Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2026 Candidate Questionnaire

- Candidate Name: Claire Valdez
- Office Sought: Congressional District 7
- Name of person filling out this questionnaire: Stef McGraw

Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) If (re-)elected, what would be your **top 3 priorities** in your term?

The central message of my campaign is that workers deserve it all. The three central pillars of my campaign platform are Unions for All, Housing for All, and Medicare for All.

I will fight for the PRO Act, full employment, a four day work week, and much more. Most Democrats pay lip service to labor, but I will truly fight for workers to be able to live beautiful, dignified, full lives where they can afford to take vacations, spend free time with their friends and family, develop hobbies outside of work, and retire early enough to still be of sound mind and body. I will fight to strengthen tenants' rights, expand tenant organizing, and fight for the Homes Act to establish a federal social housing developer. Finally, I will fight vigorously for Medicare for All, but also expanding Medicare to adequately cover vision, hearing and dental care, repealing the Hyde Amendment and re-establishing abortion rights nationwide, expanding eligibility for Medicare and Medicaid, regulating out of control hospital and prescription drug pricing, and supporting federal funding for community health clinics.

2) What **personal and/or professional experiences** do you believe make you uniquely qualified to run for US Congress?

Congress is full of millionaires and bosses who are bought by oligarchs and corrupt special interests. Before serving as a member of the NYS Assembly, I was a proud member of UAW Local 2110, where I organized and fought alongside my fellow workers for a fair contract. I'm running for Congress because I've felt that the halls of power are not meant for people like me and my union siblings. That is the problem. We can't take on the boss and the oligarchy that have long benefited from rightwing attacks on unions, universal programs, and our public institutions without building worker power. I'm committed to giving all working people — including unionists, tenants, and immigrants — a seat at the table in the halls of power.

3) Given the role and responsibilities of the office, how would you use the office to **combat harmful policies that the Trump administration rolls out**?

In the official roles and responsibilities of the office I will be absolutely uncompromising in my fight against the Trump administration. But, we need leaders in Washington who can confront the attacks from the Trump administration by mobilizing and organizing working class people with tools and around a platform that goes far beyond what the traditional roles and responsibilities of a member of Congress entail. As a member of congress, I will use my skills as a former union organizer to bring together people of all walks of life to take collective action. We will only be able to defeat facism with a mass movement of working class people.

4) How much money has your campaign raised - both in district donations and overall donations. Are there donations that you have and/or would refuse, and why?

We have raised $536,000 from 9,744 overall donations, and $86,000 from 1,467 donations in the district.

I refuse to take donations from the real estate industry, fossil fuel industry, corporate PACs, AIPAC, weapons manufacturers, charter schools, and the cryptocurrency and AI industries.

5) How have you, or will you, commit to constituent services and **local quality of life issues**? How will you advocate and organize for community services, such as food stamp applications, immigration applications, sanitation issues, etc.

I believe it's important for offices to provide effective, efficient constituent services and demonstrate that government is capable of addressing our needs and making our lives better. My Assembly office regularly helps people receive unemployment insurance, get connected with tenant attorneys, process food stamp applications, and much more. We have also held Know Your Rights trainings to keep our immigrant neighbors safe, as well as tax preparation sessions, a fire safety training, and other programming that serves the needs of the community. I will continue to prioritize serving my constituents in Congress both by having my office help individuals with their specific needs, but by also listening to my constituents about where our government is failing them. In the Assembly, every office sees a lot of cases related to unemployment insurance, and as a result I've introduced a suite of bills to help address some of the shortcomings of the NYS Department of Labor.

6) What measures would you take to improve **educational opportunities for all students** in NYC? How do you plan to ensure that all NYC children are able to attend high-quality, integrated schools?

Education is a very high priority of mine, and I believe in a fully universal, integrated, and free to attend education system all the way from childcare and early childhood education to university. As a member and leader of UAW Local 2110 working at Columbia University, I saw first hand how difficult working in education is, with the administration taking advantage of gaps in labor law to exploit its workers. In the NY State Assembly, I have introduced legislation that would provide job security and paid family leave for education workers. I am also a big supporter of the REPAIR Act, a bill that would tax private universities like Columbia and NYU to fund CUNY. I believe that the lack of funding for public education is one of the core pillars of the problem. I support a moratorium on the establishment of new charter schools, pending a full review of how to properly fund and support all public schools while ensuring fair and equitable access to education from Pre-K through 12th grade for all. I believe that existing charter schools should not get special treatment—public funds should not be diverted from public schools to subsidize charter schools, existing charter schools should be held to the same standards as public schools, and their teachers and staff must have living wages and the right to form unions without interference. I am a strong supporter of universal Pre-K and am fighting in Albany to tax the rich to fund Mayor Zohran Mamdani's program to establish free universal childcare in New York. I believe the path to addressing racial disparities in access to childcare and early childhood education lies in making these truly universal public services that are free at the point of use, while ensuring that the childcare centers that are opened or funded are available in every community. Racial disparities in education extend to childcare and early childhood education providers and workers. The childcare workforce is overwhelmingly

women of color, and are among the lowest paid workers in New York. Expanding childcare and early childhood education to every family must be coupled with investments in workers' wages and benefits.

7) How do you plan to compensate the NYS budget given the threats of Trump holding back Federal money for NYS and City programs?

The OBBBA provided the richest Americans, many of whom live in New York, with a massive tax cut. New York must respond by increasing taxes on them to make up for the federal cuts to NYS and municipal programs. At the state level currently, I am a co-sponsor of bills to increase taxes on millionaires, increase the top marginal tax rate in New York State, and increase corporate taxes. Doing this at the state level could raise more than $20 billion in revenue and invest in public services at a time when the Trump administration is putting them at risk. I am fighting for these policies in New York State and would continue to do so at the federal level. I support repealing the OBBBA in its entirety, establishing higher federal taxes for the highest income earners, higher investment income taxes, higher corporate taxes, a higher estate tax, higher taxes on yachts and private planes, and closing corporate tax loopholes, including those for private equity. I support legislation like the Ultra-Millionaire Tax Act and the Equal Tax Act.

8) What policy and administrative changes are needed for NYC government to ensure sufficient **quality housing that is actually affordable** for existing residents in Brooklyn neighborhoods? Do you have a plan to **reduce and prevent homelessness** in Brooklyn and NYC? Explain your plan.

I view the treatment of housing as a speculative asset instead of a human right as the root of the housing crisis. I believe that it will not get better unless we decommodify housing, and that will require the expansion of tenants rights through measures like the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, the formation of more tenants' unions, and expanding rent control.

Homelessness cannot be prevented without more homes, and Housing for All is a core pillar of my campaign. I support the expansion of supportive housing for homeless individuals particularly struggling to find stable housing and reintegrate with their communities. I am also inspired by the Homes Act of 2024, which would create a federal housing development authority, which would function as a public bank and developer and work directly with state, local and Tribal governmental agencies, mission-driven nonprofits, community land trusts and public housing authorities to build, rehabilitate, and maintain millions of sustainable, permanently affordable homes, repeal the Faircloth Amendment, and condition the construction work for this housing with strong labor standards.

9) Describe your vision for **public safety** in New York City? What, if any, functions would you like to see removed from the police department? What agencies would assume the functions removed from the NYPD? How would these changes be funded?

I believe true safety is achieved through investing in our communities to address the root causes of harm. I've been inspired by Mayor Mamdani's framing of this issue. Today, we have a historic opportunity to change the paradigm of public safety from mass incarceration to community based care in New York City through a Department of Community Safety – one that prevents violence before it happens by addressing the root causes of harm, and deploys civilian mental-health professionals to respond to mental-health crises. By taxing the rich to fund the social services our communities need and deserve, we can make real progress toward addressing the underlying drivers of crime. This is why I am a co-sponsor of bills in the State Assembly to increase taxes on millionaires, increase the top marginal tax rate in New York State, and

increase corporate taxes. I also support decarceral legislation like State Senator Julia Salazar's recently-passed Prison Reform Omnibus Bill, which I supported in the Assembly.

10) Given the increase in ICE raids and illegal kidnapping of our friends and neighbors, what have you done and what do you plan to do to combat these attacks? How do you see working with CBID to protect our immigrant communities and communities at large from the intrusion of ICE in our schools, places of worship, businesses, etc.?

I have a good relationship with organizations like DRUM, New York Immigration Coalition, Adhikaar, and Make the Road, among others. I have been a proud and vocal co-sponsor of immigration legislation like New York for All, Dignity Not Detention, and Access to Representation, and have marched and rallied for these bills to be passed. I and several of my colleagues were arrested at 26 Federal Plaza, where we were trying to inspect the conditions of the detention facility on the 10th floor. ICE or DHS agents prevented us from entering the facility, and went so far as to zip tie the doors closed and tape up the gap to prevent any glimpse of what was happening on the inside. After Mahmoud Khalil was kidnapped from the lobby of his apartment building last year, I and City Councilmember Alexa Aviles lead the letter demanding his immediate release and for ICE to get off of Columbia University's campus. The letter garnered 30 signatures from city, state, and federal electeds, including Congresswoman Velasquez. I have hosted Know Your Rights trainings from my office to help educate my constituents on their legal rights.

I will continue my advocacy and organizing against ICE in Congress, and fight to defund ICE in federal budget negotiations, prevent ICE from entering schools and houses of worship, and eventually abolish ICE. I welcome CBID's partnership in this fight, and would be happy to work together on protesting or organizing Know Your Rights trainings.