

Thank you for agreeing to complete the South Central Brooklyn United for Progress State Senate District 26 candidate questionnaire. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with how our endorsement process works - a candidate must receive $\frac{2}{3}$ of the ranked choice vote in order to win our endorsement. [More details here.](#)

Your answers to these questions will be made available to the public on our website, <http://scbkunitedforprogress.org/>, and will be promoted on our Facebook page and twitter feed.

Answers are due Tuesday, July 5 by 8pm if you want to be considered for endorsement!

Campaign Information

What is your name? Andrew Gounardes

What are your preferred pronouns? He/Him

What office are you running for? NYS Senate District 26

Who is the point of contact for your campaign and what is the best way to get in touch with them? Joseph Jourdan - joseph@andrewgounardes.com

What is your campaign address? TBD

What is your campaign phone number? TBD

What is your campaign email? andrew@andrewgounardes.com

What is your campaign website? www.andrewgounardes.co

Is your campaign on social media? If so, what platform(s) and what are the names? @agounardes (twitter, IG) @andrewfornew york (Fb)

Campaign Issues

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **health care** and what would you do to address them?

Simply put, the biggest healthcare challenge facing my district is affordability. The cost of patient care is prohibitive to many, which is why this session I introduced the HEAL Act to ban certain anti-competitive practices that are one of the main drivers of rising costs. For example, the average aggregate cost for a colonoscopy in New York City is between \$2,185 at NYC Health and Hospitals and \$10,368 at New York-Presbyterian. The average aggregate cost for a vaginal delivery in NYC is between \$11,101 at NYC Health and Hospitals and \$41,740 at Montefiore. These price discrepancies fuel the rise in out of pocket costs, making healthcare more and more unaffordable.

I am also supportive of the NYHA but have published some of my concerns that need to be addressed before the bill is acted upon. You can read more here:
<https://agounardes.medium.com/some-thoughts-on-the-new-york-health-act-fcd3da3da179>

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **COVID-19 and recovery from its effects** and what would you do to address them?

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare so many of the holes in our safety net. During the pandemic my office turned into a makeshift food pantry, handing out thousands of hot meals and groceries. But while many would like to think that the pandemic is over, it is very clearly not and the effects are still clearly lingering. While unemployment is down across the country, it remains high for New Yorkers who still struggle daily with the unemployment system. We are still processing and paying out emergency rental assistance funding, after it ran out at first. We must remain vigilant against the virus, and continue to look for ways to help those that were seriously affected.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **prejudice, hate crimes, and racial justice** and what would you do to address them?

The rise in hate and bias crimes started before the pandemic, but certainly since then we have seen the numbers continue to rise and rise. This scourge on our communities has a chilling effect on us all. I've been proud to support legislation that banned hate symbols on public property in NYS, as well as legislation to teach holocaust education within our schools. Hate crimes and hate symbols not only target the victim, but they target entire communities. I have held town halls and events with the Brooklyn DA and affected communities to educate and show solidarity, and will continue to look for ways to do so.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **public schools and education** and what would you do to address them?

A high quality public education from Pre-K through undergraduate college should be a universal right to all New Yorkers, which is why I've introduced legislation to create a constitutional amendment to do that. Locally, class sizes remain very high throughout my districts even with the pandemic enrollment losses that have occurred. I was grateful that this year the legislature passed a bill on class size, which would have a positive impact on students and teachers alike.

I also hear frustrations from families regarding the IEP process, and the very prolonged hearing timetable and repayment schedule. This year I introduced and pushed for a revolving loan fund for parents and schools that would front the money so that no one has to go into debt in order to get their child the education they deserve.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **homelessness and housing** and what would you do to address them?

All our communities have seen a rise in homelessness, and I am working with city agencies and my partners in government to educate our community as to how to treat them with dignity and fairness. The homeless shelter system is broken, and I think we need to create safe shelters where the unhoused can go as well as providing services where they may feel safest (subway action centers, for instance).

To read my full thoughts on the housing crisis, you can see here:

<https://www.gothamgazette.com/130-opinion/11337-good-cause-eviction-affordable-housing-new-york>

What more do you think could be done in regards to **pedestrian / bicycle / automobile safety** in your district and/or in all of New York City / State?

Pedestrian and street safety has been one of my main priorities in office and I am so proud to have just recently renewed and expanded the life saving speed camera program within NYC. This session I was also able to pass a bill that I authored to ensure that pedestrian and cyclists safety is a part of the drivers education curriculum. There is so much that can be done on all fronts of government, from changing our laws to make it easier to hold reckless drivers accountable to working with DOT and state/city agencies to have road redesign to make our streets safer. If re-elected I will continue my laser focus on pushing for safe street redesign and to strengthen our laws to make sure that we truly achieve vision zero.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **voting access and voter suppression** and what would you do to address them?

The biggest issue facing our state in terms of voting access is making it easier, and changing our antiquated laws that were meant as a means of voter suppression. Last year we had the opportunity with two ballot proposals but because of ineptitude within our state party, we failed to invest in education to get them over the finish line. No excuse absentee voting and changing the enrollment date would allow for everyone to vote, without running into barriers. I'm committed to educating my communities on how these changes benefit them, such as the recently passed early voting laws, and making it so that everyone has access to their rights.

What other issues do you consider important and how will you address them?

My main focus in office has been improving the quality of life of my constituents (street safety, MTA accessibility and reform), workers rights (I have passed laws relating to wage theft, freelance workers and sexual harassment and discrimination), and affordability (I was the main author of the New Deal For CUNY).

Senate District 26 changes significantly from its Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights in the South to Sunset Park and Red Hook in the middle, to Cobble Hill and Dumbo in the North. What is your plan to provide for and unite these disparate neighborhoods?

The old district went from Bay Ridge to Marine Park, covering most of Southern Brooklyn and was unconnected in some parts. This new district, which runs from basically the Verrazano Bridge to the Manhattan Bridge, encompasses and is connected by half of the BQE and the entirety of the R line in Brooklyn. I think that while these communities are new and unique, they care about many of the same issues. They are concerned about their infrastructure needs, the proliferation of cars and trucks on our roads, quality education for their children and the effects of climate change on coastal communities.

For fun (answers to these questions are not required)

If your district had a musical anthem, what would it be and why? **Really fun question, and so many come to mind, but given how much of the new SD26 borders New York's harbor and waterways, I'll say "Sitting on the Dock of the Bay" by Otis Redding.**

What is your favorite restaurant in your district? **While there are so many great choices, my favorite would be Tanoreen in Bay Ridge. I am excited to explore all the restaurants in the new district as well.**