just city and planet. With a little creativity and a commitment to this work, we can address the climate crisis, create thousands of good-paying jobs, and protect the City against the impacts of climate change that we're already seeing today. As part of City Council, I'll be a vocal advocate for the Green New Deal. I'll also champion proposals to: Create thousands of jobs implementing energy efficient designs and retrofits in buildings, prioritizing NYCHA complexes; Turn Rikers Island into a solar farm and wastewater treatment plant; Improve and expand public transit and reduce motor vehicle congestion; Install more than 60 miles of bus lanes and busways throughout New York City; Eliminate fossil fuels from New York City's economy as quickly as possible; Create a comprehensive resiliency plan so we're prepared for future storms and rising sea levels; Reduce waste, improve recycling, and commit to food justice.

Third: Decarceration & Criminal Justice Reform. New York should be a leader in taking real action to address police violence and reimagine the role of law enforcement in public safety. New Yorkers – especially Black and Brown New Yorkers – deserve to feel safe, supported, and protected, not threatened, by City officials. We must substantially and systematically overhaul policing and criminal justice in New York City. City Council has the power and responsibility to spearhead this transition. I support: Drastically reducing the NYPD budget; Restricting police power at all levels; Closing Rikers Island no later than 2027; and eliminating cash bail.

## **ADDITIONAL INFO**

**Please feel free to attach any additional information such as resume, campaign brochures, or issues statements.**



**What else would you like us to know about yourself?**

I am proud to be endorsed by UES Progressives, Indivisible UES, Black Lives Caucus, Stonewall Democrats (the city’s oldest citywide LGBTQ political club), the Jewish Vote, NYC Kids PAC, District Leader Eddie Gibbs, NYCHA tenant leaders La Keesha Taylor and Jose Guevara, and many more. I am also proud to be fully funded in this campaign, without taking a penny from real estate developers, lobbyists, PACs, fossil fuel companies, or police unions.

**Please review your answers by clicking PREVIEW ANSWERS below. You can submit the questionnaire at the bottom of the preview page by clicking SUBMIT.**

**Once you click SUBMIT, you will receive a confirmation email with your responses. *If you don't see the email, please check your spam box.***

If you have any further questions, you may contact us at [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org).