



**VOTERS FOR  
ANIMAL RIGHTS**

786 Jefferson Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11221  
[vfar.org](http://vfar.org)

## **2021 New York City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

### **About Us**

Launched in 2017, Voters For Animal Rights (VFAR) is a New York based 501c(4) grassroots multi-issue animal advocacy organization that is building political power for animals. In 2020, VFAR helped elect our former board member, Jabari Brisport, to the New York State Senate. In 2019, VFAR led the successful campaign to ban foie gras in NYC, to stop wild bird poaching and to establish an Office of Animal Welfare within the Mayor's Office. In 2017 we led the campaign to ban the use of wild animals in circuses in NYC. We look forward to working with you to win more victories for animals and make New York City a leader in compassionate public policy.

Our mission is to help elect candidates who support animal protection, lobby for stronger laws to stop animal cruelty, and hold elected officials accountable to humane voters. VFAR mobilizes public concern for animals through the political process. We know that animal protection is not only a moral issue but a bi-partisan political issue as well. Over 90% of Americans believe that animals need protection from abuse and exploitation. To that end, we organize humane voters to support candidates that care about animals. If you support animals, then we want to support you! There are over 60,000 humane voters throughout New York state, hundreds of which are volunteers for VFAR who are ready to knock on doors, make phone calls and get out the vote to elect people who will stand up for animals. We deliver the vote – for the animals and for you.

As an example, here is our [animal-friendly voter guide](#) from the 2020 NYS General Elections.

### **Endorsement Process**

Candidates seeking VFAR's endorsement for the 2021 New York City Council primary elections are required to fill out this questionnaire, which will be posted on our website. Submit to [woof@vfar.org](mailto:woof@vfar.org) by **November 20, 2020**. Please let us know if you need more time.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about the topics in our questionnaire, please don't hesitate to reach out to [allie@vfar.org](mailto:allie@vfar.org) and [david@vfar.org](mailto:david@vfar.org). We are happy to help you better understand animal protection policy, and we're happy to advise your campaign.



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**Candidate Contact Information & Campaign Information**

**Candidate Name:** Shahana Hanif  
**Pronouns:** she/her/hers  
**Cell Phone:** [REDACTED]  
**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Campaign Manager:** Hamza Giron  
**Pronouns:** he/him/his  
**Cell Phone:** [REDACTED]  
**Email:** [REDACTED]

**District #:** 39  
**Borough:** Brooklyn

**Neighborhoods In Your District:** Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Columbia Waterfront, Gowanus, Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, Borough Park, Kensington

**Party:** Democratic  
**Office Sought:** New York City Council

**Incumbent/Challenger/Open Seat:** Open Seat

**Name of Campaign Committee:** Shahana from BK

**Campaign Field Office Address:**

**Campaign Website:** <http://www.ShahanaFromBK.com>

**Social Media Handles (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram):**

- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/shahanafrombk>
- **Twitter:** @ShahanaFromBK
- **Instagram:** @ShahanaFromBK

**Occupation or Employer:** Director of Organizing and Community Engagement at New York City Council - Office of Council Member Brad Lander

**Organizational Affiliations (if any):**

**Endorsements (if any):** 21 in '21, TREEage, Women of Color for Progress



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## **Personal Initiatives**

### **1. Do you feel that promoting the humane treatment of animals should be a priority for the New York City Council?**

Animal rights must be a priority for the City Council. In New York City, we often overlook animal rights, however, the relationship between animals and people is symbiotic, and discussions of true environmental justice and equitable open spaces must include animal rights. As climate change continues to swell in New York City, we must work to mitigate and eliminate negative impacts to ensure that our City's animal life and biodiversity are protected. In addition, it is important to protect animals and ensure humane treatment especially from corporations: animals should neither be collateral damage expended for profit nor be exploited by capitalism.

### **2. What achievements or advocacy for animals are you most proud of, e.g. supporting humane legislation, adopting a shelter pet, volunteering with an animal rescue organization, supporting any national or local animal protection orgs, living a plant-based (vegan or vegetarian) lifestyle, etc.? Did you grow up with or currently live with any companion animals?**

Earlier this summer, my neighborhood celebrated the opening of Kensington Dog Run. The park, which was funded partially through the support of the Participatory Budgeting process, was the result of years of advocacy from Kensington pet guardians and residents, who lacked adequate space for their pets. Through my work leading Participatory Budgeting for District 39, I joined my neighbors in successful advocacy for the 7,000-square-foot park which not only provides a safe, open space for animals to play, but also much-needed open spaces for residents to enjoy — which is particularly important during COVID-19.

While Open Spaces should always be central to the discussion on environmental justice and climate change resiliency, discourse around open space has blossomed as COVID-19 social distancing has encouraged the full use of our open spaces and parks. Dog guardians in the City do not have the luxury of immediately accessible open space for their dogs to get exercise. As Council Member, I will advocate for equitable distribution of enclosed dog runs, rather than having them condensed in wealthier neighborhoods across the boroughs. The Council must also work with the Department of Parks and Recreation to ensure that all dog runs and parks are equipped with accessible, clean dog space, dog-friendly water fountains, free dog waste bags, and dedicated play spaces for smaller dogs.

### **3. What animal issues will you prioritize and lead on as a member of the New York City Council? How would you work to empower the animal advocacy community to reach new success and growth into the 2022-2025 term, and ensure that New York is on the forefront of animal protection?**

If elected to City Council, I will work with animal rights groups, such as Voters for Animal Rights, and other local grassroots animal rights groups throughout my term, with a focus on animal-rights issues at the intersection of Black, brown, and Indigenous communities and animals. As a Council Member, I



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will urge my colleagues to see animal rights as a central component of some of the biggest challenges facing New York City, including housing, climate change, and racial justice.

As a Council Member, I will work to end animal cruelty in the City. I will work to finally ban horse carriages in the City and will work to send retired horses to ethical sanctuaries and stables. The cultural, aesthetic, and historical reasons for keeping the carriages in operation are not legitimate reasons to justify the inhumane treatment of the horses.

Additionally, I will also work to end animal abuse practices by the New York Police Department. Although I am a candidate running on a platform that calls for the defunding of police, there needs to be legislation in place to protect pets from being shot by police. Police should not be responding to animal control calls nor should they shoot pets when they are called on the scene. Legislation is needed to prevent police from handling animal control cases and to hold police accountable if they shoot a pet. It is important to also work to retire canine officers as the conversation on defunding the police continues.

I will also work to expand food justice in our public schools - focusing on providing Halal, Kosher, and plant-based meals in school cafeterias. Students who are vegetarian, vegan, or cannot consume meat/meat products for dietary/ethical reasons should be able to have access to a variety of plant-based meals. In addition, expanding plant-based meals in cafeterias can open up conversations among students about consuming less meat/meat products and why plant-based meals can be important for animal ethics and sustainability.

The fight for animal rights is also connected to our fights to end poverty and homelessness in New York City. Low-income New Yorkers experiencing homelessness must have equal access to safe and healthy pet guardianship, including companion animals. Companion animals are part of a critical support system for many New Yorkers, including those living with PTSD and anxiety, survivors of domestic abuse and gun violence, and the elderly. I believe in a New York Homes Guarantee, and will make sure companion animal bans are not used to separate housing-insecure New Yorkers from their support animals. I will also fight the use of bully breed bans in NYCHA.

The City should also work in partnership with local veterinary clinics and shelters to provide reduced cost or free veterinary services and pop-up vaccinations to animals of lower-income communities and people experiencing homelessness. Services can include:

- Physical wellness exams;
- Core (rabies and distemper) and non-core (lyme, leptospirosis, canine influenza, bordetella aka kennel cough) vaccines for canines;
- Core (rabies, FVRCP) and non-core (FeLV) vaccines for felines;
- Deworming against intestinal parasites;
- Treatment and prevention against heartworm, fleas, ticks, mites;
- Treatment for acute and non-emergency type illnesses and injuries.

In addition, I will make sure my constituent staff works addresses animal needs in the district, and includes basic pet needs and services in community events, such as providing animal food during food drives.



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As Council Member, I will also support and advocate for more legislation that looks into protecting New York wildlife. Ecological diversity - particularly in Cities - is a strong buffer against climate change, and creates a more rounded, resilient City. It is important that we protect our City's biodiversity and ecosystem and ensure that they are able to withstand and survive the impacts of climate change. I will better fund our public parks to host community programming to foster a sense of ecological stewardship and responsibility in community members.

I will also work to advocate for more educational programming for New Yorkers to understand why certain animals should not be kept as pets, focusing on education, not punishment.

**4. Do you have, or would you consider developing, a platform on animal protection issues and posting the information onto your campaign website to outline your positions? If you receive an endorsement from VFAR, will you promote our endorsement on your website and social media pages?**

If I receive an endorsement from Voters from Animal Rights, I will proudly promote the endorsement on my website and my campaign's social media pages.

I would also create a platform on animal protection issues in consultation with VFAR that centers humane treatment of animals, protecting animals from corporate exploitation, and protecting and preserving our animal wildlife and biodiversity from impacts of climate change while being mindful and respectful to cultural sustainability. Any animal protection platform must also center the voices of Black, brown, and Indigenous communities.

**5. Will you commit to designating a member of your staff to handle animal issues?**

I will commit to hiring a legislative director and a constituent liaison who are informed and aware of animal rights and issues, and are animal lovers. Likely, our constituent services director would handle animal protection issues for the District.

**6. Do you believe that the pursuit of animal rights is part of a broader vision of social justice? Please explain your answer.**

Animal rights are central to social justice. We, as human beings, rely on animals for sustenance, for companionship, and to co-exist together to sustain our ecosystem. It is impossible to tackle and deal with social justice without considering animal rights. We cannot talk about accessible housing and finding permanent homes for the homeless, senior citizens, folks with physical and mental health issues, and survivors of domestic violence if we do not talk about the importance of service, therapy, and companion animals. We cannot talk about public health and worker's rights, especially in the midst of COVID-19 without talking about how the non-regulation of fresh meat markets can present both ethical issues with the preparation of meat and public health concerns for the workers of the market, many of them being BIPOC, working class, and immigrants. We cannot talk about climate change without talking about preserving the biodiversity of our City's wildlife.





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We have to remember that we are sharing the land with animals. I recognize that New York is a settler city built on stolen land from the Lenape tribe, who were the stewards of this land and worked in symbiosis with the natural environment. As New York has grown, we have participated in the active alteration and destruction of natural land and space of wildlife to accommodate roads, housing, and other infrastructure for our comfort. To be ethical stewards of the land we occupy, we need to incorporate animal rights into our policy and our social justice activism. Being ethical stewards of our land also means countering capitalist exploitation of our land.

### **Positions on Legislation and Policy**

#### **1. New York City's Companion Animals**

##### **A. Increased Funding for ACC and Independent Animal Rescue Organizations**

**Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) is a non-profit organization contracted with the New York City Department of Health to manage New York City's three full-service municipal animal shelters located in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island, as well as two admissions centers located in the Bronx and Queens. ACC is an open admission shelter required by law to accept every animal brought through its doors and cannot turn away any animal like most other shelters, whether arriving due to homelessness, family crisis, abuse, or abandonment. ACC relies on public funding for operational costs necessary to save and find homes for these animals in need, but resources are needed to ensure that these facilities always have sufficient capacity, staff and other resources to increase adoptions, perform spay and neuter operations, provide pet retention services and other efforts to ensure a successful and humane NYC shelter system.**

**Do you pledge to allocate funding to maintain ACC and other non-profit animal rescue organizations?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

As Council Member, I will pledge to allocate funding to maintain ACC and other non-profit animal rescue organizations. According to the data found in the 2015 Comptroller [audit](#), there were poor shelter conditions found at ACC shelters, such as overcrowded kennels, improper storage of vaccinations, and failure to keep track of medications and substances. In addition, ACC shelters failed to [transition](#) to no-kill shelters as of June 2019. The Comptroller's audit states that ACC's poor conditions is due to lack of proper management and funding. Proper funding to ACC will help support a proper management staff to run the shelters, support full time staff to help care for animals in the shelter, and ensure that there are resources such as sanitary, humane spaces for animals and unexpired medication. With funding, ACC will be able to properly provide services and care for



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animals -- ensuring that they are healthy enough for fostering and adoption rather than leaving animals to be unhealthy and be euthanized.

#### **B. Trap Neuter and Release (TNR) of feral cats**

Tens of thousands of stray and feral cats, collectively called community cats, live in the outdoor spaces of New York City. They live in groups called colonies, and they establish themselves near human activity — in backyards, around businesses, in parking lots, etc. — attracted by a food source such as trash or rodents. Community cats have no legal guardian, though many people care for them by feeding and sometimes providing outdoor shelter. These cats are not socialized to humans. They are timid and fearful around people and are not suited for adoption. Because most of these cats are not suited to living indoors, bringing them to a shelter is not the humane answer. Taking them to a shelter also doesn't solve the population problem — if cats are simply removed from an area, others will soon move in and breed. This is called the "Vacuum Effect."

The most humane and effective approach to managing the growing population of community cats is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). In TNR, entire colonies of community cats are trapped, sterilized, vaccinated, ear tipped, and returned to their territory of origin. TNR halts reproduction and many of the nuisance behaviors associated with unneutered cats, such as yowling, fighting, and marking territory. The cats are healthier, free from the stresses of mating and motherhood. TNR also includes colony management to ensure the cats' well-being and their peaceful coexistence with the rest of the community. Community cat programs not only provide life-saving options for cats who might otherwise be euthanized when admitted to a shelter but also can stabilize, and even reduce over time, the population of community cat colonies. Such efforts require support and funding and rely on many thousands of volunteer hours and out-of-pocket expenses incurred by dedicated New Yorkers.

**Do you pledge to support increasing funding to programs that support these community cat operations?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

More funding would ensure that there are sufficient resources to continue these operations. Community cat programs are important to ensure that the feral cat population is controlled and that the shelter system is not strained.

## **2. Pursuing a More Humane City: Education, Health Care, and Social Services**

### **A. Pet-Friendly Housing**



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**As New York City continues to experience a housing affordability crisis with high displacement rates, housing must be accessible to people with companion animals. Keeping people and companion animals together reduces the burden on animal shelters and allowing New Yorkers to stay in their homes. This is a particularly significant concern for especially vulnerable populations such as low-income families, the elderly, and victims of domestic violence. Housing legislation and policy should expand affordable pet friendly housing options as well as the ability of those experiencing homelessness and victims of domestic violence to seek refuge in shelters with their pets.**

**Would you support and vote for legislation soon to be introduced (Brannan, Cabrera) which would preserve the right of individuals over the age of 62 to not be denied housing on the basis of having a companion animal?**

**YES / NO**

Additional comments:

It is important that the City pass legislation that allows individuals over the age of 62 to not be denied housing on the basis of having a companion animal. However, as Council Member, I will work to expand the legislation to include victims of domestic violence, low-income individuals and families, and those who deal with mental health issues (ex. PTSD, depression, anxiety). I believe housing is a right for all and housing regulations that ban folks from getting housing on the basis of having a companion animal are inherently ableist, ageist, and classist. There is no question that companion animals have benefits to mental health. Companion animals can serve as companions for the elderly and to help them feel less alone. They are soothing, comforting, and healing to survivors of domestic violence and those who deal with mental health issues. Companion animals can help to manage regarding stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma.

On the other hand, there are so many animals who need loving homes and allowing these animals to stay together with their humans will alleviate the strain on the shelter system in the City. Housing regulations (like banning pitbulls from housing) induce housing insecurity.

#### **B. Homeless Services Accommodations for Companion Animals**

**Currently, shelters provided by or under contract with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) do not allow or accommodate pets. Individuals seeking shelter are forced to abandon their animals to be admitted, and thus, often choose to live on city streets. More info [here](#) and [here](#).**

**Would you support and vote for [Intro 1483](#) (Levin), which would require the DHS, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, to develop a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families with the objective of providing pet-friendly shelters and identifying other temporary pet care arrangements that would allow homeless pet-owners to keep their companion animals?**





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**YES / NO**

**Would you support and vote for [Intro 1484](#) (Levin), which would require DHS to report, on a monthly basis, information on the placement or disposition of companion animals that belong to people who enter homeless shelters?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

As Council Member, I would support and vote for Introductions 1483 and 1484. However, I would work to strengthen Intro 1483 to allow for homeless folks and their companion animals to stay together rather than relying on the use of a foster home or other temporary pet care arrangements.

I firmly believe that to solve the City's homelessness crisis, it is important to create affordable permanent housing for New Yorkers rather than relying on the shelter system. However, I recognize that it will take time for the City to transition into a permanent social housing for all model. Therefore, I believe that legislation like Intro 1483 needs to be strengthened and passed to ensure that all folks, even folks with companion animals, are able to access safe shelter for them and their companion animal.

I believe that legislation like Intro 1483 must be strengthened to ensure that homeless folks and their companion animals are able to stay together for the same reason why the Brannan/Cabrera companion animal bill must be passed. According to the Committee Report for Intro 1483, "the prospect of parting with a pet only compounds the trauma of homelessness (and the issues that bring about homelessness)" and the report quoted one woman who stated that her companion pet provides mental and emotional support for her, likening the relationship to one of a parent and child. In addition, the report mentioned that there is a cross-therapeutic effect of a bond between survivors of domestic violence and their companion animal and that 48 percent of domestic violence survivors would rather remain in a dangerous situation than be separated from their pet. It is important that there are pet-friendly shelters in New York City to ensure that folks who are homeless are not further traumatized by this separation and are able to have their pet as a form of therapeutic healing while they transition into permanent housing. In addition, the fear of being separated from one's pet should not be a barrier for a domestic violence survivor to remain in an abusive household.

I support Intro 1484 because it will provide more transparency between the City and its shelters and it will provide more information on the barriers of non-pet friendly shelters. Intro 1484 will allow the City to fully understand the scale of how the lack of pet friendly shelters or pet accommodations plays a role in preventing folks from seeking shelter.

### **C. Fulfilling New York's Humane Education Mandate**

**Section 809 of the New York State Education Law requires instruction in the "humane treatment and protection of animals ... in every elementary school under state control or**



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supported wholly or partly by public money of the state.” Although there is a penalty for non-compliance, the legislation has remained unenforced, and many educators and administrators are unaware of this statutory requirement. [More info.](#)

**Would you support and vote for [Intro 1465](#) (Dromm), which would require the Department of Education to report on humane animal treatment instruction in public elementary schools?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

As Council Member, I will support and vote for the passage of Intro 1465. I support transparency between the City’s legislature and its agencies because transparency ensures accountability. The passage of this bill will allow the Department of Education and schools to be held accountable and to provide humane animal treatment instruction in public elementary schools. I believe this instruction will help to bring awareness of why animals in New York City have to be protected and to instill a sense of environmental stewardship in young New Yorkers. Requiring the Department of Education to submit this report would ensure that all elementary public school students in New York would receive the same humane animal treatment instruction.

**D. Animals Used for Experimentation: School Hatching Projects**

Principals and school teachers should end the use of bird-hatching projects and replace them with learning activities that teach life processes without the use of live animals. School classroom incubation and hatching projects of baby chicks and ducks is cruel and leads to the abandonment and death of countless young birds each year. Once the eggs develop and the cute baby birds grow up, schools realize that they have no plan for the adult birds. These hatching-project birds are deprived of a mother hen to raise them, which may lead to developmental issues. The birds are often abandoned in city parks where they cannot survive on their own or dumped at local animal shelters and rescues who are already overburdened with unwanted animals.

Hatching projects encourage the view that animals are disposable objects instead of living creatures requiring a lifetime of care and commitment. Humane alternatives have been developed by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), HEART, and other humane educators. More info [here](#).

**Would you support and vote for legislation that would prohibit New York City schools from using mail-ordered eggs, live baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects?**

**YES / NO**

**Would you co-sign a letter urging the NYC Schools Chancellor to ban the use of eggs, live baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects?**

**YES / NO**



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Additional Comments:

As Council Member, I will urge my colleagues in the State legislature to support A.58 and will co-sign a letter to urge the Chancellor to ban the use of baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects. As it states in the New York City Bar's recommendation, there are more risks than benefits to having hatching projects in schools, putting both animals and students at risk of harm. While a hands-on experience would allow students to better understand and witness the concept of a bird's life cycle, there are viable alternatives outlined in the recommendation such as using 3D models, using virtual videos or live streams from farms, or visiting local farms or hatcheries on field trips. The Department of Education could fund these alternatives for schools rather than relying on incubation projects. The alternatives balance out the ethical concerns with chickens and ducks, the public health risks incubation projects have on students, and the educational goals of students learning about incubation and life cycles.

#### **E. Fireworks**

**The booming sounds of fireworks are terrifying and overwhelming for pets and wildlife, as well as for veterans with PTSD, children on the autism spectrum, and survivors of gun violence. [According to the ASPCA](#), more dogs get lost on the Fourth of July than any other day of the year due to panicking and running off. On July 5th shelters notoriously have increased numbers of frightened lost pets. Additionally, baby birds and other infant wildlife become orphaned and starve to death as their parents panic from the sounds and take off. Wildlife are known to race into the road to escape the sounds, resulting in dangerous car collisions. A solution that has been instituted in many cities in Europe and Canada are silent fireworks. Silent fireworks deliver the same beautiful cascading colors but without the daunting decibels and startling explosions. Read more [here](#).**

**Would you support and vote for legislation that would require all fireworks displays to be of the silent type?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Silent fireworks would protect animals, folks with PTSD, children on the autism spectrum, and survivors of gun violence and would not compromise the festivities and spectacle of celebrations in New York City. It is important to ensure that legislation is passed to make silent fireworks a norm in the City and the City must hold corporate actors who put on large scale firework events in the City or within the vicinity of the City accountable to using silent fireworks in their displays. When it comes to animal rights and protections, the use of silent fireworks are necessary to ensure that both domestic pets and wildlife are not frightened off, develop anxiety, and/or flee from the noise and putting them at risk of getting hit or being abandoned. If silent fireworks are already used in Canada and parts of Europe, the Council can work to make it a reality here in the City.

As a positive unintended consequence, perhaps silent fireworks could reduce air and sound pollution in the City.



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### 3. Animals Used For Food

#### A. Factory Farms

As the global COVID-19 pandemic exposes the [dangers inherent](#) in our highly concentrated food system, [legislation](#) introduced by Senator Cory Booker, co-sponsored by Senator Elizabeth Warren, as well as its [House companion](#), introduced by Rep. Ro Khanna, would place a moratorium on new and expanding factory farms and provide a transition for farmers who want to transition out of operating a factory farm. The scale, density, and practices associated with Large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) aka Factory Farms are heinously cruel to animals and present a range of public health, worker safety, and environmental problems.

Would you support and vote for a New York City Council resolution calling on Congress to adopt [S.3221/H.R.6718](#), legislation to end factory farming?

**YES** / NO

The Green New Deal is a set of policy proposals that seeks to transform our energy system to 100% renewable energy while creating jobs needed to solve the climate crisis, and ensuring a just transition for workers and vulnerable communities, and has the potential to improve the welfare of countless animals, wild and domestic. The Green New Deal calls for massive investments in weatherization, public transportation, modern infrastructure and high-speed broadband, reducing emissions throughout the world, transitioning to sustainable farming, conserving public lands as wildlife habitat, as well as holding the fossil fuel industry accountable for our current environmental crises.

Do you support the [New York State](#) and/or [federal Green New Deal legislation](#)?

**YES** / NO

Do you believe the Green New Deal does enough to address the impact of CAFOs?

**YES** / **NO**

Would you support and vote for [Res. 1151](#) (Constantinides) calling on corporate and government entities operating in New York City to divest from agricultural industries that benefit from deforestation and the acceleration of global warming?

**YES** / NO

What do you believe the NYC Council should do to end factory farming? Additional Comments:  
Factory farming not only presents ethical animal rights issues but it also poses environmental risks as



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commercial factory farming produces high levels of methane into the atmosphere and sewage waste. The Council should organize and coalition build with Congress Members and Senators to pass nationwide policy that will end factory farming and pass a City Council resolution that supports passing such policy. In addition, the Council can take steps within City policy to lessen the City's dependence on meat such as expanding plant based meals in schools and creating language accessible and culturally informed outreach on lessen meat consumption.

## **B. Live Animal Slaughter Markets and Transportation**

There are 80+ slaughterhouses and live animal markets in NYC – more than any other U.S. city. [These facilities in New York are functionally no different than the live animal markets abroad where Coronavirus started.](#) In addition to horrific treatment of animals in these facilities (tiny cages, no vet care, severely limited food and water), these facilities pose a significant health and safety hazard to the community affecting the quality of life for neighborhood residents. Blood, feces, urine, body parts, and feathers are routinely found on our public sidewalks and streets due to the unsanitary conditions associated with slaughterhouses. Many of these slaughterhouses are located close to schools and playgrounds. Of critical concern, these facilities are rarely if ever inspected by regulators, and despite the animal cruelty and other impacts of these facilities, there is no meaningful oversight.

**Especially in light of COVID-19 and the threat of pandemics that are believed to originate from crowded, unsanitary animal markets, would you support and vote for legislation to increase regulations, inspections and reporting requirements for live animal markets and other facilities in New York City where live animals are kept, and increased penalties for health code or animal cruelty violations?**

**YES / NO**

**Would you support and vote for legislation that would require licensed slaughterhouses in New York City to have video recording systems in all areas with live animals?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

As Council Member, I am willing to support and vote for legislation to increase regulations, inspections and reporting requirements for live animal markets and other similar facilities, and increase penalties for health code or animal cruelty violations because I acknowledge both the public health issue for workers and the ethical issue of humanely using animals for food. However, any legislation that calls for this regulation, accountability, and oversight by the City must also not result in the over-policing of live markets and facilities owned by Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). There are many live markets and facilities owned by BIPOC in the City such as specialty halal meat shops and meat markets in the City's Chinatowns (Lower Manhattan, Sunset Park/8th Avenue, and Flushing). The regulations, accountability, and oversight in any passed legislation should not result in the targeting of these businesses, especially by any law enforcement. Inspectors need to be held





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accountable as well. In addition, all surveillance should not be used to criminalize any BIPOC owners and workers.

It is also important that any regulations, accountability, and oversight passed must also include proper outreach by the City to all business owners and employees of these establishments. Outreach that is both culturally informed and language accessible is needed to inform the owners of these regulations to ensure that their businesses are up to code and to inform the employees of their public health rights and regulations.

### **C. Shipments of Live Animals**

**Small animals such as chicks are regularly shipped through the US Postal Service. This terribly cruel practice is tragically routine. They are not provided with any food and water, and many animals suffer terribly or perish during transit. It is not uncommon for thousands of animals to be transported this way in the same shipment. The result is that animals often [arrive at their destinations dead](#).**

**Would you support and vote for legislation that bans or restricts the shipment of live animals into New York City through the mail?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Yes, I would support and vote for legislation that bans or restricts the shipment of live animals into the City through the mail. However, any legislation passed must include alternative shipment methods for small farms and businesses. According to the Bloomberg article, small poultry farms and individuals who raise chickens in their backyards rely on mail shipment. It is important to protect live animals and to ensure that they are not harmed and killed during transport; however, it is important to not financially burden small farms and businesses in the City, especially those owned by BIPOC, working class folks, and immigrants.

### **D. Restaurants**

**Would you support and vote for [Intro. 1405](#) (Dromm), which would offer clarity for consumers who wish to avoid animal-derived food products and allergens?**

This legislation would require the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to establish a food protection course and certification program for restaurants to demonstrate compliance with food allergen safety, and require restaurants to post a sign for customers on food allergen awareness. The bill would also establish a voluntary certification program for food service establishments who advertise themselves as capable of accommodating certain dietary restrictions, such as gluten-free, nut-free, vegetarian, and vegan, among others.

**YES / NO**



Additional Comments:

I support the legislative intent of Intro. 1405 and I believe that there needs to be a clarification for consumers because clarification will allow consumers to avoid consuming food that is counter to their dietary restriction (ex. halal, kosher, vegan, etc.) or food that can trigger an allergy. I also believe that providing information to food preparers on how to keep their food safe from allergens is important from a public health perspective. Consumers should not have to risk an allergy due to failure to contamination of allergens. However, the legislation as it is drafted needs to be strengthened. Intro. 1405 requires all food preparers to take a course and pass an examination on food safety. Course and exam fees should be covered by or reduced by the City for small business owners. The City should not have to financially burden small restaurateurs, especially Mom and Pop businesses owned by working class individuals, BIPOC, and immigrant individuals, with more compliance fees. In addition, courses and examinations must also be language accessible and culturally informed.

**E. Aquatic Animals**

There is widespread scientific consensus that aquatic animals such as fish, lobsters, octopus, squid, and other marine life can experience pain and suffering. Cruel and neglectful treatment of all animals, including aquatic animals, is a misdemeanor under New York State law. See, N.Y. Agric. & Mkts. Law § 353. New York courts have held that intentionally causing extreme pain to a pet fish is a felony. See, *People v. Garcia*, 29 A.D.3d 255, 257, (App. Div. 1st Dept.). In spite of this prohibition, commercially farmed aquatic animals live in filthy, barren tanks so overcrowded they can barely swim and where they are victims of disease outbreak, rough handling, and months to years of psychological deprivation.

**Would you support legislation to establish minimum animal welfare standards for procurement of aquatic animal products by city agencies relating to the following production practices?**

- YES/NO** Extreme overcrowding
- YES/NO** Barren tanks unlike their natural habitats
- YES/NO** Deprivation of food for several days during transport
- YES/NO** Being slaughtered while fully conscious

Additional Comments:

It is important to ensure that aquatic animals are protected. Aquatic animals must be humanely taken care of even when used for commercial food production. In addition, humanely caring for aquatic animals would prevent disease and would prevent diseased aquatic animals from being put on the market for consumption.

**4. Protecting and Coexisting with Urban Wildlife**

**A. WildlifeNYC**



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New York City is home to an immense diversity of urban wildlife. Our five boroughs are home to hundreds of species, including geese, deer, squirrels, ducks, raccoons, opossum, coyotes, hawks, eagles, whales, dolphins, seals, turkeys, beavers, bats, pigeons, rats, migratory birds, and so many more. While many animals inhabit New York year round, other species pass through on their annual migrations. The City has initiated a program, WildlifeNYC, aimed to promote awareness, tolerance, coexistence, and understanding of the wild critters we are so fortunate to share our city with.

**Will you support funding for the continuation and expansion of New York City's WildlifeNYC program?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Creating environmental and ecological stewards within the City means providing accessible educational programs for New Yorkers of all ages. Being in an urban environment often means that we, as New Yorkers, do not associate wildlife with our City and do not fully understand how it plays a role in our daily lives as New Yorkers. Programs like WildlifeNYC allow New Yorkers to understand our relationship to wildlife and how we can be better stewards to our ecosystem. It is important to continue and expand WildlifeNYC so that more educational programming can be done in our schools and our parks.

#### **B. Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation**

New Yorkers often come in contact with injured wildlife and have no idea what to do. There is only one brick and mortar wildlife rescue facility in New York City, the Wild Bird Fund. There is no centralized administration of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, or reliable information for what New York City residents should do when they encounter injured wildlife. Because of the limited information on the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's website, independent volunteer licensed rehabilitators are called upon to respond to emergencies and provide care to wild animals in need on a near daily basis. There is much more that New York City can do to support this vital service.

**Would you support increased city funding for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation facilities and services?**

**YES / NO**

**Would you support establishing city-funded wildlife emergency response units as an alternative to untrained police officers responding to such situations?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

It is important that the City increase funding for the creation of more wildlife rescue and rehabilitation facilities and services and increase funding for education and outreach on how New Yorkers should deal with injured wildlife. More wildlife sanctuaries should be created in the City and there should be



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one in each borough to make it easier for New Yorkers to access. For example, the Wild Bird Fund is located in the Upper West Side. This location is inaccessible for many New Yorkers, including those in my district, and not everyone has the resources to be able to safely transport an injured bird to the Upper West Side (ex. having to transport an injured bird from Kensington or Park Slope all the way to the Upper West Side by subway is difficult).

In addition, it is important to ensure that there is proper and accessible outreach and education for New Yorkers on what to do when they encounter an injured animal. Dealing with an injured animal is intimidating and daunting for many New Yorkers, especially since we do not often have to directly handle wildlife. Education and outreach that is culturally sensitive and language accessible is needed to ensure that New Yorkers can help play a role in animal rescue and intervention without relying on outside actors such as the NYPD.

I personally believe and have publicly advocated for the defunding of NYPD and therefore, I do not believe that they should intervene in wildlife emergency situations. I believe a city-funded wildlife emergency response unit that consists of trained staff is the best alternative.

### **C. Canada geese in NYC parks**

After the 2009 “Miracle on the Hudson”, Mayor Bloomberg set forth on a policy of hiring USDA Wildlife Services, a federal agency notorious for inhumane wildlife killing practices, to exterminate Canada geese and goslings in New York City parks. This policy was always wrongheaded. Mayor de Blasio was elected on a promise to pursue alternative non-lethal approaches to Canada goose management. The current administration cancelled the contract with USDA Wildlife Services that compensated USDA to kill geese, instead opting for a non-lethal form of population control known as egg oiling. However, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which leases and controls the city’s airports, has continued to contract with USDA to exterminate geese, and Mayor de Blasio has allowed the Port Authority and USDA to access city parks to do so. USDA Wildlife Services has killed hundreds of geese in New York City parks every summer for the past 10 years, decimating the local population. The regional population of Canada geese is significantly reduced and should now be stabilized exclusively through non-lethal management practices going forward.

**Will you call for a complete end to killing of Canada geese in New York City parks, and demand that the Port Authority and USDA Wildlife Services pursue exclusively non-lethal methods of wildlife management in areas within the City’s jurisdiction?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Non-lethal management processes should always be used to protect wildlife and people. It is important that these methods are used to control and protect geese, especially as they migrate through the City. It is important that New York plays a role in protecting North American wildlife such as Canadian geese because they play a huge role in our ecosystem.



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#### **D. Staten Island Deer**

In the past decade, white-tailed deer have taken up residence on Staten Island, believed to have swum across from increasingly developed areas of neighboring New Jersey. The City first responded by implementing conflict reduction efforts, including measures like increased traffic signage, a reduction of the speed limit, and the inclusion of white-tailed deer in New York City's [WildlifeNYC program](#) aimed at educating New Yorkers about coexistence and tolerance with urban wildlife. In May 2016, the City took a bold and unprecedented step of implementing a non-lethal deer management program that sought to stabilize the deer population by performing vasectomies on bucks. Over the past few years, vasectomies have been performed on more than 1,500 bucks that have stabilized and reduced the total deer population and have reduced conflicts caused by their presence.

Despite these encouraging results, some have pushed for a "controlled hunt" of Staten Island's deer. Controlled hunts require killing some number of deer every year, which often leads to a bounce-back effect that ultimately increases the population. In addition to the cruelty involved, annual culls are unlikely to achieve any long-term reduction in the deer population or actually address any of the conflicts associated with their presence.

**Will you support continuing the City's deer management program that has successfully stabilized and reduced the population of deer on Staten Island humanely and effectively?**

**YES / NO**

**Will you oppose lethal management of deer on Staten Island, including a "controlled hunt"?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

I believe a deer management program that involves performing vasectomies on bucks is a more ethical and effective way to control the Staten Island deer population than a controlled hunt. In addition, I believe the City should also put in other protective measures to protect the deer on Staten Island, including securing highways and roads to prevent deer from entering into traffic.

#### **E. Raccoons**

Even though the incidence of rabies has been [extremely rare](#) in New York City, with only one human case over the last 50 years, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) requires that any raccoons brought to Animal Care Centers (ACC) be immediately euthanized, regardless whether they are sick or injured or healthy. Every year, hundreds of healthy raccoons are brought into ACC, usually by police officers responding to nuisance complaints, and killed instead of being assessed and potentially released or rehabbed.





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**Would you join VFAR in calling on the DEC to allow healthy raccoons to be rehabilitated and/or released when suitable?**

**YES / NO**

**Would you support establishing alternative protocols for emergency responders such that healthy raccoons are not brought to ACC?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

As mentioned above, I do not think police officers should be responsible for animal welfare issues and I do not believe that a healthy raccoon should be euthanized simply because it poses a nuisance to the community. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the City of New York needs to develop alternative ethical methods to deal with wild raccoons in the City. The DEC must change this requirement and as Council Member, I will work with VFAR to urge my State colleagues to take action on changing this requirement. In addition, I will work on the City level to find new ways to create wildlife sanctuaries and rehabilitation centers in the City that will work to rehabilitate raccoons and safely release them back into the wild (especially into an area that will keep both raccoons and humans safe).

## **F. Rats**

Historically, rat control invariably relies on cruel and imprecise extermination methods - poison bait, glue and snap traps, and more recently dry ice and drowning devices. Needless to say, these methods have failed to achieve lasting impacts on New York's total rodent population for decades (if not centuries). The Department of Health's Rat Academy [public education](#) on nonlethal rat management methods, debuting nearly 10 years ago, has been shown to be effective. [Feral cats](#) are also a potential way to manage rat populations.

**Would you support a comprehensive humane rat control program that would be focused on prevention, deterrence and infrastructural improvements?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Yes, I will support nonlethal ways to manage the rat population in the City. The course and the outreach for the course should be offered with language accessibility to ensure that non-English speakers are able to receive this information. In addition, in a post-pandemic world, the courses should be continued to be offered virtually or at other locations than lower Manhattan to ensure that all New Yorkers can easily attend these courses. As Council Member, I will ensure that my constituents will have access to flyers and information about these courses in my office and on my social media platforms.



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## **5. Animals Used for Fashion: Fur**

Fur farms breed and confine animals in tiny, filthy cages where they suffer intense stress and unimaginable cruelty. They are beaten, bludgeoned, electrocuted, and skinned alive. Trapping animals in the wild is no better — animals are trapped in cruel leg hold traps where they can suffer for days in excruciating pain — starving, until a trapper returns to shoot or bludgeon them to death. Coyotes are known to attempt to chew off their own legs trying to break free. Many other animals are unintentionally caught and killed in these traps, including household pets. California has enacted a ban on the sale of fur. Several countries such as Norway, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, and the U.K. have taken steps to close fur farms, and Israel is on the verge of [banning the entire fur trade](#). With public awareness and innovative alternatives on the rise, many popular designers have stopped using all animal fur. There are ethical alternatives to fur which are not only stylish and warm but environmentally friendly. More info [here](#).

**Would you cosponsor and vote for [Intro 1476](#) (Johnson) that would ban the sale of new apparel products using real animal fur?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Intro 1476 is important and needs to be passed. Using animal fur solely for fashion and aesthetic purposes is not a valid reason to severely harm and torture animals, and there needs to be protections in the City to end this practice. New York City is considered one of the fashion capitals of the world and it would be a huge step in the fashion industry for the City to ban sale of real animal fur products. In addition, Intro 1476 does a great job of balancing the needs of ensuring animals are protected and religious customs are respected. The bill should go further; however, by explicitly stating that religious **and** cultural customs should be protected because the use of animal fur and pelts are common practice for Indigenous tribes. It is important to ensure that any animal rights legislation passed also considers Indigenous stewardship practices.

## **6. Animals Used in Entertainment:**

### **A. Carriage Horses**

**Advocates have long called out the poor working and living conditions for horses used for NYC carriage rides. Despite common belief, the horses do not live in Central Park, they are forced to travel through NYC traffic to get to and from Central Park. Despite improvements implemented over the years, the horses are often made to work long days - sometimes in extreme weather conditions, and they can go weeks without any opportunity for daily turnout. Over the course of the past three decades, there have been countless incidents and accidents involving New York City carriage horses. As recently as March 2020, a [12-year-old horse named Aisha was euthanized after collapsing in Central Park](#), a tragic incident that was captured on video camera by a horrified pedestrian. Many horses have died on the streets of**



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**NYC or been sent or sold to slaughter once they are unable to continue working. Carriage horse operations have resumed after a temporary hiatus for COVID-19.**

**Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation to ban horse carriages in New York City?**

**YES / NO**

**Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation to enact stronger protections for all working horses in New York City, including a mandatory retirement age and restrictions on sales of exhausted horses to “kill buyers”?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Legislation to ban carriage horses in the City is long overdue. Time and time again, we have seen horses involved in fatalities and accidents in the City and we have seen horses work in inhumane environments. A life should not be harmed simply to preserve aesthetics. We need to end this practice in Central Park and in other places in the City now to ensure that horses are protected. We also need to ensure that legislation finds alternative ethical solutions to ensure that folks can still sightsee around Central Park and other sites in New York in a safe way without relying on the labor of animals. Finding alternative ethical solutions to carriage horses will ensure that the glamour/appeal of traveling around Central Park is preserved and to ensure that carriage horse attendants are able to have employment, especially as many carriage horse drivers are from working class backgrounds and/or are BIPOC. As Council Member, I will support legislation to ban carriage horses in the City.

I believe that working horses such as NYPD horses, should be phased out and banned in the City. Until this is phased out, I will cosponsor and vote on legislation to enact stronger protections for all working horses in the City. I believe there should be a mandatory retirement age for carriage horses to allow horses to still be in good health when they are let go from their positions and all horses should not be sold to kill buyers. Rather, horses should be given to horse stables and sanctuaries in the State to ensure that they are able to be taken care of properly in a humane environment.

## **B. Rodeos**

**While New York State has limited the use of animals in circuses and other entertainment, rodeos have been left unregulated despite the display of similar, and in many cases more egregious, acts of cruelty. Rodeos typically include an event called “calf roping” where baby calves are shocked with electric prods, forcing them to run as soon as the holding chute opens, only to be “clotheslined” with a rope and tied at the legs. Panicked calves are routinely injured or killed during these performances. Rodeos also continue to use flank straps or bucking straps, which are tightly fastened around the animal’s abdomen and may be used with sharpened spurs to cause pain to the animal, encouraging them to buck more violently. Rodeos are responsible for causing death or serious injury to countless animals, all for the sole purpose of entertainment and showmanship.**



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**Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation which would prohibit these practices at rodeos?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Animals should not be tortured and killed solely for entertainment purposes. As Council Member, I will work with my colleagues in the State legislature to strengthen the existing regulation about animals in entertainment to include rodeos.

### **C. Captive Wildlife, Zoos and Aquariums**

**The Bronx Zoo currently has two wild-born female Asian elephants, Happy and Patty. Happy, has been confined alone for over fourteen years in a small enclosure that contains a one-acre outdoor yard, barren corrals, and an industrial holding facility. In the winter months, when it's too cold for her to be outside, she is confined to an industrial cement structure that is lined with windowless, barred cages. Happy has been documented engaging in unnatural behavior indicative of distress and suffering. Scientists who are experts in elephant cognition and behavior have attested that the Bronx Zoo cannot meet Happy's biological and psychological needs. There has been a longstanding campaign for the Bronx Zoo to close its elephant exhibit and send Happy to an elephant sanctuary.**

**Would you join VFAR and other advocates in demanding that the Bronx Zoo close its elephant exhibit and release Happy and Patty to an elephant sanctuary?**

**YES / NO**

**Through extensive study and observation, scientists have found that elephants are self-aware, autonomous animals. In other words, they are cognitively, emotionally, and socially complex beings who have the capacity to exercise free will and make choices about how to spend their days and live their lives, just as human beings do. The right to liberty protects an individual's autonomy and ensures that she cannot be imprisoned (held in an environment that deprives her of her autonomy) or exploited (displayed, used for entertainment, or forced to breed).**

**Would you support legislation that would recognize and protect elephants' right to liberty?**

**YES / NO**

Additional Comments:

Happy and Patty should be freed from the Bronx Zoo and be released to an elephant sanctuary. According to the Nonhuman Rights Project, the Bronx Zoo has already decided to shut down its elephant exhibit once one or two of their remaining elephants have died. If the Bronx Zoo has already made the conscious decision to close out this exhibit, why should they wait until Happy and Patty have died? In addition, elephants have not been kept in the City's other two zoos since the 1980s. The Bronx Zoo has argued that the elephants should remain in the zoo because they have already created bonds with the veterinarians and caretakers in the zoo and taking them to a sanctuary would



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force the elephants to lose this bond. However, if scientists have said that there are telltale signs of unhappiness from the elephants and according to the Nonhuman Rights Project, the Bronx Zoo has said that it is “inhumane to isolate elephants”, then there are no benefits to keeping Happy and Patty at the zoo.

*Shahana Hamif*

November 18, 2020

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CANDIDATE SIGNATURE

DATE