

Thank you for agreeing to complete the South Central Brooklyn United for Progress City Council District 39 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 24 hours prior to your scheduled interview time if you want to be considered for endorsement!**

## Campaign Information

What is your name?

Justin Krebs

What are your preferred pronouns?

He/Him

What office are you running for?

City Council, 39<sup>th</sup> District

Who is the point of contact for your campaign and what is the best way to get in touch with them?

Campaign Manager Aziz Yakub – [info@justin2021.org](mailto:info@justin2021.org)

What is your campaign address?

240 8<sup>th</sup> St, BK NY 11215

What is your campaign phone number?

212-489-7982

What is your campaign email?

[info@justin2021.org](mailto:info@justin2021.org)

What is your campaign website?

Justin2021.org

Is your campaign on social media? If so, what platform(s) and what are the names?

Facebook.com/justin2021

@justinmkrebs

South Central Brooklyn United for Progress

Campaign Issues

- ***What would you do to improve health care as a city council member?***

As the husband of a health care provider -- Casey is a nurse midwife who has worked at Bellevue, Roosevelt (now Sinai West), and Mt Sinai, and served in the organizational and advocacy leadership of the NYC Midwives -- I've seen my wife's experience working with expectant mothers from all walks of life, different ages, races, immigration statuses, family make-ups, insured and uninsured. I've also seen that when our city and society choose to, we can ensure that health care is accessible.

At MoveOn, our main work in 2017 was stopping the repeal of the ACA -- as we continue to work toward health care as a human right, and a single-payer plan like Medicare for All.

We need more community hospitals as well as investing in successful community health centers -- accessible across income level, documentation status, and language — situated in communities with active outreach to the communities they want to serve. An investment in preventative care and well visits will have a serious impact on the overall hospitalization needs, and be a more accessible and cost-efficient first stop.

And no, this can't rely on private urgent care— as we've seen in the pandemic, private urgent care can play a role, but is not a substitute for robust, community-responsive public health infrastructure.

The Council can support the efforts on the state level to pass the most progressive legislation. Both Assembly Member Dick Gottfried and Senator Gustavo Rivera, two leaders in Albany who I consider friends, know they'd have a determined ally in me. And on the local level, we can be ensuring that anyone left out of state or federal coverage has access to clinics and community health centers. We also need to be funding our public hospital system in ways that ensure coverage; while also using our positional power to demand that hospitals lower overall costs and increase pricing transparency and accountability; demand insurers lower overall premiums; and negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for cheaper prices and more access.

It's not just a human right for each individual and family. As this pandemic reminds us, it's essential for our collective good that everyone has access to health care.

- ***What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district specifically immigrant rights and access to resources and what would you do to address them?***

Our current system underrepresents neighborhoods with immigrant communities within Boroughwide and Citywide elections. New York must be a leader in pro-immigrant policies, from refusal to comply with ICE raids, to multilingual outreach around government services, to

making sure municipal services -- from voting in municipal elections to the expansion of IDNYC style programs -- are available regardless of status.

In my work at MoveOn over the past 6 years, we've worked closely with immigrant-led ally organizations to confront the abuses of ICE, call for their defunding and dismantling, support individuals who were detained, and raise funds for their families and the organizations in this fight. I'd tap into these relationships as well for their guidance and their partnership as this is part of a bigger fight.

We must be a city that refuses to comply with abusive practices of federal agencies, and proactively creates resources for immigrant communities including legal representation and funding mechanisms for individuals and families that are targeted. These are efforts MoveOn has supported significantly over the past 4 years; as has the NYCLU, of which I was a board member; and that I would continue to work on, following the lead of immigrant and civil rights leaders in the space.

Our government should reflect our neighborhoods, and that happens when people can have a voice in their city's government. Non-citizens attend schools, own small businesses, ride the subway, use city services, and pay taxes. They have been able to vote for Community School Boards in the past and Participatory Budgeting more recently; it's time to let them participate in local elections. It is one of the surest ways to guarantee our immigrant communities will have their voices be heard.

I would take the lead from immigrant-led allies whose courageous and tireless efforts have already moved the needle in New York and nationally, trusting their guidance on the next decade of the fight here in the city. At MoveOn, we often saw our role as using our platform as a partner in lifting up the leadership of immigrant-led organizations through our work on DACA, family separation, pathway to citizenship, and resistance to Trump's anti-immigration policies—that's the model and spirit I would take into City Council.

- ***What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding civil rights and criminal justice and what would you do to address them?***

The long term vision is to take on the carceral state: reduce the incarcerated population, invest heavily in alternatives to incarceration and in reacclimation and training programs for the formerly convicted, to break the schools-to-prison pipeline, to remove the over-policing of our schools and streets, and to understand that criminal justice is racial justice, economic justice, gender justice and family justice.

We need to rethink how law enforcement is serving our communities and that includes how we fund them -- and we need to move funding from the police and fully fund community service programs in health, education, mental health, job training and more that address systemic challenges and inequities. Specific places to start would be to get police out of our schools, and to follow Lander's proposal to move transit enforcement out from under the NYPD. We also need to require the commissioner be appointed with advice and consent of city council CCRB recommendations should become mandatory. A rule change should have residency requirements on law enforcement in line with other agencies, and police funding should be

moved to health, education, mental health and job development programs. We need to look at successful models like the Fortune Society to develop the top-tier programs that support people who have been caught up in, and failed by, our criminal justice system.

I signed onto a letter to defund the police department by \$1 billion in June 2020 and worked within MoveOn as MoveOn to organizationally move towards these goals as well. I stand by that and would vote for budgets that moved \$2-3 billion more than that into education, health and mental health, and job development programs.

Beyond police reform, there are fights for civil rights and civil liberties across the city. In my years on the board of the New York Civil Liberties Union, I was proud to support the work and leadership of that organization—and now I want to continue it: From rights for students, reproductive rights, data privacy rights that are under attack by forces accelerating like never before, the right to protest—all of these are live-wire issues for the next City Council.

- ***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?***

During this pandemic, the issues facing our schools have just intensified -- and I start and end almost every conversation talking about our schools: How to focus citywide resources on a vision to get schools reopened 5 days a week in a way that is safe, accessible to all communities, and instills confidence; how to bring in a surge of resources to face the growing educational disparities; how to tackle digital divide, not because technology solves everything but because the divide exacerbates everything; and ultimately how to move to resourcing and integration for the benefit of all students citywide.

As a former board member of the New York Civil Liberties Union, which has fought educational battles across New York, I start with the clear affirmation that education is a civil right and a human right.

We need to make our schools a funding priority, which means relentlessly advocating for more federal and state resources, working overtime to tackle inequities in funding across the system by having a bright-line of standards for all our students, and investing in teaching, not in testing.

While the shutdown has hit everyone, we've seen clear resource equity issues emerge that can't be ignored even when we're back in school: Students with high quality devices, high speed internet and access to supplemental tutoring or at-home support have a different experience than students who don't. That will remain true even after a vaccine unless we seriously consider how we understand the needs of students individually, and ensure resources to meet those needs.

As we prepare for next year, we need to rebuild trust between the DOE and the parent and teacher communities. That means transparency, clarity, honesty. We need a real assessment of the resource gaps so we can demand public resources, smartly use partnerships to supplement technology, and make sure we're not falling back on standardized testing. If this year taught us anything, it's that the city can change our schools when needed—well, let's take that opportunity

to change them for the better. With a real plan that we can marshal necessary resources around.

And that plan needs to build common energy for reopening 5 days a week citywide, while still recognizing the power of remote, small cohort and individual learning for many students and families.

As an executive leader in the Community School District 15 Presidents Council (which substantially overlaps Council District 39), I've experienced the challenges of allocating resources for different schools and the structural difficulties helping all schools thrive. The work is not over -- and I'd join forces with the parent, student, faculty, administration and civic leadership that made these strides so far as we bolster, deepen and expand the District 15 Integration Plan. This is a racial justice issue, an equity issue, and a deeply personal issue as someone who knows how much we rely on schools at the center of our lives.

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

In Council District 39, there have been numerous debates over creating housing for the unhoused -- in some cases, converting privately developed buildings. The details of those deals looked too much like a bailout for developers and reflected how broken our public capacity to serve the homeless is; but the impulse to build different forms of supportive housing in residential areas, with access to transit, infrastructure, and schools absolutely makes sense, and I would advocate for more of it.

The city can and must do more to ensure housing is a human right. We need to increase investment in deeply affordable units; do everything we can to create supportive housing for the formerly homeless including converting hotels, buying bankrupt hotels, converting existing dhs shelters to higher quality, permanent, affordable housing with service enhanced transitional units; prevent homelessness -- protecting displacement from non-rent-stabilized units; creation and massive investment in social housing trust, accelerate creation of affordable housing citywide at the scale of Mitchell Lama; and support efforts to cancel rent.

We need to ensure that housing built on public land targets these lowest income households making less than 50% AMI for whom there are almost no quality options available anywhere in the city.

We need to provide additional City capital budget support for NYCHA repairs in tandem with greater state funding, and I would support greater resident involvement in the governance of NYCHA as a requirement for any additional City funding.

Overall, though, the city needs comprehensive planning that centers community needs, rather than a system responsive to developers' desires. The city has to be looking at racial impact as well as environmental impact, and we need timelines that include significant and accessible public comment, ones set by community needs.

- ***What is your opinion on the Gowanus Green development and on how the city should handle development and rezoning generally?***

Often we fight over zoning, when we need to talk of planning. I am supportive of comprehensive planning; of identifying our real needs in affordable housing, community benefits, open space, schools, transit, environmental infrastructure, cultural space, and more. The city has to be looking at racial impact as well as environmental impact, and we need timelines that include significant and accessible public comment, ones set by community needs not developer dollars. For the proposed Gowanus rezoning, I support the work of the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice—they have done extraordinary work to bring together stakeholders and navigate this issue. If there dealbreakers are met, I would follow their lead in support of this project -- which seems like the opportunity for community organizations to have the most leverage -- to push for investment, oversight, community benefits and governance -- rather than letting developers drive the discussion. That leverage can be used to force the considerations on the environment, community investment and even outside of the actual rezoning area to reap benefits and attention to NYCHA tenants as well.

The work around the Gowanus is a generational project—and we need to get it right. I know nothing in our city -- infrastructure, bike lanes, better schools, more parks -- comes by fiat. None of it happens by accident. It's all the result of determined advocacy. I'd work to be the inside ally to community forces that are propelling a vision of the kind of development and investment we want that's sustainable, equitable and conducive to a vibrant city.

- ***What would you do to improve transit and street (pedestrian/bicycle/car) safety for New Yorkers in your district?***

This is a huge question! And an important one! Among my closest campaign advisers and friends are folks who have been studying these issues and advocating for better public transit and safer streets for much of their careers. I would work with them to implement and enforce measures to promote safe, efficient, and accessible transportation options for mass transit users, pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers in Brooklyn.

We need to be investing in options that work for everyone and prioritizing safety. We need to take steps to create a local network of protected bike lanes that work for ages 8 to 89; remove the NYPD from transit enforcement; implement congestion pricing; make up the shortfall in real estate taxes and fares with a tax surcharge on high income earners; and prioritize real investment in regional transit access including a regional bus plan along with fully implementing the Riders Alliance Bus Turnaround campaign.

We also need to ensure we are protecting, including expanding automated traffic safety enforcement and working closely with the advocacy world to identify the most dangerous areas and develop a collective approach to solve safety issues and with organizations like Families for Safe Streets to continue to foster a cultural awareness around vehicular killings so that there is a collective effort to change our culture toward safety and accessibility.

- ***What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding the environment, including access to, maintenance, development and preservation of parks and other open spaces and what would you do to address them?***

The climate crisis has to be part of every policy we consider and every day in which we use the power of city government -- it touches everything and time is short. NYC can be a leader in every regard against climate change -- from getting our fleets off of fossil fuels, divesting from new pipelines, turbocharging our work to retrofit buildings, and using our purchasing and pension power to force structural changes.

As someone who has worked in parks advocacy and had the chance to write a history of New York City's playgrounds, I am fully committed to the belief there needs to be a playground within walking distance for every child—that is equipped, maintained, accessible, and meets community needs. And that's as part of a larger vision for a green-line of service for all our parkland, public areas, and commons around the city.

I've signed on to a commitment to a next generation Green New Deal for New York City. As part of that, I'd focus on implementation and enforcement of the Climate Mobilization Act; immediately moving to decarbonize transportation across the city including agency fleets; using city power in investment funds to break the investment pipeline into extractive projects; and investing in communities that have faced historic discrimination including the impacts of environmental degradation. I'd additionally look to use the city's purchasing power -- especially through school meals -- to force changes in our food system, and build relationships with and guaranteed contracts for climate-conscious producers.

Through my work at MoveOn, I've been part of the team that has aligned us with efforts to push the Green New Deal, supported and partnered with the Climate Strike, lifted up the youth voices that demanded a climate debate in the presidential primary, and worked with partners on anti-fracking efforts. I'd continue to call upon those relationships in the work on the city level.

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

So much of what I want to work on is ensuring our main streets are the vibrant hubs of community life that we want them to be, that make New York exceptional. That means investing in public spaces, in small businesses, in our restaurants and bars, in our theater and culture— and creating public spaces, the commons, that support all of these. This inherently requires a city that is friendly to pedestrians, accessible in affordable, clean, efficient ways, and is a city that is ready to blossom post-pandemic.

I was a founder of The Tank, a unique community space for performing arts and public affairs that I helped start in 2003. The Tank is an institution which, from its scrappy, volunteer-run beginning, imagined creating something collaborative and communal without cost being a prohibition to present or enjoy new work.

My experience there has given me the opportunity to be part of the culture of our city. It's given me the chance to think about challenges faced by small businesses and community non-profits. It's allowed me to meet thousands of creators who are pumping ideas and joy and creativity into our city. It's forced me to contend with budgets, management, permits, grants, contracts. It's allowed me to witness the creation of social capital in a non-commercial setting.

Let's save our small businesses in part by taking on the monopolies and corporate power that are eviscerating them. Let's pour our common resources into common goods, creating, investing in and celebrating what makes this city vibrant: our common public spaces, our cultural spaces. Let's stop giving tax dollars away for real estate development and spend more on local businesses that give New Yorkers real living wages and get people back to work.

Throughout the campaign I'll be talking to small business owners, non-profit leaders, and other folks whose work and organizations make our main streets vibrant – I'll be listening to them, learning from them, and building momentum with them for the next City Council.

For fun (answers to these questions are not required)

***What is your favorite restaurant in your district?***

5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Diner