



Ben Yee for AD 66

Responses to DID Candidate Survey

1. Why this seat, why now?

- a) What motivates you to run for AD-66 at this moment, and what in your background best prepares you to represent the district effectively in Albany?

What motivates you to run for AD-66 at this moment, and what in your background best prepares you to represent the district effectively in Albany?

This election offers us a chance to shape our government and politics. Today, we need leaders with big ideas to improve lives, and who can engage people effectively.

I've worked in campaigns, government, nonprofits, and tech. I've also spent 20 years as a leader in our community with DID, as Sec. of the Manhattan Party, and on State Committee. This has honed a deep understanding of how politics and government work, and how systems can change.

In 2017, I founded a nonprofit to demystify government, training over 8,000 people to build power for their communities. As a result, hundreds have become organizers and candidates, including people like AOC, and multiple Presidents of DID.

My record of empowering thousands, of big ideas that bring change, and of building coalitions with same Democratic leadership that's run Albany, have prepared me to represent our community in the Assembly.

I'm involved because of my family. My father's parents came from China. My mother's were Jews who survived the Holocaust, she was born a refugee. An interracial couple, my parents married ten years after SCOTUS made interracial marriage a civil right. I learned early everyone has a place in our democracy—but we must fight for that truth.

Now, racism, sexism, and corruption are again at the center of our politics. I'm running to bring my skills, my knowledge — all of who I am—to make NY is a sanctuary for our values, people, and democracy.

- b) How have you been involved in the community/district over the past two years? Name some of the organizations, community work, coalitions, etc., that you've taken part in.

My involvement in AD 66 centers on civic education, party reform, and direct service:

Civic Education: Last spring, I designed and taught a multi-part civics series for high school students, combining history lessons with guest speakers and volunteer actions. I frequently lead info sessions on complex topics like Ranked Choice Voting and Charter Revision for groups like DID and VID. In 2024, I assembled a coalition of Downtown clubs to host the only local club town hall featuring Zohran Mamdani, facilitating high-level engagement for Lower Manhattan constituents.

Democratic State Committee (AD 66): For the past eight years, I have served as your elected representative. I've passed more reforms and resolutions than any member in the last decade, including measures to oppose ICE, make Committee votes public, and support consent education. I provide regular updates to local clubs and author a highly regarded, in-depth voter guide (benjaminjee.substack.com) analyzing candidates and ballot initiatives.

DID Leadership: Since 2024, I have served as Chair and now Co-Chair of the DID Events Committee. Alongside Palak Kaushal, I lead the planning for our fundraisers, member meetings, and special events, focused on growing our club's reach.

Direct Service: Beyond politics, I volunteer for local essential services, including the Vision Urbana Thanksgiving Turkey Giveaway and the House of Good Deeds Food Pantry.

2. District triage.

What are the three most urgent issues facing AD-66 specifically (not New York State in general), and why do they rise above others?

1. Affordable housing

Lower Manhattan faces a housing emergency. This market distortion produces cascading harms that hollow out communities and drive costs up for everyone else:

* Overproduction of luxury housing and undersupply of “regular” homes, driving up rents and purchase prices for the rest of us.

* Vacant units and pieds-à-terre held primarily as investments, draining housing supply and neighborhood vitality.

* Declining foot traffic and a weakening local economy, as empty units translate into fewer customers for small businesses.

2. Climate resiliency & disaster preparedness

Flooding and sea-level rise are an existential threat to Lower Manhattan. Climate resilience here is not an abstract environmental issue—it's been 14 years since Hurricane Sandy and our community remains completely vulnerable.

3. Accessible healthcare

The lack of accessible healthcare—including mental health and addiction services—poses a systemic risk to people living in AD-66. When care is out of reach, the entire system destabilizes producing a chain reaction in which people delay preventive cares causing mental health, addiction cases and manageable conditions to worsen until emergency rooms become the first—and most expensive—line of defense. This artificial overloading of hospitals and healthcare infrastructure, driven not by medical need alone but by lack of upstream care leads to hospital closures a lack of access for everyone.

3. Intellectual honesty.

Name one position you held in the last five years that you have since changed your mind about. What evidence, experience, or reasoning caused the shift?

For a long time, I believed that addressing sexual violence was primarily about what happened after harm occurred — better policing, better prosecution, better victim services. I supported those goals, but I did not fully appreciate how much of our policy attention was misplaced.

About a year and a half ago, my long-term partner was sexually assaulted. Watching the toll it took — and how woefully inadequate the system’s response was — forced me to rethink that framework. I began working closely with legislators like Julia Salazar and Jessica González-Rojas and digging into the evidence more seriously.

What changed my mind was not just personal experience, but data: Sexual violence is the second most likely crime a person in the US to experience; and high-quality, age-appropriate consent education and emotional-regulation instruction reduce sexual violence and gender-based bullying by 25–50%, far outperforming adult or workplace interventions which have minimal impact. Meanwhile, over 60% of reported sexual assaults never receive a meaningful investigation, even when survivors do everything “right.”

That combination — lived experience and hard evidence — made it clear to me that prevention must be treated as core public-safety infrastructure, not soft or optional policy. Since then, I’ve been committed to leveraging state resources toward early education, survivor support, and systems that prevent harm before lives are permanently altered.

4. Independence in practice.

What concrete actions in your career demonstrate independence from party leadership, political machines, or entrenched interests?

For 20 years, I have been a reformer who chooses principle over patronage. My record proves I am not a "go-along-to-get-along" politician:

Exposing the IDC/Cuomo Alliance: In my first year on the State Committee, I publicly exposed Governor Cuomo’s attempt to install IDC leader Jeff Klein as a Party Vice Chair. My whistleblowing forced Klein’s removal and upset the Governor’s transition plans.

Refusing the "Cuomo Bribe": I was later offered a seat on the DNC by Cuomo's inner circle. The catch? I had to promise not to oppose a future Cuomo presidential run. I declined. My voice and my vote are not for sale.

Ending the "Voice Vote" Era: When then-Chair Byron Brown tried to ram through a leadership slate without debate, I organized a group of State Committee members to threaten legal action. This led to Brown's resignation and the establishment of actual votes and debate within the body.

The Open Seat Project: In 2009, I led the Manhattan Young Democrats' first "Open Seat" project, electing 68 young people to County Committee. We stunned the machine by challenging the Vice Chair slot. Rather than backing down, we kept running candidates until I eventually won the Secretary seat to fight for transparency from the inside.

The political power players have been trying to threaten and coerce me into silence as long as I have been active. I have never been willing to be silent. I will bring that same unbought independence to the Assembly.

5. Campaign finance and ethics.

What specific reforms would you champion to strengthen New York's campaign finance and ethics system (e.g., coordination rules, disclosure, enforcement, ethics oversight)? Please be concrete.

NY's ethics laws fail due to evasion loopholes and oversight bodies that lack independence. I will champion:

1. Closing Coordination Loopholes: We must define coordination broadly to include shared vendors, digital targeting, and data sharing. I'll prohibit consultants from working simultaneously for a campaign and an aligned PAC and require real-time disclosure of vendor relationships to reveal conflicts as they happen.
2. Modernizing Disclosure: I'll expand 24-hour disclosure for large gifts (\$1k+) to the final 60 days of a race and create a statewide public database for digital ads showing spend and targeting. We must also require LLCs and shell entities to identify real beneficial owners.
3. Proactive Enforcement: Public financing needs "rapid audits" before funds are released, not years later. I'll fight for increased staffing to investigate violations during the campaign cycle.
4. Independent Oversight: Politicians shouldn't appoint their own watchdogs. I'll transform COELIG into a body appointed by non-political entities like Law School Deans. I also support mandating 48-hour digital disclosure for lobbying meetings and requiring independent, outside sexual harassment investigators for all state offices.

5. Expanding Matching Funds: To truly level the playing field, we must pair the state's matching program with an expenditure cap, modeled on NYC's system, to prevent large outside donors from drowning out grassroots voices.

6. Outside employment.

Should state legislators be allowed to hold outside employment? If yes, under what limits (type of work, income caps, conflicts rules, disclosure)? If no, why not?

No. A legislator's job should be serving the people, outside employment makes them directly beholden to other interests. That said, the job description of legislators should be expanded to be a central community touchpoint and organizing hub. It's arguable whether most legislators earn a full-time salary given the job doesn't have a description that requires full-time working.

7. Judicial selection.

Should New York reform how judges are selected, including the judicial convention system for State Supreme Court? If so, how?

All judges should be elected through highly publicized elections with a centralized candidate portal provided to voters by the government. It makes sense to elect judges, but we must stop pretending that they're not political and make their elections as accessible as all others.

The archaic process by which the political Parties avoid Primary elections for Supreme Court judges via a convoluted election of Delegates in the Primary, who then attend a Convention to then select the Party nominee should be abolished.

My preference would be to have a ranked choice general election for judges without the need for a primary, which is also my preference for all elections, for the record. Barring that, judges should go through a standard primary / general election model just as our current governor and legislators do.

8. Strengthening democracy.

a) Should ranked-choice voting be expanded beyond NYC? Why or why not? (in brief)

Yes. Ranked-choice voting should be expanded statewide.

New York City's experience shows that voters are capable of using the system effectively, turnout does not suffer, and the results better reflect the electorate's preferences—especially in crowded, competitive races. RCV is a practical reform that improves legitimacy without limiting voter choice.

For more information, check out this video I made: <https://youtu.be/4n8pQJe0ols>

b) Are there any changes to the New York Constitution you support? Why?

Yes. I support modernizing New York's Constitution to fix structural flaws that weaken accountability. Key reforms:

Ban Policy in the Budget: Limit the budget to appropriations. Banning non-fiscal riders will restore transparency and ensure major policy changes receive standalone debate rather than being forced through behind closed doors.

Strengthen NYC Home Rule: Grant NYC constitutionally protected authority over local taxation, land use, and elections. The City should not need Albany's permission for routine self-governance.

Streamline the Courts: Our fragmented judicial system is inefficient by design. I support a constitutional overhaul to simplify court structure and reduce delays.

Constitutionalize Voting Rights: Move "no-excuse" mail-in voting and same-day registration from statute to the Constitution to ensure they are protected rights, not vulnerable privileges.

Allow Non-Partisan Primaries: Give voters more choice and reduce party gatekeeping in districts where the primary effectively decides the outcome.

Multi-Member, Gender-Balanced Districts: Allow multi-member Assembly districts to improve representation, reduce gerrymandering, and better reflect our diverse electorate.

Independent Ethics Body: Since ethics commissions are constantly challenged in court or altered by the Executive, we must enshrine a fully independent, non-politically appointed anti-corruption body directly in the Constitution to ensure it has the teeth to investigate the highest levels.

9. Zoning and housing supply.

Do you support statewide zoning reforms to increase housing production (e.g., by-right housing, transit-oriented upzoning, legalization of multifamily housing)?

If yes, what model and guardrails do you favor?

If no, what scalable alternative do you propose?

No. I do not support Albany imposing one-size-fits-all statewide zoning mandates. Localities should be empowered to make land-use decisions for their own communities, and New York City in particular should have far more home-rule authority than it does today. Zoning set from Albany treats housing as a technical problem rather than a democratic one—and too often substitutes blunt mandates for real solutions.

The deeper problem is that localities are currently given ****only one lever—zoning—****to solve a multi-dimensional housing crisis. When zoning is the sole tool, every conflict gets forced into an all-or-nothing land-use fight. I support devolving broader housing authority to cities, including control over taxation tools and housing programs, so local governments can pair zoning decisions with vacancy taxes, pied-à-terre taxes, rent-stabilization variants, and affordability programs tailored to local conditions.

****What the State should do instead****

Albany has a critical role—but it should focus on coordination, incentives, and guardrails, not parcel-level zoning.

1. Regional housing and transportation planning

The State should require and fund integrated regional plans that align housing production with transportation capacity. Fragmented planning concentrates demand near job centers and inflates rents. Coordinated regional transit—fast buses, commuter rail integration, and through-running—expands where people can realistically live and reduces pressure on the urban core without displacement.

2. Incentivize democratically approved comprehensive plans

Rather than preempting local control, the State should offer block grants and infrastructure funding to municipalities that pass comprehensive development plans through their local legislatures. These plans should address housing mix, affordability levels, infrastructure, schools, and open space together—so communities negotiate tradeoffs once, transparently, instead of parcel by parcel.

3. Use state land and money to model the standard

Where the State controls land directly or through authorities, it should require at least 50% permanently affordable housing, with deeper affordability where public subsidy is highest. Public land should serve public housing outcomes—not luxury development with minimal set-asides

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****Bottom line****

Statewide zoning mandates confuse speed with legitimacy and supply with affordability. A better path is home rule plus state coordination: give cities real authority over housing and tax policy, align housing with transportation at the regional level, and use state funding to reward comprehensive, democratic planning. That approach builds homes people can actually live in—while reducing displacement and political deadlock rather than intensifying it.

10. State vs. local authority. (1,479/1,500)

When, if ever, should the state override local zoning and land-use rules?

I do not support blanket statewide zoning mandates imposed by Albany.

Zoning is currently the only meaningful housing lever local governments control, which turns it into a blunt, all-or-nothing battlefield. When the State preempts local zoning without devolving other housing tools, it strips communities of agency while still failing to produce the kinds of housing New Yorkers actually need.

Instead, I support more home rule and more local authority over the full housing toolbox—not just zoning—paired with strong state-level planning and accountability.

What I support instead:

1. Incentivize democratically approved, comprehensive development plans with block-grant programs.

Offer block-grant incentives for localities to pass comprehensive development plans

2. Fund state-led regional planning tied to transit and housing.

4. Align incentives with outcomes.

State tax benefits and discretionary funding should be conditioned on meaningful affordability, not just unit counts. This includes higher mandatory affordability thresholds for projects receiving public subsidy and prioritizing housing that serves low- and moderate-income New Yorkers rather than investment-grade luxury supply.

The housing crisis is not caused by local control alone—it is caused by a system that gives communities responsibility without the tools to succeed. The solution is not less democracy, but better-structured democracy paired with real state coordination.

11. Preservation vs. homes.

How should New York balance historic preservation with housing needs in Manhattan?

If a project meets objective standards but faces organized neighborhood opposition, how would you approach the decision?

If a project meets objective standards but faces organized neighborhood opposition, the decision should not be made by the State. This is fundamentally a New York City issue. Albany's role is not to referee individual development disputes, but to address the structural failures that turn every project into a zero-sum fight.

What the State should do instead:

1. Relieve pressure through regional transportation and housing planning.

The State should invest in and coordinate regional transportation—fast buses, integrated commuter rail, and through-running—to expand access to job centers and reduce development pressure on Manhattan. When people can realistically live farther from where they work, neighborhood opposition driven by scarcity and fear of displacement diminishes.

2. Fix market distortions that bias development toward luxury and speculation.

Albany should work with localities to adopt tax policies that correct a housing market skewed toward international capital rather than residents. This includes vacancy taxes, pied-à-terre taxes, and—where legally viable—limits on purchases by large corporate or non-resident buyers, as cities like Toronto have done. These tools shift incentives toward building homes people actually live in.

3. Incentivize democratically approved comprehensive development plans.

Albany should offer funding and infrastructure partnerships to municipalities that enact comprehensive development plans through their elected legislatures, covering housing, transit, schools, and public space together.

Bottom line:

Historic preservation must be real, but so must housing need. Projects that meet clear standards should be evaluated within democratically adopted local plans—not decided ad hoc by the State in response to organized opposition. The solution to neighborhood conflict is better planning, fairer markets, and accountable local governance, not preemption.

12. Rent regulation philosophy.

Is New York's housing situation best served by expanding tenant protections and rent control regulations, reforming them, or rolling them back? What evidence informs your view, and what would change your mind?

New York's housing crisis is best addressed by expanding tenant protections while reforming rent regulation to make it more effective and durable—not rolling it back.

Strong protections against unjust eviction, harassment, and displacement are essential in a market with chronic scarcity and extreme power imbalances. The evidence is clear that stability matters: when tenants are protected, families remain housed, neighborhoods remain intact, and downstream costs to shelters, healthcare, and social services decline.

Rent stabilization remains a necessary tool, but it works best when paired with policies that preserve housing quality and incentivize long-term stewardship. That means funding capital repairs for stabilized units, preventing regulatory arbitrage that encourages neglect, and aligning affordability targets with real cost-of-living measures rather than blunt AMI bands. Rent regulation should preserve existing homes while complementary policies expand non-luxury supply.

Decades of experience in New York show that weakening tenant protections increases displacement without reliably increasing affordability, while rent regulation—when isolated from capital funding, tax policy, and production—cannot solve the crisis alone. The strongest outcomes occur when protections, regulation, and public investment operate together, especially for households at the lowest income levels.

13. Elizabeth Street Garden

Elizabeth Street Garden is now officially designated parkland. Under the public trust doctrine, land formally dedicated as parkland cannot be sold, leased, or used for non-park purposes without express legislative authorization. If elected, would you vote to remove Elizabeth Street Garden as parkland if that vote came up? Why or why not? (In brief)

I would vote to preserve Elizabeth Street Garden. This battle is a microcosm of a market rigged for the wealthy, where communities are forced to fight over scraps—affordable housing vs. green space—while luxury development happens by default. I refuse to authorize the removal of parkland when the real solution is systemic: ending the anti-democratic consolidation of land-use power and building housing without sacrificing the rare, magical public spaces that make our city livable.

14. Making it easier to get stuff done.

a) Briefly state your diagnosis of what most impedes housing delivery in New York and how that diagnosis informs your policy approach.

The City government's complete abdication of any responsibility in building a cohesive, comprehensive plan for development that forces our democratic representatives to trade upzonings, affordable housing, waste transfer stations, greenspace, amenities, homeless shelters, jails, etc. is impeding housing in New York City.

Because of this, every single plot of land is a battle. Every single project has been threatened by member deference, marginalized communities get undesirable necessities forced on them, and wealthy communities don't do their part.

And now, because a comprehensive plan is unthinkable, the problem of member deference has given way to what will be the new problem of Mayoral steamrolling with the new Charter proposals.

b) Name one specific approval, review, discretionary power, or program you would limit, reform, or eliminate—for housing or transit—while preserving safety and environmental review.

We need State incentivization for local legislatures to do their job by offering block grants and incentives for comprehensive planning in coordination with State departments and authorities like the MTA and Port Authority. We also need dedicated funds in a lock-box for affordable housing that comprises part of this fund so that plans for affordable housing don't fall apart due to redirection of funding.

15. Disruption tradeoffs.

Would you support policies that allow more short-term construction disruption (noise, street closures, visual impact) in exchange for faster and cheaper delivery? What limits would you impose?

Yes. It's New York, it's loud already. We desperately need to get things done more cheaply so we can provide the infrastructure that makes the city and state run, and makes the lives of New Yorkers better. That often means we need to do things faster, because time costs money. We obviously shouldn't be jackhammering at night, or shutting down mass transit lines during rush hour, but these are things that need to get done.

That said, in terms of transportation disruptions, programs like Fast and Free buses and subsidized Citibikes offer highly adaptable ways to create alternative transportation options to rival the subway when the latter must be shut down.

16. Infrastructure cost crisis.

New York infrastructure projects often cost multiples of peer regions. What specific reforms would you support to reduce costs and timelines (e.g., standardization, procurement reform, in-house capacity, limiting late scope changes, narrowing veto points)? What tradeoffs are you willing to accept?

New York's infrastructure projects cost far more and take far longer than those of peer regions because we combine bespoke design, fragmented procurement, weak public-sector capacity, and too many late-stage veto points. I would support reforms that standardize delivery, professionalize the public owner, and lock decisions earlier—accepting some loss of customization in exchange for speed, affordability, and scale.

Specific reforms I support proposals to:

1. Expand best-value contracting and design-build with strict prequalification, and rein in change-order abuse by tying contractor profit to on-time, on-budget delivery rather than delay.
2. Pay market-competitive salaries for engineers, project managers, and cost estimators so the State can act as a competent project owner, not just a contract manager outsourcing judgment to consultants.
3. Establish a hard scope-freeze milestone. Late changes should require supermajority approval and identified funding, rather than being absorbed quietly as overruns. Fragmented planning across agencies drives bespoke design, duplication, and delay. Integrating capital planning across transit and regional infrastructure reduces redundancy and lowers per-project costs.

Tradeoffs I am willing to accept:

- * Fewer bespoke architectural elements and late add-ons
- * Tighter timelines for community input, concentrated early rather than reopened repeatedly

However, I AM NOT willing to trade away safety, accessibility, or labor protections.

17. MTA governance and accountability. (1,302/1,500)

What is one governance or accountability reform you would pursue for the MTA (board structure, transparency, capital oversight, procurement, labor rules, or operations), and what problem would it solve?

I will champion the creation of an Independent Capital Oversight Board for the MTA. This body, staffed by construction and finance experts with fixed, staggered terms, would have the authority to approve scopes, budgets, and major change orders.

Problem: Current accountability is diffuse. The board is too large and political to enforce discipline, meaning overruns surface only after costs have spiraled.

Technical Solutions

Real-Time Claims Logging: I will mandate a project cost log including all claims be presented to the oversight committee. This serves as an early warning system, identifying "projects going bad" before massive change orders accumulate.

Earned Value Reporting: Project updates must be based on Earned Value calculations of work completed in the field. This replaces "optimistic" reporting with objective data on actual progress.

Transparency: Real-time public reporting on cost and schedule variance.

What I would not do: I won't micromanage operations or weaken labor and safety rules. The goal is governance clarity, not cutting corners.

Measuring Success: We must measure outcomes, not ribbon cuttings. Success means improved cost-per-mile, reduced schedule variance, and increased elevator uptime.

Accountability only works if the public can see the data. By locking scope early and enforcing mid-project discipline, we restore trust that capital dollars are being stewarded responsibly.

18. Congestion pricing.

What, if any, specific changes do you support to the existing congestion pricing model, and why?

The data show that congestion pricing has been a success in terms of reducing traffic in lower Manhattan, reducing commute times through bridges and tunnels and improving the air quality. That said, I have two changes I would seek to implement:

The current structure of a flat fee for all popular driving hours is more a tax on cars than a congestion price. While it does discourage driving, and therefore congestion, it could be much more effective by using an adaptable price based on the time of day.

For example, today we have a flat fee of \$9 for all high-traffic hours. A more effective model to reduce congestion would be one that charges more when there are the most cars on the road, say \$12 between 6am-7am, and less when there are fewer cars, say \$8 between 8am-9am.

A model like this, focuses on congestion and street capacity, not driving, and encourages people to shift away from the densest driving times, thereby smoothing the number of cars on the road throughout the day.

I would also support instituting a fare reduction or rebate for those who live within the Zone as they truly cannot avoid going through it if they need to use their vehicle.

19. Street safety authority.

Would you grant NYC broader authority to use automated enforcement (speeding, blocked crosswalks, bus and bike lanes), subject to due-process and privacy safeguards? What else can be done to improve street safety for pedestrians in New York?

Yes. I support granting New York City broader home-rule authority to use automated enforcement—such as for speeding, blocked crosswalks, bus lanes, and bike lanes—subject to clear due-process, privacy, and data-retention safeguards. Local street conditions vary dramatically across New York, and enforcement tools should be responsive to those conditions. Albany should not micromanage how NYC.

That said, any expansion should include:

- * limits on data retention and secondary use;
- * public reporting on where cameras are placed and why;
- * evaluation based on safety outcomes, not ticket volume.

What else should be done to improve pedestrian safety:

1. Hold delivery corporations accountable for delivery drivers with licensing and mandatory insurance.
2. Regulate e-vehicles by risk class based on weight/max speed, including licensing for motor vehicle equivalents.
3. Align authority with accountability. If NYC is responsible for pedestrian safety outcomes, it must also have the authority to deploy the tools that work. State interference without assuming responsibility only produces paralysis—and pedestrians pay the price.

Street safety is not a culture-war issue or a revenue strategy. It is basic public infrastructure. The goal is fewer injuries, fewer deaths, and streets that function safely for everyone—not just those inside cars.

20. State vs. city climate power.

Should the state remove obstacles to city-led climate policies (e.g., building electrification, performance standards, clean-energy siting)? Where should statewide uniformity prevail, and where should local flexibility apply?

As mentioned, I support Home Rule for NYC. Localities should largely be able to act in a way that serves their residents without interference from Albany unless it will impact other areas of the State.

Insofar as power requirements, the main areas of necessary cooperation or state-preemption would be about long-run integration with the power grid which is in desperate need of modernization, and power generation as most power plants (be they solar, wind, gas, etc.) will be sited outside the 5 boroughs.

21. Climate strategy.

Should New York incorporate explicit carbon pricing (tax or fee), or rely primarily on regulation and targeted investments? Why? (in brief)

Yes! Tax and Invest is a great program to disincentivize the creation of more carbon emissions and force polluters to pay for the infrastructure that is necessary to save us from climate catastrophe.

Additionally, at least 75% of any revenue generated by Carbon Pricing should be placed in a lock box solely for green infrastructure and climate resiliency projects

22. Environmental review reform.

Should New York's environmental review process explicitly assess the environmental costs of *not* proceeding with a project (such as increased emissions, sprawl, or displacement) alongside the impacts of development? If so, what changes would you support?

Yes. The fact that our environmental review process does not consider both the “pro” and “con” of a project in this way is kind of wild. Every undertaking in our world is about weighing the costs and benefits. Insofar as the public must be informed to make good decisions, and they are effectively “hiring” the service of Environmental Review as a consulting service to do the research so they can make an informed determination, those reviews should provide a cost-benefit analysis.

23. Schools: outcomes vs. process.

How should Albany approach NYC public school governance, funding formulas, class-size mandates, and charter school policy to prioritize student outcomes and family needs? Where should flexibility increase, and what accountability should accompany it?

I support age-appropriate social and emotional learning, consent education, media literacy, financial literacy and civics instruction as core elements of a modern curriculum—not add-ons. These are prevention tools that improve school climate, reduce downstream safety and disciplinary costs, strengthen our democracy, and support academic achievement—especially in high-need classrooms.

Funding and formulas

Albany should fully fund and modernize equity-based aid so high-need students (poverty, ELL, disability, housing instability) are resourced predictably, not through volatile add-ons.

Predictable funding allows schools to retain counselors, social workers, tutoring, and special-education support. We must ensure that Albany releases the full \$1.4B it is required to pay to NYC as mandated by our courts.

Governance

Albany should set transparency and accountability requirements and allow NYC to choose the governance structure that delivers results, with clearer reporting and oversight—not less.

Class-size mandates

Keep class-size reduction as a goal, but increase flexibility in implementation. Rigid mandates can force perverse staffing and space decisions. Require a published phased plan prioritizing early grades and highest-need schools, with temporary waivers where space or hiring constraints make strict compliance counterproductive. Expand Dial-a-Teacher to offer full virtual tutoring which has been wildly successful in other states and countries.

Charter school policy

Charter schools were created to allow for experimentation, with successes incorporated into public schools. I support their use for that purpose, not as a secondary school system that enhances segregation and disparate outcomes.

Bottom line: fund fairly, enforce rights, demand transparent outcomes—and give NYC the operational room to deploy proven academic supports, mental-health services, and family-centered strategies at scale.

24. Mental health and addiction capacity.

What state-level changes would you support to expand the supply of effective mental health and addiction care in lower Manhattan, beyond simply creating new programs?

Universal healthcare that covers mental health and addiction treatment. We have to stop treating these elements as unrelated. Mental health and addiction problems benefit enormously from preventative and consistent care. Our single, best answer to minimizing issues related to these in our society is to ensure that people have access to help EARLY, that it's GUARANTEED and that it's NOT A CHOICE between healthcare that will save them, and our communities, or other necessities like food or rent.

Additionally, I propose more education in schools on social-cognitive skills and consent and boundaries. These programs have been shown to improve decision making and reduce bullying/peer pressure early in life which are key causes of mental health stresses and drug use.

Other than that, we do need to fund and build more treatment centers, and increase harm reduction programming.

25. Critical health infrastructure.

Lower Manhattan lost a major hospital (Mount Sinai Beth Israel) after years of financial struggles and legal challenges, despite efforts by community advocates to keep it open. What specific actions should state government take to ensure that critical health care access is preserved in high-need neighborhoods when major hospitals seek to close? How would you tailor these actions to suit the medical needs of downtown Manhattan? Be concrete.

When a major hospital seeks to close in a high-need area, Albany should treat it like critical infrastructure, not a private real-estate decision. The State has tools—especially through DOH

oversight, Medicaid financing, and consolidation review—to require continuity of care and prevent “closure-by-attribution.”

What the State should do statewide when a hospital seeks to close

1. Strengthen closure approval standards (with enforceable conditions).

Require DOH approval to include a binding Continuity of Care Plan: replacement capacity, timelines, staffing, and patient transfer protocols—not just promises. If the operator can’t meet conditions, the State should deny or condition approval..

2. Financial transparency and accountability across the whole system.

Hospitals should not justify closure based solely on losses at one site if the parent system remains solvent. Require system-wide financial disclosure and prohibit cross-subsidizing expansions elsewhere while hollowing out essential access locally.

3. Targeted stabilization funding, tied to reforms.

If a facility is essential to access, the State can provide time-limited bridge funding or capital support—but only with hard guardrails: measurable service requirements, turnaround plans, and clawbacks for noncompliance.

4. Consolidation review with teeth.

Tighten merger/consolidation oversight: a clear public-interest standard, enforceable conditions, and post-transaction monitoring with penalties.

26. Public order and civil liberties.

What role should **New York State law, funding, and oversight** play in keeping streets, transit, and public spaces safe and functional, and how should the state set standards for policing and public safety that protect civil liberties while allowing effective enforcement?

Above all, the State has a fundamental obligation to ensure that civil liberties guaranteed under the US Constitution, our State Constitution and local Charters are enforced. Each level of government is charged with preserving our rights, and with holding other levels of government accountable.

Insofar as funding, the State should invest heavily in programs that maximize public safety while maximizing civil rights with data driven policy. These include several of the policies I’ve mentioned or proposed in this questionnaire. For example:

* Teaching cognitive-social skills in HS and to incarcerated populations. Shown to reduce violent crime by up to 30% and recidivism by up to 45%.

* Providing mental health and addiction services, a primary reason that people end up unhoused and on our streets.

* Providing better designed and funded homeless shelters so that they are livable and safe. Otherwise unhoused people won't use them or will use hospitals instead.

* Funding community policing programs to expand the relationships and empathy that law enforcement has with the communities they're serving.

* Using law enforcement staff and subpoena power to protect New Yorkers from civil rights violations by the Federal government. Including arresting Federal agents, and using subpoena power to investigate and shutter facilities where civil rights violations are purported to be happening.

27. Oversight muscle.

What is **one** area where the Assembly should use oversight more aggressively, and what would be the first hearing, audit, or information request you would push for?

Coastal resiliency and climate preparedness. It's been 14 years since Hurricane Sandy and New York City still remains lethally vulnerable to storm surges and rising sea levels. There needs to be a complete audit on why this took so long and how we can prevent this in the future.

Bonus: ICE. As mentioned in 26, the state should be aggressively using its law enforcement power to protect our civil rights violations by the Federal government. Including arresting Federal agents, and using subpoena power to investigate and shutter facilities where civil rights violations are purported to be happening.

28. AI, privacy, and civil rights.

As New York increasingly uses AI systems and large-scale data processing in government and the private sector, what guardrails should be required to protect New Yorkers' rights and democratic accountability?

Please discuss your view of the recently enacted RAISE Act, and describe the core principles you would prioritize—such as limits on data use, transparency and oversight for high-risk systems, meaningful notice and human review for consequential decisions, and effective enforcement—along with how those principles should be applied in practice.

Governor Hochul took an important first step by signing the RAISE Act, which requires the largest AI developers to identify the risks their systems could pose and to be transparent about those risks.

New York should set strong, common-sense rules for privacy and AI that match the best standards already used around the world. At their core, these standards all say roughly the same thing: companies should only collect and use data for legitimate purposes; people should be able to see, correct, and delete information about themselves; sensitive data like health or location information should receive extra protection; and when AI systems are used in high-stakes situations—like hiring, housing, health care, education, or access to essential services—

those systems should be tested for errors and bias, clearly explained, and overseen by humans who can intervene when something goes wrong.

New York should build on the RAISE Act by making sure people can actually exercise their data rights without jumping through hoops; by requiring companies to manage AI systems responsibly from design through deployment; and by protecting people from biased, inaccurate, or unsafe automated decisions in situations that affect their livelihoods, health, housing, or safety. And when those rules are broken, enforcement shouldn't depend entirely on regulators having time or political will. People who are harmed should have the right to go to court themselves and seek compensation. That's how accountability becomes real—and how strong rules translate into real protection.

29. Do you support: Treatment Not Jail Act, prioritizing community-based treatment and services over incarceration.

30. Do you support: Ending Qualified Immunity (S1991/A4331)

31. Do you support: Fair & Timely Parole (S7514/A4231A) and Elder Parole (S15A/A3475A)

32. Do you support: Daniel's Law (S4814/A4697), which would remove police officers as first responders to most mental health and substance use crises and instead deploy trained mental health professionals, peers, and other health workers

Yes to all (29-32)

33. Do you support: Any further rollbacks of New York's bail reform laws? If so, please explain (in brief)

No, money should never be the determinant of freedom. Judges should be empowered to decide whether someone is a safety or flight risk. If they are, they can be detained, if not, they can be released. We have ample technology to track a person's whereabouts if necessary, paying for release is an archaic and unjust form of law enforcement.

34. Do you support: Any rollbacks of Raise the Age? If so, please explain (in brief)

No. As a society we decide when someone reaches the age of majority. Either we are consistent in that standard and believe a minimum level of growth and development is required, or we make carve outs based on prejudice.

35. Do you support: Any rollbacks of New York’s discovery reform laws? If so, please explain (in brief)

No. Discovery is a fundamental civil right that gives those accused and opportunity to defend themselves against an often vastly more well resourced government.

36. Do you support: Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act — eliminating mandatory minimum sentences, including New York’s two- and three-strike laws, to allow judges to consider individual circumstances

37. Do you support: Second Look Act — allowing judges to review and reconsider excessive sentences based on demonstrated transformation or changes in law and norms

38. Do you support: Earned Time Act — expanding and strengthening earned time, good time, and merit time programs to support rehabilitation and family reunification

Yes on all (36-38)

39. Do you support: The full decriminalization of sex work? Please explain (in brief)

I believe that, in a world where economic opportunities are enough so that all sex workers are purely there out of desire — not forced by the market — full decriminalization makes perfect sense. But in a society where sex workers tend to be drawn from the most marginalized and least well off communities, I would need to do more investigation to determine whether immediate decriminalization does more good than harm.

40. Constituent accountability.

How will you maintain ongoing, transparent communication with constituents?

As mentioned in Question 1, one of the three pillars of my campaign is to make the Assembly seat a Hub for Community Activism. Our most effective leaders — people like Barack Obama, AOC, Zohran Mamdani — are those who have big policies to change lives for the better. And, focus equally on the importance of engaging and empowering people to inspire hope through real participation.

I will transform the Assembly office into a center for civic engagement, doing what I’ve done for 17 years. Building on a proven track record of reaching beyond community boards and political clubs, to bring over 10,000 New Yorkers into the democratic process.