



Wednesday, April 28, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Maria Danzilo

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

64

Education

- CUNY Brooklyn College, BA - Brooklyn Law School, JD - New York University School of Law, LLM (Masters in Trade Regulation)

Occupation/Employer

Small business owner, Law practice that represents tech start-ups, small businesses, artists, writers, athletes and entrepreneurs.

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Women in Sports Foundation--women's leadership committee,
Copyright Society of USA--past president and lifetime trustee,
Community Squash Alliance--co founder,
Community volunteer and organizer on important issues including food insecurity, veterans disability services and improving sports facilities in public parks.

Campaign Contact Information**Website**

www.mariadanzilo.com

Twitter

@maria4dist6

Facebook

@Maria.danzilo.uws

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.

My motto is "I hear you Upper West Side." I will run constituent services in a way that fulfills the promise of this motto by prioritizing listening to the community and being actively (not passively) responsive to their needs. My office will listen and respond to every constituent and every concern will be addressed. Our current City Council representative has a reputation for simply not responding to the concerns of the community. I would start my tenure by announcing a plan to improve access and communication between the Council Member's office and the constituents. This means regular meetings and zoom forums where constituents can bring their concerns and get direct access, accepting questions and feedback via all technology platforms and communication methods, and regular updates via email and newsletter.

The scope of services provided by the office must be expanded as follows:

- Senior services: food insecurity, access to health updates, technology literacy, nursing home outreach.
- NYCHA Housing—needs a dedicated arm of the office to address issues in the District.
- Green initiatives and community gardens
- Public safety—more frequent updates
- Street cleanliness
- Small business help in conjunction with the BIDS
- Mental health hotlines, referrals
- Street outreach and homeless programs to address these issues within the City.
- Jobs programs—job fairs for youth, summer opportunities
- Voter education — helping people register to vote and vote, understanding RCV

Constituent services must also address the role of the community board in responding to community concerns. There needs to be better coordination and communication with the city council member's office and greater transparency.

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

I am not an elected official but I still worked to serve my community during the pandemic. I provided pro-bono legal help to help small businesses so that they could open during the pandemic, helping them with burdensome paperwork and accessing much needed PPP funding. I also worked with FoodBankNYC to increase food access for many New Yorkers during the pandemic.

I attended and spoke out at community board meetings. I have participated in many community discussions throughout the pandemic in order to be fully immersed in the issues we are facing.

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

I have lived in District 6 for over 40 years, since I graduated from NYU Law School. I am deeply committed to my neighborhood.

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

Recovering from the pandemic has to be our first priority so legislation that will assist in our recovery

efforts would be introduced first. Since small businesses account for 50% of private sector jobs in NYC and generate \$65 billion a year in revenues, I would introduce legislation to streamline the process of securing a permit to open a small business, by reducing the number of city agencies that must approve a permit and streamline the process of applying. New York should be the best place to open a small business in the country. If it were not for the ability of my immigrant grandparents to open a small business, I would probably not be writing this today.

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?

While reliant on city funding, the NYC BOE is governed by State law. The relationship appears to have a long and difficult history, as the governance structure is a hindrance to the reforms that are needed. The budgeting authority of the City Council can certainly be used to improve BOE operations. As a lawyer with extensive business and corporate experience, who has served as secretary to a Board of Directors, I am well equipped to understand and recommend the changes that need to be made to the governance structure that would improve the operations of the BOE. The City Council does have some significant power in ensuring younger voters, especially students, and parolees are informed of their voting rights and are given access to voter registration materials. We need to make sure to continue these efforts.

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 am a steadfast supporter of RCV. It facilitates candidates working well with each other, improves voter engagement, and ensures accountability of elected officials to a broader spectrum of constituents, not just a plurality of the primary electorate.

In every single one of our campaign zooms we conduct a RCV education segment. When elected, I will make sure my constituents are kept informed

and provided with the tools they need to fully understand RCV. With proper education and support, the electorate can be fully comfortable with RCV by 2023 (our next voting cycle).

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?

First and foremost, and of utmost importance, is that the commission appointments must be done transparently, free of conflicts of interest. Unfortunately, the current conflicts of interest policy does not go far enough in preventing actual conflicts of interest in appointments. Commissioners should never be people to whom an elected owes a “favor” such as the fulfillment of a promise from a past endorsement. Also, while the City Charter (CH 2-A) forbids partisan gerrymandering in favor of one political party, it says nothing of drawing maps in favor of certain incumbents or candidates. This must get fixed. Another loophole in the Charter that must get fixed is the allowance of population deviations between districts of up to 10%. We need much stronger, clearer rules to stop the erosion of fair and democratic redistricting.

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

I fully support an Open Primary System. In 2019, when the State Legislature passed new voting laws for the first time since 1890, they did not include opening the primaries. New York has one of the lowest voter turnouts in the country, and we must do more to support voter engagement in our elections. As a candidate who cares deeply about upholding democratic principles of a free and fair election, the fact so few voters actually pick our

elected leaders is very discouraging. One fair and non partisan way to improve voter turnout is to open primaries. Without open primaries, there is a de facto disenfranchisement of millions of voters. Approximately 20% of New York City voters and a quarter of New York State voters, register as independents. After Democrats, Independants are the largest voting block in the state, and the fastest growing. In 2019, voter registration totals of independents surpassed those of Republicans, yet because of the closed primary system, this whole group of voters has no voting power in primaries. This means that in my district, and other heavily partisan areas around the state, independent voters are effectively shut out of choosing their elected officials, as the general elections are non-competitive. Disenfranchising the 25% of NY State voters who are Unaffiliated further diminishes our political discourse and limits us from engaging the full electorate in the political conversation. Scores of engaged people whom I have met campaigning expressed deep frustration and a deep distrust in the electoral process. Most were either independents or Republicans who felt they had no voice in their representative, since whoever won the primary would inevitably win the general election in our district. For our electoral system to be truly inclusive of all voters, and for our government to be truly representative of the people, we need to give all voters a say in who gets elected in our City. We must stand together for the principle of a free and inclusive election in every case, as it is the best way to encourage diversity of voices in government.

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?

No

Comments

We need consistency in how agency heads are appointed. With that said, I am in favor of having the City Council take a greater role in ensuring accountability of all Commissioners of all city agencies through vastly improved transparency. In reviewing publicly available agency reports I am not seeing the type of information and data that is needed to ensure this accountability.

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 current Police Commissioner has gone on record to say that studies have shown that CCRB in many cases is imposing lower penalties than he himself would support and he has overruled them. At the same time, other studies seem to indicate the opposite is true. This is clearly a highly charged issue and an important question, but we have to get it right as people who are victimized by overly aggressive policing must have justice, while at the same time people who join the police force are putting their lives at risk and can lose everything (including their life savings and home) if we don't get it right.

Here is what I support:

Have the Police Commissioner retain authority for an additional two year trial period. Appoint a non-partisan overseer to compile data on the results of the trial period. After two years the matter should be re-assessed by the Council and a decision made as to whether the Commissioner should retain final decision making power.

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?

No

Comments

This is one area where administrative oversight and a system of checks and balances would make sense. Few remember how extensive corruption in NYPD used to be and few appreciate how much reducing and eliminating corruption has contributed

to unprecedented decreases in crime. Keeping this unit is essential. The Inspector General has a unique role in ensuring the effectiveness of policing. It's role is to ensure the effective operation of NYPD's mission to provide public safety and prevent civil rights violations, and should be working hand in hand with what CCRB is empowered to do. CCRB's role is essential to ensure police accountability. Having three agencies increases the ability of NYPD to regain the public's trust. This is not the time to reduce efforts to bring needed reforms to NYPD.

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.

Please see my full public safety plan included below...

Public Safety For All

It took decades of hard work and community building to create the safe, diverse multi-generational neighborhood that is the UWS today. But to many Upper West Siders, the feeling of safety that we have enjoyed for so long is slipping away. Unfortunately, our elected leaders have downplayed or ignored the problems so many are experiencing on the UWS. The loss of our sense of safety is impacting every aspect of community life, from shopping at local stores, taking the children to the playground, sitting on a bench on Broadway, walking the dog in our beautiful parks, enjoying outdoor dining, riding the subway to work, to even crossing the street. For our community to recover from the destabilizing and disruptive impact of Covid-19 we must restore this sense of safety. Everyone has the right to feel comfortable and safe, whoever they are and wherever they are, without the

fear of violence: from seniors to students, mothers and children, gay and straight, communities where police may be viewed warily, bicyclists, people who fear they are targets of hate crimes or bias, drivers, pedestrians, subway riders, the unsheltered. Everyone has the right to safety. The UWS must be a place where every single person can live and work with dignity and without fear.

My Plan to Restore Safety

Commit to enhanced public safety efforts to address street and subway crime, gun and gang violence.

Ensure the UWS is getting its fair share NYPD funding allocations.

Support the newly adopted Memorandum of Understanding that provides the agreed upon disciplinary matrix for the NYPD

Support reform and reinvention collaboratives underway between NYPD and the City.

Provide enhanced support for addressing mental health issues to both support our community and mitigate crime.

Deploy a comprehensive strategy to root out Hate Crimes

1.- Commit to enhanced public safety efforts to address street and subway crime, gang and gun violence.

Public safety is vested in the New York City budget; to support public safety, City dollars must be spent wisely. Our first steps towards addressing public safety ought to focus on areas where we need to bolster financial support for reforms that increase the safety of everyone in our community and build trust between the NYPD and the communities they serve. We must:

Require the NYPD to hire the requisite number of detectives to fully staff the Special Victims Division and address the backlog of untested rape kits.

Establish City community outreach programs in coordination with block associations, community organizers and other stakeholders to ascertain which areas need more public safety dollars and a larger police presence.

Conduct a comprehensive review of NYPD technology to ensure that its technological needs are met for a 21st Century police force.

Invest in technology infrastructure to improve efficiency, lower administrative costs over the long term, and enable more money to be spent on actual public safety rather than back end administration.

Allocate more resources towards investigating and stopping the pipeline of guns entering our City.

Hire specialists who can begin to address how to

reduce gang violence and provide concrete initiatives that we as a neighborhood can implement to further this goal.

Restore cuts to the police academy class.

We must address root causes of violence among our youth, and we must significantly increase programs and services to these youth as a top priority. Gang and gun violence must be addressed through public safety initiatives as well as holistic and community driven approaches. Recognizing that gun and gang violence is tied to a lack of educational and employment opportunities starting from a young age, we must focus on bringing back our small businesses and igniting our local economy. Our local businesses, private schools and houses of worship must extend a welcoming hand to our youth and provide jobs and support as we emerge from the devastating effects of Covid-19. Through local outreach we can help connect our neighborhood's youth to employment opportunities at small businesses who need our help the most.

2.- Ensure the UWS is getting its fair share of NYPD allocations of public safety dollars.

Order a comprehensive review of the number of public safety dollars assigned to the UWS to ensure we are getting our fair share.

Require that crime statistics are compiled in an accurate and comprehensive way.

Increase the allocation for security cameras in locations that have seen a rise in car break-ins and hate crimes.

3.- Implement consistent standards for the NYPD to ensure safety for both officers and NYC residents.

In February, 2021 the City and the NYPD came together and agreed upon a Memorandum of Understanding establishing an historic new disciplinary matrix. This agreement is seen as a blueprint for a path forward for many police departments across the US. It prioritizes reducing the use of force against civilians and increasing police professionalism through adhering to the chain of accountability between street level officers, their supervisors, and the command. This will increase public trust and reduce money spent to settle officer misconduct claims. These savings can be used to provide enhanced public safety as we stare down an increase in crime throughout NYC. We must continue these efforts by:

Supporting the Memorandum of Understanding that provides the agreed upon disciplinary matrix for the NYPD. This will ensure a fair and consistent standard for the use of force.

Conduct a comprehensive review of how police officers are trained and what metrics are being used to measure success so that we can improve the overall quality of training.

Complete a full review of police weapons and equipment to ensure they are suitable for adequately protecting police officers in the line of duty and are appropriate for addressing public safety.

Adopt new types of training in de-escalation techniques to help prevent violations by NYPD officers and ensure officers feel safe on the job. Fully fund police use of body cameras and detailed protocols for their use so that when these violations do occur, they can be properly addressed.

4.-Support reform and reinvention collaboratives underway between NYPD and the City.

Supporting amicable discussions among stakeholders is essential to effectively address public safety needs.

Require Community Boards to have a yearly review of public safety complaints in conjunction with local NYPD precincts

Expand NYPD and DOHMH co-response teams so that they operate 24 hours a day

Increase awareness of NYPD-small business relationships and build the block programs

5.-Provide enhanced support for addressing mental health issues.

Increase funding for the NYPD co-response unit.

Expand treatment options for all New Yorkers experiencing mental health issues.

Expand project Hope, which provide alternatives to incarceration for people experiencing mental health issues and who have chemical addictions to decrease recidivism.

Provide mental health support for officers, especially those who have been injured in and are dealing with trauma from the line of duty.

6.-Deploy a comprehensive strategy to root out Hate Crimes

Work with the NYPD to develop comprehensive outreach programs to foster relationships so that victims feel confident in reporting hate crimes.

Update NYPD training and technology to ensure comprehensive data collection of crimes with a bias motive, regardless of how such crimes are ultimately prosecuted.

Fully fund the Anti-Asian Hate Crime Unit with paid officers, not volunteers who have full time jobs elsewhere, so that the investigation of these crimes are given the attention they deserve.

Ensure NYPD has full resources to address anti-semitic hate crimes, hate crimes against LGBTQ and people of color, and all groups who may be targeted for a bias crime.

Support installation of security cameras at houses of worship, ethnic food markets, and other locations that have been found to be frequent targets for hate crimes.

Ensure comprehensive data collection on hate crimes by updating NYPD training to cover hate crimes, and creating easily interpretable definitions of hate crimes

Train criminal justice personnel on how to investigate crimes that have a bias motive and work with victims.

Support public education campaigns (especially in schools) on tolerance and acceptance of differences.

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?

No

Comments

The standard of "Strong Support" is too vague. I would consider supporting if the standards were more specific.

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

I strongly support expanding what is reportable as a lobbying expense to include all actions which are or

may appear to be intended to influence any City Council decision or outcome.

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?

Review of the process for deciding how discretionary spending is allocated is long overdue. The appearance of impropriety—that the Speaker used the allocation to punish dissent—is disturbing. However, the Speaker denied a connection, and blamed the reduction of allocations to certain council members on budgetary shortfalls. The allocation process needs to be more transparent, and the public is entitled to an explanation of how and why decisions are made, and allocations should not be used to punish dissent.

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?

Community engagement and public participation can be improved by allowing more time for community members to speak and have their voices heard.

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?

- 1.-Fully reopen all schools.
- 2.-Get New Yorkers back to work in offices in the commercial districts. . Make sure our subways are safe and our commercial centers are safe and clean.
- 3.-Reopen restaurants, shops, gyms , sports arenas

and cultural institutions with reasonable safety protocols in place.

4.-Use federal stimulus money to shore up recovery by prioritizing safe and clean streets.

5.-Lower taxes, and reduce unnecessary regulations and overly burdensome fines. This should be the paradigm for reframing the future of business in New York City.

6.-Work aggressively to bring back tourism.

7.- Make sure we prioritize public safety. We need safe and clean streets.

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.

I am an attorney who has worked in the private sector for a large corporation as a senior level lawyer for 33 years. One of my responsibilities was to write and administer the Company's Conflicts of Interest Policy which is required of corporations under various laws, such as the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. I wrote the policy, and then worked closely with our auditing team in order to ensure that every employee who was required to complete the form did so. I then worked on follow up to address any conflicts or perceived conflicts. I believe that compliance with ethical rules is critically important for a well functioning public corporation, and a well functioning government. Public servants, in particular, must be held to the highest ethical standards.

I was also Vice-President and Secretary of the subsidiary of a global corporation and one of my responsibilities was governance. I was responsible for ensuring that board members followed best practices for engagement, and that committees were structured to reflect the needs of the corporation for proper oversight. I believe that this experience will be invaluable in my role as a City Council member.

As a candidate who is a part of the CFB Matching Funds program, I was required to complete the City's Conflicts of Interest Policy. This form was woefully inadequate in eliciting necessary information that would prevent an elected official from crossing what I believe to be the appropriate ethical lines for a public official. For example, the form only requires the official conflicts of interest,

as opposed to matters that might have the appearance of a conflict of interest. It also does not prevent public officials from hiring members of their immediate family (nepotism).

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.

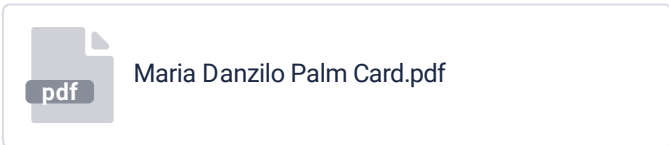
First: Safe and clean streets--we need to be sure that the Upper west side is getting its fair share of public safety resources, deploying a comprehensive strategy to fight hate crimes, and addressing the gun violence epidemic. This goes hand in had with combatting the mental health crisis--strop wasteful spending and ensure increased access to mental health services for those who need them.

Second: Quality education--We need to expand successful programs and improve transparency in the DOE. Our schools must prepare every student to fully participate in the workforce of the future. We need to drastically improve early childhood education by cutting class size and adding resources so that no child falls between the cracks.

Third: Supporting our small businesses--we have to ensure they get the financial and institutional support they need to keep our economy thriving. We must reduce taxes, cut burdensome regulations and fines.

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?

Maria Danzilo is a lawyer, mother of three, and a lifelong New Yorker. Throughout her life her family always taught her about helping others and giving back to the community. She is stepping up to run for City Council because she believes the city needs people with her deep legal and business experience in the private sector to help the city recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic. She will bring a solid, sensible and thoughtful approach to all the important issues we face. She is committed to keeping our streets clean and safe, funding our great schools so that they work for every student, bringing back our small

businesses, and tackling our city's growing mental health crisis.

Maria has lived on the Upper West Side since graduating from law school in 1981. She raised her three children on the UWS and is well known in the community from years of volunteering and community service. A few years ago she started a law practice representing tech start-ups, small businesses, artists and writers. Through her work, Maria became immersed in the challenges of starting a small business and the insecurity of working as a freelancer in creative fields in New York. Over the past few years Maria has become increasingly active as an advocate for our community on the UWS. She has worked with local leaders to spearhead efforts to increase government transparency, and she has been a strong advocate for increasing access to sports programs as a critical way to provide an outlet for many in our community. More information available at MariaDanzilo.com.

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.