



Monday, May 3, 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](#).

**

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.

**

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

We thank you very much for your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Your Info

Name

Jeffrey Omura

Running for Council District number

6

In which primary

Democratic

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

Democrat

Age

36

Education

Carnegie Mellon University

Occupation/Employer

Actor, Labor Leader

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Twice elected officer of Actors Equity Association, founder of Fair Wage Onstage, founder of Be An Arts Hero

Campaign Contact Information**Website**

jeffreymura.com

Twitter

jeffreymura

Facebook

jeffreymura

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.

Being a union officer has taught me that good policy will only get you so far, and that success is only possible if your workers are behind you. Educating, organizing, and galvanizing a constituency is our specialty.

Too many in our community feel ignored, abandoned, and talked down to by their leaders in City government. Small business owners tell me I'm the first person who's come to ask how they're doing. A young woman who lives in the Amsterdam Houses, simply said, "No one cares about us over here."

I have many policy proposals, but what I truly hope to be—and what I truly believe we need—is a "neighborhood organizer." Using my skills and strengths not only as a labor leader but as an artist, a listener, a storyteller, that's exactly what I'm running to become, and to restore a sense of community to District 6 in the process.

The same open access I have maintained throughout my campaign—holding weekly "Coffee Time" on Zoom on Mondays at 6. I set a goal for myself to meet every small business owner in the district by going store to store to hear directly from them what they need to survive. I'm about 40%

toward meeting that goal. When I call voters, I ask what their concerns are. This is exactly how I intend to serve my constituents once elected. When and where my constituents don't come to me with their concerns, I will come to them to ask.

I have instilled this spirit of outreach, openness, and inquiry throughout my campaign staff of twenty, and my volunteers. Most of my staff are artists, many are also union officers, and they are as curious, engaged, and empathic as I. When elected, I will hold myself and my staff to the same standard.

2. If you served as an elected official, what did you do to help your constituents during the Covid-19 pandemic? Please be specific.

As a twice-elected officer of Actors' Equity Association, the AFL-CIO-chartered, national labor union representing over 51,000 stage managers and actors, last March I voted to approve the retention of Dr. David Michaels, an epidemiologist and former Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health under President Obama, as our advisor on coronavirus. He has developed AEA's rigorous and ever-evolving Covid safety protocols, personally approving each employer's safety plans as productions move forward.

With most live theater shut down by public health officials, I also vigorously defended the union's jurisdiction over streaming theater with its bargaining partners, despite encroachment from sibling union SAG-AFTRA, in a conflict which ended amicably. As a result, theatrical stage managers, solely represented by AEA, retained their contractual worker protections along with theatrical actors, all at AEA's superior, collectively bargained rates.

As a member of AEA's National Council and National Public Policy Committee, I approved the union's aggressive lobbying with its sibling unions for 1099 workers to qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance in the CARES Act, and for stage managers and actors to qualify based on the promise of future work that had been canceled due to the pandemic. And thanks to our lobbying with our sibling unions, many of our members who have lost their multi-employer health insurance through Equity-League's Health Fund this year have qualified for six months of federally subsidized

COBRA.

As an activist, I helped found the #BeAnArtsHero campaign, organizing the national arts community to collectively lobby Congress for direct arts relief. Our activists met with over 60 US Senate offices, helping to secure \$15 billion for performing arts venues in the December 2020 stimulus package.

Locally, I joined with community based organizations to help out the neighborhood. When the sanitation budget was slashed, I joined One Block UWS to pick up garbage off the streets. I volunteer with Goddard Riverside to deliver meals to seniors. And I volunteered with a holiday gift giveaway for unhoused families.

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

5 years

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

Paid sick leave for gig economy workers.

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?

Free and fair elections are one of the foremost things on the nation's mind right now: in response to the most accessible (via early voting and mail-in ballots) and secure elections ever, certain politicians are scrambling to gin up wrongheaded laws in Florida, Georgia, Arizona, etc, to disenfranchise voters.

When it comes to a functioning, healthy democracy, one of the highest responsibilities of a body politic is to ensure as much participation in the process as possible. Full stop. Unfortunately the current state of New York City's Board of Elections does not fulfill that profound obligation.

The City Council does two major things with respect to the NYC BOE: approve its commissioners and appropriate/maintain oversight of the body's budget. Both of these are currently problematic to say the least, dysfunctional to say

the worst.

In practice, the current commissioner appointment process and results are sadly reminiscent of the bad old days of New York City corruption. Cronyism is rampant in appointments and hirings. And there have been enough miscues over the past few years alone (misprinted ballots, locked polling sites, delays, voter roll purging) that New York City inhabitants are rightly frustrated and ready for change.

First and foremost is changing the work culture of the BOE.

While commissioners should require City Council approval, they should not be appointed by party county bosses, something that inextricably causes conflict of interest and lends itself to backroom shenanigans. The BOE commissioners should not be bipartisan; they should be non-partisan — independent, qualified appointees, vetted by the City Council with respect to knowledge of election law and commitment to accessibility and voter education, not simply party affiliation. Changing this vestige of machine politics would necessitate a change to the state constitution, but considering the general feel of free elections in America these days, getting rid of the favoritism and nepotism within the system would not be as difficult as once thought.

The 350 or so permanent staff members of the BOE should likewise be held to higher standards, and not be granted jobs in the body simply because of political — or worse, familial — connections, as has been all too common in the past. Transparency of hiring practices as well as independent commissioners would help rectify that.

Another frustrating example of wrangling between City and State is that, while Albany technically oversees the BOE, the City Council appropriates its budget. Because we dole out the money, we should require more oversight over their performance, to build (back) the trust that they're using the money wisely with that one broad directive: making elections as free and accessible to as many people as possible. As a Council Member, I will push to hold the BOE accountable to the City, by both regular review and performance assessment.

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?

I absolutely support Ranked Choice Voting.

I joined a coalition of candidates calling on the City Council to fully fund a Ranked Choice Voting education plan for the whole city. When elected, I will work to make sure it happens before the next election.

My campaign has an exciting Ranked Choice Voting voter education campaign planned that breaks down for voters the “how” of RCV through a series of fun explainer videos featuring everything from favorite deli-meats to drag queens. More importantly than the “how” of RCV, though, we are also releasing video content really getting to the “why” of RCV—centering the voter experience, and empowering New Yorkers to vote their values, knowing that RCV will ensure their vote will always count.

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?

Chapter 2-A Section 50 of the New York City Charter states that the Districting “Commission shall have among its members (a) at least one resident of each borough, and (b) members of the racial and language minority groups in New York city which are protected by the United States voting rights act of nineteen hundred sixty-five, as amended, in proportion, as close as practicable, to their population in the city.”

The Census Bureau also collects data on gender and, through the American Community Survey and Survey of Income and Program Participation, on persons with disabilities. As the City Council appoints commission members, I will examine this data and use it as I propose and vote on potential commissioners, to ensure fairness of representation based on immutable characteristics including and beyond those protected by the Voting

Rights Act.

I have long felt that while New York City is the largest in the country in terms of population, its strength and charm and livability lie in the fact that it is actually a collection of villages. Chapter 2-A Section 52 of the City Charter upholds this belief in its directives to drawing Council District lines: “District lines shall keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other.” As I consider potential district maps, I will be sensitive to the preservation of the fabric of New York City’s communities.

But I think the 10% variance between the most and least populous Council Districts also set forth in Section 52 is too broad. I will seek to appoint commissioners who share this belief, and carefully examine potential district maps to ensure that New Yorkers are represented equitably, and that no New Yorker suffers for the sake of a fellow Council Member’s political advantage.

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

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

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?

We need to rethink the structuring of the CCRB to ensure that it's not only representative of the will of New Yorkers, but that its decisions and findings have both credibility and authority. We'll work to create a Board elected by the people of New York, that serves the people of New York, and has the authority to impose discipline.

We need to negotiate accountability into NYPD collectively bargained agreements. We'll work to make sure the City's contracts with the NYPD are negotiated to ensure that there is real, transparent accountability for the police. Due process is important, but nobody is above the law.

In March 2021, the City Council ended qualified immunity. The next City Council must work to ensure the new law creates a culture of accountability that's essential to quality policing.

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

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

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.

Policing in New York City is broken. Period. And a renaissance for all New Yorkers will require rethinking and reimagining what good, quality policing and a fair and equitable justice system look like, beginning with giving the residents of New York a greater role in determining how we move forward. We will prioritize accountability for and oversight of law enforcement, aiming to build trusted relationships with officers and ensure that nobody is above by law. We will actively work to repair harm done by long-standing systemic injustices in these systems, including the criminalization of poverty, unconscionable conditions in our jails, and the failed “war on drugs.” And we will forcefully advocate for the redirection of police funding into services for education, social work, and mental health so that we may better and more holistically serve all New Yorkers.

Good, effective policing depends entirely on trust—residents who know and trust law enforcement, and law enforcement that knows and trusts the community it is sworn to serve and protect. We’ll work to prioritize community policing by building collaborative, community partnerships with law enforcement. We want an organizational transformation of law enforcement from the top throughout police ranks, to create a present, visible, and responsive police department to proactively address immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues. We’ll continually work to examine what’s working in the neighborhood and what’s not, and whether our existing Neighborhood Policing programs are moving us towards the trust we sorely need to establish.

The anecdotes the NYPD provides about the successes of Neighborhood Policing impress us, but we must demand the NYPD produce data about its Neighborhood Coordination Officer Program. In 2019, 50% of those arrested in New York City were Black, while Black New Yorkers make up only 24% of the population. So, despite a movement from Broken Windows policing and Stop and Frisk toward Neighborhood Policing, nothing about policing has essentially changed. We must hold the NYPD to account.

We must also strictly prohibit the NYPD from cooperating with ICE. And NYPD officers should not be immune from legal action taken by anyone whose rights they have violated, whether they are a citizen or non-citizen.

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 to enable members to function more effectively and independently of the speaker, and to increase public participation.

HOW CITY COUNCIL WORKS

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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

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

Yes

Comments

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

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?

By electing me, my constituents will have entrusted me to hear their concerns and use my conscience as I vote to represent their interests. A budget is a moral document. I should be able to vote my conscience without fear of the Speaker using discretionary budgeting to punish me--because ultimately those who would suffer would be my constituents. The axe would fall on the families who live in the Amsterdam Houses, the cultural institutions and the New Yorkers they serve, and the nonprofits who support our unhoused neighbors.

Using the City budget and discretionary funds as a tool of coercion is unconscionable.

I'm not driven by conflict. I wish to work together toward solutions. But just as a labor leader I have used all my leverage, including my moral authority, to prevent an employer from balancing their budget on the backs of the workers I represent, I will strenuously advocate on behalf of New Yorkers who need my voice the most, and speak out against punitive budgeting.

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?

If done correctly, remote participation can be a great asset to the City by allowing a larger range of individuals to participate in the City's governance. If participation is down, it is incumbent upon us to ask if the most accessible structures are in place. Is the Council creating a space where New Yorkers want to participate? As public servants, we owe it to the public to imagine and re-imagine the environment and processes to make sure that as many voices as possible can be heard.

Ideally, remote participation will continue to be an option for the public even after the City reaches full recovery. What we have learned is that remote access can be a great equalizer for those individuals whose personal circumstances make it difficult to attend in person. For many, those circumstances will not end with pandemic. People will still need childcare, mobility assistance, and for some, the cost of travel to and from their home is a barrier to participation. We have also learned that remote access is the antithesis of access for some because they simply do not have the technology or internet capability to participate.

We can and must take steps to make broadband fully accessible to every New Yorker and ensure that those in need of technology are able to find affordable access. Through current programs like Older Adults Technology Services--OATS.org--seniors are able to access technology and training. In December of 2020, NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications successfully put forth, and the New York City Council approved, the Information Services Resolution (Res. No. 1445-2020) authorizing new companies to expand the residential and commercial broadband options available to New Yorkers. This effort is geared toward closing the internet gap for lower income New Yorkers. This is just the beginning. New York must become a city that creates an environment for all of its residents to benefit from technology, so we must continue to

innovate for all residents.

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?

With unemployment holding steady in the City at a rate of 12.5%, City Council must embrace big solutions to put New Yorkers back to work.

We have to think big about small businesses. 98% of the businesses in New York City are small, employing less than 100 people. 89% are very small, employing less than 20.

Small businesses recently employed as many as 3 million workers in New York. Vacant storefronts now line the streets of District 6. We must encourage the return of small businesses to the Upper West Side. To do this, we must support the businesses that are holding on right now, and encourage the creation of new businesses. To do this, I will:

Strongly advocate for my district's small businesses to receive PPP loans over large corporations.

Reform our commercial property taxes: currently, the tax burden is passed down to the business owner in the form of skyhigh rent. The City must overhaul our commercial property taxes, reassess property values, and create a more flexible system linked to store revenues. A new system can incentivize landlords to keep properties leased and occupied and ease the burden on commercial tenants and landlords alike.

Work to void minimum rent provisions in mortgages: many commercial mortgages contain minimum rent provisions that prevent landlords from lowering rent even when they want to. Some of these mortgages are securitized, needing the approval of up to thousands of institutions holding a piece of the loans to change provisions. The City must work with state lawmakers to pass legislation to allow landlords to respond to declining market demand and offer competitive rents. By eliminating these provisions, we will help

small businesses thrive, foster new businesses, fill vacant storefronts, and put people back to work.

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Eliminate regulatory hurdles and create a single point-of-contact customer service liaison: Mayor DeBlasio started the Small Business Advocates program to assist small businesses in navigating regulatory agencies. We should go further and create a city-sponsored single point-of-contact customer service liaison assisting business owners by coordinating and expediting all interactions with City agencies, walking business owners through permitting, regulatory paperwork, Department of Health guidelines, compliance issues, insurance requirements, etc., enabling more New Yorkers to become small business owners and create jobs.

Advocate to redesign our streets and expand outdoor seating to maximize restaurant revenue potential: one of the few bright spots to come from this pandemic has been the transition to outdoor dining. As restaurants have poured out onto the streets, we have seen the sounds of the Upper West Side return. We can continue this trend and make our streets more pedestrian friendly, expand space and permitting for outdoor dining, and limit large industrial traffic. Not only will this create jobs and support local businesses, but it will also make the Upper West Side an even more welcoming and vibrant neighborhood, and a safer one.

Encourage pop-up and start-up shops and restaurants: we can use our many vacant storefronts to provide entrepreneurs with an opportunity to start or expand their business by streamlining permitting and eliminating permitting fees for temporary alcohol and food service. This will allow entrepreneurs to sell their products in brick-and-mortar locations and build a loyal following while revitalizing our commercial corridors.

Envisioning a massive expansion of low income and affordable housing, I will prioritize using the ULURP

process to ensure opportunities for well-paying, union construction jobs by working with community boards early in the process, and strategizing with union leadership to pack public hearings with union workers. The workers who build that housing should be able to afford to live in it.

I will further champion union apprenticeship programs for NYCHA residents. As a legislator, I can work with Council to pass a law creating a new workforce development program for those in public housing to help residents develop new skills and create good union jobs.

I will implement a Green New Deal for New York City, including job transition programs for these new industries, and hold the City to its recently passed legislation to close the jail at Rikers Island by 2027 and transform it to a green energy hub.

And my Arts & Culture Recovery Plan will revive a devastated sector, 70% of whom are now unemployed. In the national performing artists' labor union of which I'm an officer, our 51,000 members face almost 100% unemployment. 19,000 of them live in the New York metropolitan area. Through immediate action, relief, and rebuilding of New York City's Arts & Culture sector, we will not only get them and the rest of the City's arts workers back on the job, we will prime the City to welcome the return of tourists, since Arts & Culture are its number one draw. While the Creative Economy itself employs 300,000 New Yorkers, Tourism accounts for another 300,000 jobs. Tourists also support hotels, restaurants, retail, and more businesses that employ New Yorkers. The Arts & Culture sector brings wealth to our City not only in the \$110B in economic activity it directly generates, but in all the jobs it necessitates in all the other sectors it touches.

My campaign is just the beginning. We will work with the city, state, and private sector to

- Get arts workers back to work
- Ensure tourists return
- Build a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive arts economy
- Get every elected official to prioritize Arts & Culture because the \$110 billion Creative Economy is an economic engine for the whole city

We act now

Connect Businesses with Artists: We'll help restaurants and hotels recover by providing them with grants or tax incentives to hire professional musicians and entertainers, both enhancing

customer experience and employing arts workers in the process.

Repurpose Vacant Storefronts: We'll work to repurpose available space into art galleries, rehearsal spaces, and music venues, expanding on successful programs like "Art on the Ave NYC" and Chashama.

Revise the Open Culture Law: We'll demand that unions be brought into the conversation to ensure safe working conditions and fair pay for arts workers, work with cultural institutions to designate appropriate outdoor venues, and open the program to more participants to ensure equitable access.

Create Exclusive Artist Housing: We'll work to pass legislation to create affordable housing exclusively for arts workers, ensuring that artists and artisans can make New York their home for decades to come.

Open Access for New Yorkers with Disabilities: Access to Arts & Culture is out of reach for too many. We'll work to ensure New York's cultural institutions—especially those that receive funding from the City—provide free or pay-as-you-wish entry for all disabled visitors and up to one caregiver.

We ensure relief

We'll work to ensure that an appropriate portion of the American Relief Plan's billions of dollars gets directly into the hands of the arts workers who need it—to pay their rent, bills, and other expenses after a year of unemployment—and not only to the institutions that employ them.

We rebuild

Initiate a City-sponsored, Sector-wide Promotional Campaign: After 9/11, the state created a promotional campaign to ensure Broadway's survival. Now, we'll need a new campaign for the entire Arts & Culture sector. Not just for Broadway, but for all theater, music, dance, comedy, art spaces, and museums, to be beamed across the world trumpeting that the global capital of Arts & Culture is again open for business.

Build Back Better—and Safer: Many of our cultural institutions operate in aging buildings. The science we've learned about ventilation during the pandemic has shown us how unsafe some of our workspaces could be even before the shutdown. We'll ensure that some portion of funding allocated to cultural institutions goes to upgrade HVAC and other systems to make them safer for Arts & Culture

workers and consumers alike.

Expand Public Artist in Residence (PAIR): Artists are creative problem solvers, well-suited to help the City find solutions to tough challenges. PAIR places artists in residence within City agencies, where they forge community bonds, encourage dialogue, and reimagine reality to create new possibilities. We will expand this program, put more artists to work, give more City agencies fresh perspectives, and benefit the lives of more New Yorkers.

Found NYC's Own International Festival: Inspired by the River-to-River Festival that revitalized Lower Manhattan post-9/11, the City can sponsor an annual multi-borough Olympic-sized festival bringing the world's arts communities together and celebrating neighborhoods across the city.

Broadcast Live from New York: The city can organize a weekly broadcast of New York City-based live-streamed performances, featuring a plethora of artists across all disciplines, that the entire world can tune in to. Think Jazz at Lincoln Center, but global.

Support Performers in Bars and Restaurants By Modernizing State Liquor and City Zoning Laws: Venues that provide live entertainment often struggle to get liquor licensing, forcing them to decide between selling alcohol and employing artists. I'll work with state lawmakers to revoke the State Liquor Authority's power to regulate live music, and work with the Office of Nightlife and other authorities to change outdated and confusing zoning laws, allowing more restaurants and bars to hire more arts workers.

Directly Buy Tickets: As it did after 9/11, the City can directly purchase tickets to performances across the City and distribute them to schools and community groups—opening up access and cultivating the next generation of arts workers and arts patrons—and to tourists, as an incentive to spend money at stores, restaurants, and cultural institutions.

Invest in All Five Boroughs: We'll work to expand the arts community's Manhattan-centric footprint by coordinating partnerships between Manhattan-based cultural institutions and those in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island to present events and productions in every Council district, giving each City Council member a reason to personally invest in the City's arts budget. We will build a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive arts economy and ensure funding goes to communities historically shut out of funding opportunities.

Restore Funding to the Department of Education's Arts Education Budget to Support Teaching Artists: The City must restore funding to ensure equitable access to arts education for all of our students. We must also streamline the vendor application process to make it easier for artists to secure funding, and allow schools to directly hire organizations with which they have established relationships.

Connect Artists with Schools to Share Resources: New York's public schools contain thousands of art, dance, music, and theater spaces that sit empty most weekends and for two-thirds of each weekday. The city can share these spaces with local artists, providing affordable work space in communities across the city. Upper West Side Schools have 41 arts rooms, 41 music rooms, and 40 theater rooms.

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.

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: Enact my Arts & Culture Recovery Plan: my detailed proposals may be seen above in my answer to question 19.

Second: Enact my Small Business Recovery Plan: again, my detailed proposals may be seen above in my answer to question 19.

Third: Enact my Housing and Homelessness Plan: we need a bold citywide housing plan and a massive expansion of low-income and affordable housing to overcome the severity of the crisis and redefine what it means for housing to be “affordable.” We need to fund and rehabilitate NYCHA. We must create a housing landscape that encourages socioeconomic and racial diversity and ensures that this city is an affordable and safe place for all. We must: Rezone and repurpose commercial office space: the pandemic has led to a surplus of newly vacant commercial office space. We can turn lemons into lemonade by rezoning and transforming that real estate into residential space, while protecting space for artists and small businesses. Develop City-owned land: The City currently owns thousands of undedicated parcels of land. That land can be committed to Community Land Trusts to work with non-profit developers to build permanent low-income and affordable housing. The Comptroller estimates this could create as many as 53,116 new units. Streamline basement apartment conversions: We can create as many as 210,000 new units within city limits by expanding the City’s Basement Apartment Conversion Pilot Program, which modifies zoning and streamlines the permit process to make it easier for owners of one- and two-family homes to add attic, basement, or garage apartments. That’s more housing than was produced during the entirety of the last decade! Redefine “affordable housing”: the metric by which the City calculates eligibility for affordable housing does not serve the population of New York City residents who need it. We must redefine affordable housing pricing standards to ensure it is truly affordable and accessible to New Yorkers of all income levels. Improve access to housing for New Yorkers with disabilities: we need to expand independent and integrated living options for New Yorkers with disabilities. We must reduce the financial, technological, and physical barriers to access affordable housing. Transition away from Mandatory Inclusionary Housing: as long as the City centers the needs of commercial developers in the conversation around “affordable housing” it will only continue to develop and promote programs that ultimately serve to enrich developers. This is why Mandatory Inclusionary Housing has failed. Ultimately, this approach gives away far more than the City’s ROI, and damages the fabric of communities by contributing to gentrification and displacement. It is time to center the needs of residents and communities over commercial interest. Create public banking and empower homeownership: under the current private big banking system that prioritizes profit, home ownership is out of reach for many city residents. By creating a public municipal banking system dedicated to investing in communities, we can expand credit services in low income neighborhoods. Additionally, we can expand down payment assistance programs to make home ownership possible for more New Yorkers. Implement a pied-à-terre tax: we must implement a tax on empty and overpriced luxury condos, owned by shell companies controlled by people who don’t live in this city, that inflate the price of housing for the rest of us. We can use the revenue to fund affordable housing initiatives Expand and prioritize permanent supportive housing for our homeless neighbors: the City’s current shelter system is meant to be temporary and too often those it serves end up on the streets. By transitioning away from a temporary shelter system, we can get more New Yorkers experiencing homelessness off the street and into permanent supportive housing. Create transparency and root out corruption: over the decades, NYC administrations have implemented a variety of failed efforts aimed at curbing homelessness. With the City’s homeless expenditures rising to over \$3.2 billion, and corruption rising along with it, the City Council must create a robust audit and review system aimed at tracking every dollar spent by the Department of Homeless Services while simultaneously ensuring that those dollars are spent on meaningful and effective programs. Streamline the

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 an actor, activist, labor leader, and candidate for New York City Council District 6 (Upper West Side, Lincoln Square, Clinton).

In 2016, my acting career had taken off, but my colleagues and I were struggling to make ends meet while working for unlivable wages at New York City's renowned Off-Broadway theaters. So, I helped create and lead #FairWageOnStage, a grassroots campaign to ensure that stage managers and actors receive fair pay Off-Broadway. The movement gave Actors' Equity Association leverage to achieve historic wage increases, up to 83%, across Off-Broadway theaters. I was soon elected to the board of Actors' Equity, where I've organized from the inside, negotiating higher wages and greater benefits for the union's members. I recently helped lead the union's first strike in over 50 years.

As a union officer, I've seen firsthand how the pandemic has devastated New York's Arts & Culture sector. Most of the industry's employers shuttered, with 70% of arts workers out of work. Realizing that the sector was getting left out of conversations at every level of government, I helped create a new campaign, Be An #ArtsHero, organizing the nation's arts sector to collectively lobby Congress for direct arts relief. After meeting with over 60 US Senate offices, the #ArtsHero organizers helped secure \$15 billion for the arts in the recent pandemic relief bill.

I'm eager to make history as the first openly gay person elected to represent District 6 and the first Japanese-American ever to win elected office in New York State. I'm running for City Council to ensure that all New Yorkers, including artists, the LGBTQ+ community, communities of color, organized labor, and working families have a seat at the table and a voice in City Hall.

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.