

Thank you for agreeing to complete the South Central Brooklyn United for Progress City Council District 40 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? Harriet Hines

What are your preferred pronouns? she/her

What office are you running for? City Council District 40

Who is the point of contact for your campaign and what is the best way to get in touch with them? Amber Ceffalio, Campaign Manager (amberala@gmail.com)

What is your campaign address? 797 Ocean avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11226

What is your campaign phone number? (332) 210-6142

What is your campaign email? Hhines@gmail.com

What is your campaign website? Hines2021.com

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

## Campaign Issues

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

First, we need to recognize that health care is more than visiting a doctor or picking up medicine at a pharmacy. We like to compartmentalize so it's easy to talk about and easy to write up a budget, and then complain about the said budget. But health care is so much more.

Health care, especially for people with disabilities, is also pedestrian safety, transportation, education, and housing. As a City Council member I will be extremely aware of health care adjacent fields that can derail a delicately balanced health care routine, and that can send an able bodied person into the rabbit hole that is our health care industrial complex. For example, I am homebound right now because of snow removal. Normally every day I'm riding my big-wheeled, electric scooter up and down Cortelyou Ave fighting for the survival of my neighborhood. Yet now, I--and so many more like me--are increasing our health risk because we can't get outside. But getting outside in such dangerous circumstances would also jeopardize our health. This is just one example of how snow removal isn't only about traffic and transportation, it's also a health care issue.

As a City Council member, I will also advocate for traditional health care legislation to make Health Care Affordable and Accessible for New Yorkers. Health care is controlled by the state, and so I would encourage the Mayor to advocate on behalf of New Yorkers to the Governor, insisting that a cap be placed on health care costs.

There are 2.8 million New Yorkers without health insurance, many of which are low-income New Yorkers. New York's Medicaid program costs \$75 billion and \$20 billion is absorbed by the State. New York should put a growth cap in place for health care allowances on the part of providers. Health care providers already make enormous sums of money and costs to New York are rising faster than the budget can adjust to absorb the impact.

The state's Medicaid cost in New York City grew by 7% in 2019. This means that more New Yorkers have a loss of wages with health concerns that need to be addressed. Instead of taking more monies from low-income New Yorkers to offset the costs, New Yorkers should increase the taxes being paid by the rich. The monies being generated from the tax increase on the rich can be used to offset the costs. We want to increase the probabilities that all New Yorkers can receive health care.

Cuomo's rewarding counties that hold Medicaid increases to less than 3%, would mean raising the bar, by tightening the criteria on who receives in-home care. This could lead to grave results excluding those that need it most. With this, people with disabilities on fixed income would be the hardest hit. He insists on cutting Medicaid during the pandemic and is rejecting federal monies designated to provide relief offered by Chuck Schumer just to do so. Cuomo feels that Schumer's plan does nothing to help New York. Medicaid insures a third of New Yorkers. New York stood to gain \$6.7 billion from Schumer's legislation if it

lasted for a full year and did not place new restrictions on eligibility. Heading into 2020, New York faced a \$6 billion deficit and still wants to trim the budget by \$2.5 billion.

New York should place an allowance on health care providers and sign it into law. Currently, the State is being extorted by the health care system. Health care is a right and the health providers are turning it into a privilege. For this reason, as a nation we should embrace a Universal Health Care system where doctors and providers are handsomely compensated but are not allowed to monopolize. The system should be regulated. Health care rates are rising faster than inflation, and this should be deemed unlawful. In New York we should fight to enforce a growth cap and encourage other states to do the same. This will send a message to health care providers that either they become humane by honoring their oath to serve people or suffer the financial consequences. It's time to level the playing field.

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?

Seeing that District 40 is very diverse with **White:** 14.7% or 18.K; **Hispanic:** 15.2% or 18.9K; **bBack:** 3.2% or 9.683K; **Asian:** 64.2% or 79.7K; **Mixed:** 1.6% or 2.006K; **Other:** 1.0% or 1.99K. District 40 faces huge immigration rights issues and access to resources because it's so diverse. Advocating for fairness and justice for New York immigrants also includes those in District 40. I'd align with groups like NYIC Action, a leading organization in the fight for immigrant rights. They gather a wealth of information and encourage strong advocacy efforts that serve as a strong foundation in the fight for more political potency. This can work for District 40's immigrant population. NYIC Action has a clear and comprehensive vision and one that can assist with breaking strongholds by shining the light on those conditions that exist.

I would formulate programming and allocate money to:

1. Providing more opportunities for immigrants in good standing to obtain their green cards, visas and citizenship.
2. Educational opportunities to learn English for both adults and children.
3. Job skills and readiness courses.
4. Education to learn about the political process.
5. Affordable housing opportunities
6. Access to quality health care
7. Small business opportunities
8. Address Immigration Services Fraud in our District

Since my platform is *Accessibility and Inclusivity for ALL*, this is something that is inclusive with the immigrant community, as well. This community is discriminated against and are, too, considered disabled. A person with a disability is not only a person that is physically, intellectually, or developmentally compromised. It is any person whose quality of life may be hindered, altered or negatively impacted via discrimination, lack of resources and underrepresentation.

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?

Discriminatory practices in our state and in our district impedes upon our Civil Rights and progress regarding the fight. Issues such as disability rights, fair housing, fair lending, human trafficking, immigration services fraud, LGBT rights, voting rights, notable settlement agreements, and stop and frisk reports are all issues that re listed under civil rights that are advocated for by our NYS Attorney General Leticia James. It is unlawful to discriminate against any person, discrimination against anyone makes them disabled. Action or inactions that operate to deny people with disabilities equal access to the same services, opportunities and benefits that are available to people without disabilities, which is my major platform issue. As a person with a physical disability I intend on fighting for Accessibility and Inclusivity for ALL in all able-bodied areas of society that include public accommodations, housing, employment, voting and education. Advocating for people with disabilities and their needs are bound to help the able-bodied as well. Anything that makes it more accessible for the disabled, makes it easier for the able-bodied.

Advocating for criminal justice means to stop wrongful convictions, stop and frisk, and sentence disparities in New York and our district. It is people of color and low income status that fall prey to the current system. New York leads most states in the number of wrongful convictions. District 40 is in New York and included in the statistics. We need legislation to make laws more fair, accurate and reliable according to the Innocence Project. "The DNA exonerations in New York reveal serious problems in the state's criminal justice system – problems that profoundly impact individuals' lives and entire communities, and demand serious solutions," the report found. "Common-sense remedies that are proven to decrease the potential for wrongful convictions have been introduced in the New York Legislature repeatedly, but they have not passed."

<https://innocenceproject.org/new-york-leads-most-states-in-number-of-wrongful-convictions-must-enact-reforms-to-prevent-them-innocence-project-report-finds/>. As

Councilwoman, I will fight to legislate to stop wrongful convictions. With sentence disparities we can see that more Blacks are being incarcerated than any other racial group. As Councilwoman I will fight to end sentence disparity through the introduction of legislation to help combat it.

<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/capital-region/public-safety/2020/06/05/state-statistics-show-arrest-disparities-among-race> According to state statistics, in 2018, New York's black population was 15% but made up just under 40% of arrests and almost half of prison sentences. "You can look at statistics all day. Crime is going down. Safety is improving, but it's not being experienced equally by all people," According to

<https://ag.ny.gov/civil-rights/stop-and-frisk-report> “The report, which analyzed close to 150,000 arrests that resulted from approximately 2.4 million stops between 2009 and 2012, concluded that roughly half of those arrests, or just three percent of stops, led to guilty pleas or convictions at trial. In addition, just 0.3 percent of stops led to jail sentences of more than 30 days, 0.1 percent led to convictions for a violent crime, and 0.1 percent led to convictions for possession of a weapon.”

The people of District 40 are not exempt, and I long to ensure fairness and equality for our men, women, and teenagers that are affected by this unfair practice that leaves our communities vulnerable and children with absent parents being raised by the streets.

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?

NYC has some of the best public education opportunities in the world. Sadly, those opportunities aren't spread equitably around the city. Parents, schools, school districts all participate in what is called “resource hoarding”. They mistakenly believe that there is a finite amount of opportunity and those schools want to hoard their opportunities. While we do have limits on money, speech teachers, and the like, education is a limitless resource we should make available to all of our students. Just because one student is a good reader doesn't mean that another can't read. It's quite the opposite: reading begets reading!

We need to share our resources to make education more equitable across the city.

Additionally, our schools aren't accessible. We need to ensure parents and students of all mobility needs can go into the school building and meet with teachers and participate in school life. Students in New York schools are protected by federal, state and local laws that prevent discrimination. Schools are to take affirmative steps to ensure a quality education for students with disabilities. Therefore, I will advocate for students with disabilities and able-bodied students to get the resources that they need such as broadband, working technological devices, and more specialized teachers to accommodate those that need extra help (speech, OT, etc.) The public school is in need of extra tutors, special education teachers, service providers, and more oversight with increased power to CEC's. I will fight to reevaluate Mayoral control of a system that is failing both its students and parents.

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?

The New York State Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Act, both protect civil rights by prohibiting discrimination. Specifically, the NYS Human Rights Law prohibits disability rights, equal education opportunity, and discrimination based on housing discrimination based on: gender, citizenship status, partnership status, gender identity, lawful occupation, and lawful source of income (including public assistance or housing assistance, social security, supplemental security income, pensions, annuities, or unemployment benefits). Though

there is not supposed to be discrimination with housing, we can see evidence of this as housing that is deemed to be affordable, is *not* affordable.

The root of this problem lies with the false Average Median Income (AMI) for NYC Households rising to \$71,155 in 2019 from \$67,74 in 2018. The AMI that is calculated for NYC is unfair when it includes Median Household Income from counties that have higher Household incomes such as Loudoun County at \$134,464, Howard County at \$120,941, Fairfax County at \$115,717, and Hunterdon County at \$113,684. An AMI of \$71,155 is unrealistic for NYC residents and serves to create homelessness in NYC and our District. As a council member, I will fight to increase housing opportunities by encouraging the recalculation of a fair and accurate AMI. An AMI that excludes the more affluent counties and directly represents the household income of New York City's average household income for the less affluent according to their communities.

I also intend to explore the idea of community Land Trusts (CLT's) to promote community land ownership as a mechanism to offset the influx of predatory development that we are seeing throughout New York city..

What is your opinion on **the development at 1620 Cortelyou road** and on how the city should handle **development and rezoning** generally?

The city puts their pockets ahead of the human rights of its people. Nowhere is this more clear than at the development at 1620 Cortelyou Road. City officials are elected to serve the people, and not the people to serve the officials. The people are serving the officials by being bodies (cattle) that the officials use as bargaining tools for financial gain. We see more evidence of this as officials are term limited and are forced to consider other career aspirations. The city should handle development and rezoning to consider the interest of existing people, existing structures, uncompromised health conditions, and quality of life.

Specifically, the development of 1620 Cortelyou Road and rezoning of Cortelyou Road does not serve the best interest of the community, only the developers and supermarket owner. For this reason I became one of the leading team members of the Save Cortelyou group formulated in opposition of the rezoning and development of Cortelyou Road and 1620 Cortelyou Road (Key Food Supermarket). I participated through the writing of Petitions, the contributing of political resources, and through the dissemination of the information to PS 139; where I am co-Vice President and served as Speaker at the Youth Led Teach-In to help inform parents and students of this issue. An issue that plagues their community, and what it could possibly mean for them, their families and school community. I testified at Community Land Use meetings and meetings with Councilman Eugene and Respect Brooklyn. Our fate will be determined with the stroke of the Councilman's pen, as he has the last and deciding vote.

Development of 1620 Cortelyou Road and rezoning of Cortelyou Road can mean the continuing of tower-like structures throughout the neighborhood. Our District is a contextual district which means that development is down zoned, with buildings reaching

no more than six stories. Mayor Bloomberg signed off on this zoning, as it was his intent to preserve the character of the district. A district filled with Victorian homes and Italian architecture stand the threat of being compromised through Mandatory Inclusion Housing (MIH). A policy that is not required in our district, the Community Board and Borough President approved Affordable Housing as it is a priority, as per the Community Needs Statement. Through Affordable Housing it allows a developer to build taller and wider. Affordable Housing is what is being used to destroy our contextual district, and will ultimately affect the quality of life of Cortelyou Road residents.

Our neighborhood stands to suffer the consequences of overcrowding, noise pollution, air pollution, rodent infestation, school rezoning, destruction of existing structures and foundations, less accessible train stations, traffic congestion, lack of a supermarket, lack of accessibility for people with disabilities, and the pricing out of existing residents. All of this is happening because our community has not been given simple time to fight. There are more residents in opposition, than in approval of the rezoning and development project. The Community Board is given a thirty (30) day notification of projects, but is not required to provide the details. Therefore, as Council Member I will be fighting for the inclusion of a Land Use Committee at the Community Board, promotion for new members to join the Community Board, and the ending of MIH, policy that is not zoned for our district, and the landmark/preservation of historic structures.

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

You ask about pedestrian/bicycle/car safety, but you are overlooking a key component of traffic and street safety: accessibility. If our streets, sidewalks and curbs are accessible, then they will be safer for everyone!

I'll start with the accessibility, or rather, the INaccessibility of transit in District 40. Hardly 25% of MTA subway stations are accessible, and NONE in District 40. Both Newkirk and Church Ave are excellent candidates for accessible renovations. Making our streets more accessible for people with disabilities will make them safer for all forms of traffic.

How will I fight for this? Fighting for money to construct pedestrian bubbles so pedestrians have a shorter and safer street crossing. Curb cuts. Dedicated bike lanes. Enforcement of traffic laws, including for cyclists!

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?

I love my district. I've lived in my district for 43 years and am raising my kids here. I've seen lots of great improvements. But, obviously we need more! During these unprecedented times the city has slashed the budget for Sanitation and the Parks Department. We need more access to parks and green spaces, and we need cleaner parks.

Again, the environment isn't a compartmentalized topic isolated on it's own. A clean safe environment impacts public health. We need clean, well-maintained, accessible parks so all of Brooklyn can enjoy fresh air and sunshine which literally heals the body!

I'm not waiting for "the government" to step in and maintain our parks. As President of Parade Grounds Friends of Parks we regularly go out and clean the Parade Grounds. I am a person with a physical disability that is fighting to make parks and Green spaces Accessible and Inclusive for ALL! I will fight to restore the city's budget in allocating for the cleanliness of the city through parks and Green Spaces. You are all welcome to join us on our next session!

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

- Rid the streets of drug and alcohol abusers making the sidewalks their homes.
- Formulation of more mental health and rehabilitation programs.
- Make businesses and sidewalks more accessible to the disabled.
- Fight for more accessible train stations.
- Improve relations between the community and the NYPD.

### **For fun (answers to these questions are not required)**

If your district had a musical anthem, what would it be and why?

The musical anthem for District 40 would be the American Song "This Land Is Your Land" by Woody Guthrie. The reason being, is because I find District 40 to be a very divided district. Votes and privileges are based upon ethnicity or race. This District directly mirrors the problems that we have in this nation, as a whole. This District is a diverse melting pot, and all of its population should reap the benefits of political favor. "District 40 was made for you *and* me!"

What is your favorite restaurant in your district?

I eat at all of the restaurants, but I order the most from Cinco de Mayo