



Tuesday, April 27, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)

We thank you very much for your response.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Your Info

**Name**

Maria Ordoñez

**Running for Council District number**

7

**In which primary**

Democratic

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

Democrat

**Age**

21

**Education**

Columbia University (Bachelors)

**Occupation/Employer**

N/A

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

I am an organizer and activist from West Harlem, where I have organized with my local community through my local community garden, local church, and for tenants' rights in 3333 Broadway. In 2018, I ran for County Committee and won, and mobilized many to come out to vote. On top of this I have also organized with Columbia/Barnard YDSA, a group I helped start, for Bernie, a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, a graduate student workers' strike, and currently a tuition strike with over 3k students supporting us. I have organized with my local chapter of the DSA, the Bronx/Upper Manhattan DSA chapter. On top of this, since 2019 I have organized for the Bernie 2020 presidential campaign by organizing meetings, tablings, phonebanks, barnstorms, organized petitioning for Bernie & his delegates in Congressional District 13, and ran & was elected a Bernie delegate for NY-13 with over 22k votes. During this time I organized with NYPAN and Labor for Bernie, a group of union members that supported Bernie and organized for Bernie in their communities and workplaces. After Bernie's campaign, I co-created with other organizers a Grassroots Action New York (GANY), chapter of NYPAN in Harlem and the Upper West

Side where I am a co-chair. Through this group we have organized for Black Lives Matter rallies, defund NYPD rallies, school openings rallies, cancel rent rallies, and tax the rich rallies. Furthermore, I am the NYS representative for Our Revolution. My campaign has been endorsed by GANY and NYPAN.

## Campaign Contact Information

### Website

[www.mariaordonez.nyc](http://www.mariaordonez.nyc)

### Twitter

@MariaOrdonezNYC

### Facebook

@MariaOrdonezNYC

## 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 am running on a model to co-govern and co-legislate with my community. This means that I will center the voices of local organizations, teachers, parents, students, residents, and those marginalized voices so they are part of the decision making table. I will hold monthly town halls, meetings, and roundtables where I will hear from the community to ensure that their interests are represented in the policies I am advocating for in City Hall.

**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 have not served as an elected official previously. During the COVID-19 pandemic I did as much as I could to be a resource for my community. I participated in food distributions and helped out with mutual aid groups that worked on community fridges so people could have food, in a time when people were struggling financially. I also publicly advocated at rallies for schools to remain closed for health and safety reasons, as well as for the city to provide students with the necessary resources, like technology, internet, and access to childcare so they can continue to thrive with their education.

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

I have lived here my whole life. I was born and raised by the people in this district. They have spent their lives serving me; I intend to serve them in any manner that I can.

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

If elected, the first piece of legislation I would introduce is the Green New Deal for NYCHA.

## **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 relationship between the City Council and the NYC BOE tends to be tense and unfair. The BOE is not a meritocratic organization that is

representative of New Yorkers. We need to ensure that we are making voting information accessible to all New Yorkers, to ensure that they can exercise their right to vote.

**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 am a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting. I will work to maintain this system and educate voters about it by providing more language accessibility and making information more accessible to communities that often go ignored by the political process. We will do this by providing information in multiple languages and reaching out to the community in-person, through town halls, video calls, or through the phones.

**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?**

I will work to appoint people from the district that have lived in the area for a significant amount of time and truly understand the needs of the district. I will approach the proposed district maps through a holistic lens, through which I aim to ensure that we are ensuring that we are drawing fair district maps, to reduce the influence from incumbents or external interests.

**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?**

The commissioner should not be the final decision maker on the discipline in the police department. This should be in the hands of a strengthened CCRB that is more representative of our district and ensures that the community has a voice in their process. We will establish an Elected Civilian Review Board (ECRB) with board members elected by members of the community, with the power to use an independent prosecutor to prosecute cases of criminal police misconduct.

**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.**

I am an advocate for defunding the NYPD and bringing that money into our communities so we can invest in mental health programs, education, and housing. We must also instate a hiring freeze and a reduction in office overtime spending. In addition, we must also end the criminalization of people because of the color of their skin by removing the NYPD from schools, parks, and mental health crisis cases. We must lead with community led solutions and restorative justice.

## **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

### **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?**

We need a speaker that will ensure to center the voices of the most marginalized and will be transparent. This is why I 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. It is important that we make decisions collectively and not through backroom deals, as has been happening right now with the speaker. The current speaker currently refuses to call up things for a vote that have any prospect of failing, which is very undemocratic. Ultimately, this ends up benefiting the incumbent because voters, just like candidates, have no idea where incumbents stand on various issues.

**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?**

We need to pass legislation for universal broadband to ensure that everyone has access to the internet and would be able to access any virtual meeting or hearing. Beyond this, it is important that we are reaching residents that too often go ignored by our government. We need to do this by reducing barriers to information either because of language, immigration status, or socio-economic status. We



need to ensure that meetings are accessible during different times during the day, access to ASL interpretation, and we are meeting people where they are at like community events, community centers, or churches.

## 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?**

This pandemic brought issues that already existed to light. We must fight for truly affordable housing to ensure that everyone has a dignified place to live, fully fund public education so every child no matter where they live can have access to quality education, and a Green New Deal for this city so we can cut on building's emissions and create a green jobs program. Furthermore, we must provide more funding for the arts and funding for public parks that have been extremely useful, especially throughout this pandemic.

**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.**

During the presidential elections I canvassed weekly to register people to vote because it is really important that we ensure that we give everyone an opportunity to take part in the political process. Additionally, I have been on the frontlines during the uprising due to the death of George Floyd, to fight for Black lives and defunding the NYPD to ensure that we are investing in our communities not the criminalization of people because of the color of their skin.

**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: Housing as a human right

Second: Education for all

Third: A Green New Deal for NYC

## 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'm running for City Council because it's time that working class New Yorkers have a seat at the table in City Hall. We need to build a movement at the local level to mobilize working class people because everyone should have access to our political process. I am fighting for truly affordable housing, fully funded public education, for a Green New Deal for NYC, for our small business, a transformation of our criminal justice system, and a just recovery from COVID-19. If elected, I would make history as the first Latina to represent Council District 7.

**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).