

2021 VOCAL-NY Caring & Compassionate Mayoral Forum

Candidate Questionnaire Responses

Homelessness and Housing

How has the homelessness crisis impacted your neighborhood?

WILEY: I spent time with the men of the Lucerne and heard first hand their struggles and saw first hand their leadership in advocating for housing with on-site services and support and the amazing model of community-building that Open Hearts Upper West Side represents. The crisis of homelessness in New York City affects every district, every neighborhood, and every New Yorker. COVID-19 has pushed the number of homeless New Yorkers to record numbers, with the Coalition for the Homeless reporting that 20,801 single adults slept in shelters in December, an all-time high. On top of that, the death rate for homeless individuals from COVID-19 was 78% higher than the city average between May and August of last year. This is a public health emergency, and a humanitarian crisis, and should be treated as such. Additionally, the City spends over \$3 billion a year -- much more than it would cost for us to house our people permanently -- on a shelter system that does nothing to help individuals or families move from shelter to permanent housing.

The best way to prevent homelessness is to prevent eviction. That is why I support extending and expanding the state's eviction moratorium, and will be introducing rent supports for those at risk of losing their homes. We need rent subsidies to address the immediate eviction crisis facing our families while standing up with fellow advocates to fight in Albany for universal rent protections and to preserve affordable rentals.

We also must create a way for families to get back into homes if they are temporarily evicted. That means looking into repurposing hotels and commercial space, and it means safe havens and supportive housing for those who need additional support and services to live with dignity. Longer term, all New Yorkers deserve a home with a door and a key of their own. I support the elimination of

congregate shelters which many New Yorkers facing homelessness do not feel safe going to, and the development of enough supportive housing to house those who need additional services, increased rental subsidies, and an end to source of income discrimination which prevents those with vouchers from accessing their right to housing.

DONOVAN: I grew up in a different time of crisis. I remember sitting in the upper deck of the old Yankee Stadium in the 70s and watched as, all around us, the Bronx was literally burning. As I walked to school, I would pass many homeless people lacking services they badly needed. And this inspired me to get to work on solving the homelessness problems within this city and the county.

While I now live in Boerum Hill in Brooklyn, I have the unique perspective having served as both HPD Commissioner during the Bloomberg administration as well as President Obama's HUD Secretary. Homelessness has not only impacted my neighborhood but this whole city and I have spent my career dedicated to fighting homelessness. Early in my career and then during my tenure as Housing Commissioner, I helped the Brownsville, East New York and South Bronx communities build Nehemiah housing, one of the most successful housing efforts in the nation that created more than 5,000 affordable homes.

I also created the Center for NYC Neighborhoods, the nation's first response of its kind to the foreclosure crisis to save New Yorker's homes and preserve Black and Brown wealth. President Obama asked me to be Housing Secretary in the midst of the worst housing crisis of our lifetime and then tasked me with leading this city back after Hurricane Sandy hit our shores. As HUD Secretary, I helped families across the country rent or buy affordable homes, revitalized distressed communities, fought discrimination and dramatically reduced homelessness. During this time, I worked to reduce chronic homelessness by one-quarter and eliminated veteran's homelessness in more than 80 cities and states.

MENCHACA: Every part of the neighborhood feels the impact and wants the crisis solved. Discussions were healthy when hotels began to be converted into shelters, mostly supportive and constructive to ensure expectations were met for quality of life. But right now the crisis is hitting a peak. And we want justice which includes: canceling rent, a moratorium on eviction, and rental assistance enhancements. Universal basic income pilots for the homeless can change the way we think about access to housing. Good conversations are happening. We just need action on the new ideas.

MORALES: In my native Bed-Stuy, I often see the same unhoused people over and over again. For years, I've seen the same people in the same places around the neighborhood. One man stays outside on the same block where he used to live with his mother; when she died, he lost her and his housing, too. It's a visible reminder that homelessness is chronic and city outreach is failing to permanently and supportively house New Yorkers. And I know that for every unhoused neighbor I see on the street, there are dozens who are floating between friends' living rooms, who have just been evicted, or who are relying on temporary shelters. I have lived in this city my whole life and have seen little improvement in addressing this crisis. I know it's past time for that to change.

GARCIA: Like many of the systemic issues our City grapples with, homelessness has been exacerbated by the pandemic. We can finally end homelessness if our goal as a City is to move people directly into housing with supportive services - not shelters. We can't expect people to take advantage of mental health or job placement services if their most basic need, a stable, permanent home, is not met first. This can be done at almost the same cost as the shelter system, and will be much more effective.

ADAMS: As someone who grew up housing insecure to the point where I often brought a plastic bag of clothes to school with me because of fear of eviction, I take the issue of homelessness very seriously. I have seen long-term neighbors pushed out of their homes and forced to move into shelters simply because they fell on hard times or were victims of their own success by working to improve their communities so much that they became attractive for gentrification. My office has led the way on the homelessness conversation, often standing alone as we advocated for the establishment of shelters in communities who are fighting against them. I have slept outside Governor Cuomo's office in protest of the potential expiration of our rent laws, which threatened to deepen the extensive crisis we are already facing. I launched our Adopt-A-Shelter initiative in 2016 and secured a staff member from HRA to head up our efforts to build out community support networks for shelters in various communities. I funded Brooklyn's first mobile shower bus and a mobile barber service for shelters, all because I believe that this crisis is also robbing so many of our neighbors of their dignity. I've allocated millions to advance affordable and supportive housing projects all across our borough that serve the formerly homeless.

But all of these efforts don't fully address the need to prevent homelessness in the first place. We must have a comprehensive approach to tackling the homelessness crisis starting with keeping people in their homes and preventing

them from becoming homeless in the first place. New Yorkers on the brink of homelessness and in shelters need far greater assistance than is available now to transition into permanent housing. One way we will accomplish this is by increasing the value of the City FHEPS housing vouchers so they reflect the value of the housing that is actually available in our city. For single adults who are experiencing homelessness, we need to build options of housing that allow them to get on stable footing. Right now, there is an excess capacity of hotels in the outer boroughs, and the city should purchase them and retrofit them into dorm-style housing with wraparound services. For families with children, we must provide additional priority to students for affordable housing in areas where they are attending schools even if they are currently in shelter elsewhere. We must create stable housing solutions for our young people so we do not perpetuate the cycle of instability for future generations.

YANG: Like many New Yorkers, I have seen a tragic increase in street homelessness in my neighborhood in Hell's Kitchen, as well as in neighborhoods across the City I've visited during my campaign. This is a crisis that affects all of us, though certainly not equally, and is an issue we must address together in order to have success.

STRINGER: New York City's housing and homelessness crises have touched the lives of countless New Yorkers across the five boroughs — and have only gotten more dire as the pandemic continues.

In the wealthiest city in the wealthiest country in the world, allowing nearly 17,000 of our children to sleep in shelters every night is a disgrace. Further, the city has failed to address the rising single-adult shelter population, which has reached an all time high of more than 18,500 individuals. While spending on homelessness has more than doubled since 2013—to more than \$3 billion a year—our City has virtually nothing to show for it. Even before the pandemic, the City's shelter population was growing at a record pace. And now, COVID-19 has acted like a match in a tinderbox, exacerbating the challenges facing families and single adults already in our shelter system and putting thousands more on the brink of eviction.

As Comptroller, I've audited the Department of Homelessness Services and exposed how the shelter system forces vulnerable New Yorkers, including our children, to endure hazardous and shameful conditions. It is a stain on this City that babies in our care are sleeping alongside vermin, breathing in mold and mildew, and playing near live electrical outlets. I've investigated the City's

failures to support homeless students, and guided solutions. There's a deep moral cost to the City's failures that is felt across the five boroughs. The next Mayor has to upend the status quo, break our housing and homelessness policies out of their siloes, and start making real progress in our fight to end homelessness in New York City.

New York City has historically had a siloed approach to housing planning, with separate and unequal approaches to private housing, public housing, and homelessness. Would you advocate for the City to create an integrated housing plan that brings together all agencies involved in housing, building, and planning? If so, which agencies would you bring together and what goals would they share?

WILEY: Yes! I will create an integrated housing plan that brings together all the agencies involved in housing, building, and planning to create one coordinated strategy focused on ending homelessness, increasing affordability, and promoting racial equity. Ending homelessness will be a priority of my administration and I will restructure City government to do so. There are 19 agencies across 6 different City Hall portfolios that serve people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Proactive coordination and eliminating the silos from the top will ensure each agency is contributing to the work of solving homelessness in a unified and targeted way.

A holistic approach to our housing and homelessness crisis means looking into repurposing hotels and commercial space. It means repairing NYCHA apartments that currently lie vacant because they're uninhabitable. It means increased rent subsidies and legal services so families can stay in their homes to begin with. And it means recognizing there isn't a single, one-size fits all solution. We need resources tailored to those experiencing homelessness - whether victims of domestic abuse, those suffering from addiction or mental illness, or queer and trans people who have specific needs. And it means safe havens and supportive housing for those who need additional supports and services to live with dignity.

Supportive housing breaks the cycle of homelessness by pairing permanent housing with on-site services for people with a history of substance use, and/or who have mental and physical health needs. In New York City, the creation of supportive housing has been wholly inadequate, due both to city and state failures to meet supportive housing development commitments. Today - as homelessness among single adults continues to rise - the ratio of approved

supportive housing clients to actual placements is five-to-one. If elected, what will you do to ensure New York City prioritizes supportive housing development for homeless New Yorkers?

DONOVAN: We will implement United for Housing's recommendation to lead an inter-agency effort to innovate new models, create efficiencies in process, modernize building codes, and streamline approval processes.

The financing and construction of new affordable housing and the preservation of existing affordable housing can require the work of multiple city agencies, including HPD, HDC, DOB, EDC, DOHMH, DHS, etc., and some one may not consider but may be required for permitting, like DOT, FDNY, DEP, and others. We will engage stakeholders to develop a strategy to streamline approvals and interactions between agencies, with the goal of reducing the average affordable housing construction timeline by 20% while maintaining all necessary safety standards.

We will also reduce hard costs in affordable housing construction by 20% percent while maintaining all necessary safety standards, by allowing innovative forms of project delivery, expanding allowed materials in construction, and reviewing labor requirements. By reviewing ballooning site insurance costs and other insurance costs, reviewing HDC financing fees for possible savings, and applying other similar strategies, we will identify extraordinary soft costs that can be reduced through exemptions or alternatives.

MENCHACA: I will advocate for an integrated housing plan with the goal of implementing a Housing First approach to homelessness that is need-based and prioritizes the city's most vulnerable when constructing and delegating 100% affordable housing units. My IHP will be led by NYCHA, the Department of City Planning, the Department of Buildings, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Department of Homeless Services, and the Department of Social Services. However, the plan will include input from all the city agencies that deal with homelessness and housing in any capacity.

MORALES: Absolutely! As Mayor, I will create a data-informed, community-centered Comprehensive City Plan, that will map out a holistic blueprint for the city that deepens equity and advances my commitment to Housing for All. Housing for all means that every New Yorker has a place to call home that is dignified, peaceful, and safe. Our current system of piecemeal rezonings and sporadic, developer-driven building is not working for everyday

New Yorkers. The de Blasio administration's siloed approaches to private housing, public housing, and homelessness have been a failure. Rezoning have exacerbated displacement, deepened inequalities, and produced few units at the levels of deepest affordability that are most needed by New Yorkers who are homeless or housing insecure. At the same time, homelessness has skyrocketed as the City has invested more and more in shelters instead of permanent, stable homes. Plans for public housing — the City's single largest source of deeply affordable housing — have been both inadequate and have been kept separate from the administration's overall housing strategies. A Morales administration will take a needs-based approach to housing by bringing a substantial part of housing development out of the speculative for-profit market, centering development based on need through mixed-income social housing, and aiming to end homelessness within 10 years.

My Comprehensive Plan reflects a balance between neighborhood and city-wide needs, involves participatory processes to normalize more democratic and inclusionary community-centered goals, and radically reimagines ULURP to re-center the zoning process around neighborhoods and residents by creating a fairshare frame, ensuring equity goals and making sure that marginalized communities are brought to the table beyond the Community Board. Of course, this is easier said than done and would require cooperation from across agencies and significant input from around the city. To consolidate these efforts and enact the rest of my ambitious housing and land use agenda, I would appoint a Deputy Mayor responsible for leading and coordinating a citywide, cross-sector effort addressing housing, opportunity and social mobility. The DM would not only spearhead the creation of a Comprehensive Plan - which would require cooperation from numerous agencies, among them the Department of City Planning, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Department of Aging, and the Department of Homeless Services - but would also facilitate ongoing cooperation between agencies presently doing siloed planning and housing work.

My administration would also repurpose and refocus agency work towards creating permanent, socially-controlled housing. I would mandate that the Economic Development Corporation become a vehicle for social-public partnerships focused on disrupting poverty from a root cause lens, prioritizing physiological needs, including the development of social housing, expansion of cooperative housing, increasing affordable housing and eradicating homelessness. I would work with the Department of Social Services to increase the City's rental assistance and expand criteria for the program. My

administration will pilot a resident management corporation in a NYCHA complex in each borough, with an aim to replace the Public Housing Agency with resident democracy. I would ensure that the Department of Homeless Services has enough funding to create and enforce performance based contracting with shelters and relief services and repurpose shelters towards comprehensive prevention services and rehousing. In addition to developing a Comprehensive Planning Process, there is a lot of work to be done quickly with the Department of City Planning: making better use of existing housing infrastructure by getting rid of single-family zoning; ensuring that accessory dwelling and basement units are legal, safe and affordable; and enacting flexible zoning that allows for the conversion of vacant office space and hotels into social and affordable residential options. My administration plans to coordinate some of this activity through a Social Housing Initiative, which will focus on increasing social housing and supportive housing through either the City as the developer, community-based nonprofit developers, or approved not-for-profit organizations. This would build off of a new City Land Bank, which would acquire and repurpose distressed property, and use that property for social housing. Additionally, the Social Housing Initiative would coordinate disparate agencies and bring us towards a single goal: housing every New Yorker safely and with dignity.

Housing is a human right, but it's not enough to just say that. The status quo favors and prioritizes speculation and powerful private interests; it has led to displacement, homelessness and exorbitantly high burdens on renters and the city's working class. The history of redlining, blockbusting, gentrification, government neglect and big bank predatory practices, as well as private subsidies and other market gimmicks, have perpetuated a legacy of racial, gender, and class inequality, cruelty and injustice. It will be difficult and it won't be quick, but I have the plans, the vision, and the willpower to change that.

GARCIA: The key to all policy making is to bring all the stakeholders to the table. The communities most impacted by COVID must have a say in how we move forward, and will have the best insight into what is actually needed on the ground, and then how to best implement the solution. The rollout of the vaccine distribution plan is an excellent example of what happens when you don't include communities in the process- vaccines are not getting to the people that need them most, are not accessible, and are not trusted.

In my first 100 days, I will improve the City government's response to homelessness through better coordination. The first step is having one Deputy Mayor that oversees both housing and homelessness. As mayor, I would ensure

that homeless services and economic development and housing all report into the same deputy mayor, who will be held accountable to treating housing issues with one comprehensive approach. Currently, DHS and HPD are overseen by two separate Deputy Mayors – the Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services and the Deputy Mayor for Housing & Economic Development. Although preventing homelessness requires multiple strategies, linking together housing and homelessness will focus our affordable housing efforts.

Second, there are 19 City agencies that play some role in homelessness. This is a problem that requires a proven manager who can coordinate between agencies to solve problems. I will order these agencies to complete a 60-day review of all of the processes and policies that need to change to shift from a shelter strategy to a housing strategy. We will center the voices of those who have experienced the shelter system in that review process.

ADAMS: My mantra for governance is that inequality leads to inefficiency which in turn leads to injustice. The siloed and fractured approach to housing planning is just one example of where city agencies are working at cross-purposes and not in concert with one another.

The first towards doing this is to ensure that all the agencies involved in addressing our housing crisis must be using the same data. The fact that in 2021 each of the agencies is using its own datasets that don't "speak" to one another is a travesty.

As mayor, I will treat our affordable housing stock as the precious resource that it is by monitoring the status of the entirety of our housing resources in real-time by creating HousingStat, which we would use to deploy investigators and lawyers to triage affordable buildings at risk. To do this, we will convene DCP, HPD, DOB, NYCHA, DHCR, DSS, Housing Court, and others to fully build out the plan to protect our affordable housing stock and build the new stock that will accommodate the needed growth in New York City. As I wrote in a 2018 Daily News op-ed, "The costs of inaction far outweigh the costs of building out this system. HousingStat would instill much-needed discipline, delivering accurate reporting, rapid resource deployment, as well as relentless assessment and follow-up."

YANG: As mayor, I would manage oversight and coordination better between the eleven agencies that touch housing and our hundreds of homeless service providers: We will achieve greater coordination through requiring homelessness

agencies, such as DHS to report to the same Deputy Mayor as housing agencies, such as HPD to ensure that these vital agencies are working in coordination toward mutual goals. Currently, no agency has a mandate to make sure that individuals stay housed. Through steady management, adhering to data-driven metrics, coordinated partnerships and accountability standards, I will make this goal the explicit mission of DHS. We must also bring a suite of city services to New Yorkers; wherever they are. Therefore all of our field offices will have services available to connect New Yorkers to jobs, housing vouchers, childcare and more. For example, if a person is visiting his or her ACS caseworker, they should also be able to gain assistance on applying for housing vouchers. These “one-stop-shops” will reduce bureaucracy and create effective experiences when navigating city services. Likewise, a Yang administration would establish a Clients Advisory Board under DHS made up of at least 40 shelter residents from the various types of shelters. This CAB would be required to meet with the DHS executive staff on a monthly basis.

STRINGER: For too long we have approached homelessness and housing as separate problems, when in fact they are one in the same challenge. I’ve laid out [a transformational plan](#) to address our housing and homelessness crisis. As Mayor, I will end this siloed approach and finally tackle homelessness—by expanding our supportive housing network by an additional 30,000 beds over the next 10 years; opening up more low-barrier, Safe Haven beds and offering housing vouchers for those living on the streets; investing in programs to prevent domestic violence, which is now the leading cause of homelessness in the city; and fundamentally changing our housing approach to build a generation of real affordable housing, targeted to low-income and extreme low-income New Yorkers, including New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

We need to recognize that individuals do not only enter the shelter system by eviction—many enter after being in a hospital, a correctional facility, or other social service entity. Each time a City agency or institution interacts with a person, it is a chance to stop homelessness before it starts with an integrated, citywide approach. However, only DHS is graded in the Mayor’s Management Report on whether it is taking steps to reduce homelessness. As Mayor, I will hold all agencies and institutions accountable for proactively intervening before individuals enter the shelter system.

The “housing first” model that I will champion necessitates cutting through bureaucracies and coordinating agencies. We’ve actually seen it work before, but on too small a scale. The City’s success in reducing homelessness among

veterans was due in part to investing in resources by constructing affordable housing or providing vouchers; providing mentors and peers to offer support; and making placement of veterans a priority among agencies. The City must create a rapid rehousing program, that creates a priority of streamlining both supportive housing and general affordable housing placements. As Mayor, I will ensure that agencies work together to streamline the process for housing homeless individuals and families.

I have a five-borough housing strategy to fundamentally realign New York City's failed approach to our housing crisis – including a new Universal Affordable Housing (UAH) requirement, ending 421-a, utilizing vacant city properties for low- and extremely low-income New Yorkers most in need of affordable housing, and converting permanently vacant commercial and hotel space into deeply affordable and supportive housing. Building the affordable housing New York needs will require a new paradigm that puts community before real estate interests, which is why my campaign has pledged to decline donations from developers.

Supportive housing breaks the cycle of homelessness by pairing permanent housing with on-site services for people with a history of substance use, and/or who have mental and physical health needs. In New York City, the creation of supportive housing has been wholly inadequate, due both to city and state failures to meet supportive housing development commitments. Today - as homelessness among single adults continues to rise - the ratio of approved supportive housing clients to actual placements is five-to-one. If elected, what will you do to ensure New York City prioritizes supportive housing development for homeless New Yorkers?

WILEY: I am clear: every person is housing ready. We must build true affordable housing and enough supportive housing to permanently house those who need it. Our housing crisis cannot be siloed - we need to approach our solutions holistically. A key pillar of my forthcoming housing plan is investment in robust supportive housing with wrap around services and a pipeline to permanent housing. While there is nothing positive about the COVID crisis, there are opportunities that we must take advantage of. For instance, About 200 of the city's 700 hotels have closed their doors since the start of the Pandemic. The City can purchase these and convert them into supportive housing and/or save haven beds.

My administration will build more permanent supportive housing, both SROs and apartments, with a pipeline from SROs to permanent housing. We will convert congregate shelters into supportive housing, and look closely at community partnerships like those formed on the Upper West Side between Project Renewal, the residents of the Lucerne, Upper West Side Open Hearts Initiative and Goddard Riverside. This partnership serves as a model for community support and integration of New Yorkers who are currently or formerly homeless, ensuring onsite services and employment opportunities. "

The primary tool that New York City provides to homeless people to help them exit shelter is the CityFHEPS voucher. Unfortunately, CityFHEPS fails to move most homeless families and individuals out of shelter because the voucher's payment standards are impossibly low compared to New York City rents (on average falling \$400 below market rate based on household size). If elected, will you work to pass Intro 146 - a bill to increase CityFHEPS value to reflect market rents in New York City?

DONOVAN: We will create and fully implement a simple, client-focused process of placement of individuals and families who are homeless into safe, affordable permanent housing. Increasing the speed from which people move from homeless into permanent housing will relieve pressure on the homeless system. This streamlined system will build upon the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS) model which focuses on getting the right person into the right housing as quickly as possible, based on the individual or family needs. Managing housing placement across systems will allow the city to hold itself and the landlords accountable for timely placements and housing stability.

We must make sure to expand the creation of permanent supportive housing units for those who need the more intensive support provided by this form of housing. The administration will aim to create 2,000 supportive housing units annually for individuals and families living with a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or other disability, and young adults.

We will also convert underutilized hotels into supportive housing with onsite social services: The conversion of hotels into single-occupancy units for permanent supportive housing has been part of New York City's housing plans for decades. We have the experience, infrastructure, and capacity to make this a part of our city's economic recovery. Additionally, supportive housing is one of the most effective pathways to addressing the ongoing homelessness crisis. Tenants who were served by supportive housing spent fewer days in jail,

homeless shelters, and State-sponsored psychiatric facilities, than those who were not. While there are many supportive housing developments across the city, perhaps the most visible example is the Times Square Hotel, a former grand hotel that was converted into a 652-unit permanent supportive housing development for formerly homeless adults. The project, which is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is credited with developing a new approach to ending long-term homelessness and helping to stabilize the Times Square neighborhood.

MENCHACA: Despite the city's 15/15 initiative, the lack of placements for supportive housing makes it clear that we have fallen behind in meeting homeless New Yorkers' needs. I plan to work with the hotel and real estate industry to convert vacant, non-union hotels and commercial spaces into congregate supportive housing sites. I will also municipalize empty apartments and prioritize turning these units into scattered-site supportive housing units. For existing supportive housing units, we must ensure that the application process is free from red tape and prioritizes the quick and efficient placement of our most vulnerable New Yorkers.

MORALES: As a former non-profit leader who worked within and helped expand the supportive housing system in the city, I deeply understand how inadequate the availability of this housing is. New York City must reorient our homelessness policies towards supportive housing and, if we are serious about reducing homelessness, dramatically increase funding for this type of housing. Within the first 100 days of taking office, my administration will provide more secure and guaranteed pathways toward permanent residence, including the prompt conversion of hotels into permanent support housing and services for families of our 100,000 unhoused school-aged youth.

I will also expand the city's ability to purchase vacant apartments, hotels, commercial and office spaces facing foreclosures and turn them into housing, with a priority for permanent housing for homeless families and individuals. I will support utilizing eminent domain, when necessary, especially for buildings with significant OATH/ECB fines, to create more supportive housing. Further, my administration will prohibit the City from selling or leasing city-owned land to private developers and require the City to review all public land for social housing development purposes. Additionally, I will require the City's development partnerships to favor nonprofit and mission-driven organizations, Community Development Corporations, and supportive housing, tenants groups and alliances.

GARCIA: Our goal as a City should be to move people directly into housing with supportive services - not shelters. We can't expect people to take advantage of mental health or job placement services if their most basic need, a stable, permanent home, is not met first. This can be done at almost the same cost as the shelter system, and will be much more effective.

I am the only candidate to commit to expanding support for the 140 NYC schools with more than 20% homeless students. Before COVID, 1 in 10 students were doubled up, living in a shelter, or unsheltered; we cannot blame teachers for low performance in schools. We need to expand support for these schools and provide practical necessities, like installing a washer and dryer.

The pandemic has highlighted significant healthcare disparities by income and race --driven by lack of access to regular, affordable care. Some of NYC's lowest-income communities also have the fewest hospitals and healthcare facilities. And as of the last census, 600,000 New Yorkers lack health insurance. I support more investment in H+H virtual care / telehealth services to improve access to mental health care services. We can adapt learnings from the successful Test and Trace models to send micro teams into communities for public health screenings and services, and connect people with virtual care and wraparound services. Mental health services, particularly via telehealth, will be included as part of the wraparound offering for all individuals that interact with the shelter system. This will be particularly important as we face COVID recovery, with so many young people in New York City having lost a caregiver in the last year.

I will absolutely commit to making WiFi universally available to all shelter tenants (I have supported and will implement universal broadband), but as I've said above--our goal is not to have people stay in shelters long term.

ADAMS: We must prioritize the development of permanent supportive housing for all homeless New Yorkers and ensure we get the funds we are due from the state. During my tenure as borough president, I have approved and funded important projects to create supportive housing apartments all across Brooklyn. Recent examples include my \$500,000+ investment in renovating 520 Gates Avenue, operated by the Doe Fund, and my land use recommendations to create 87 supportive housing units in partnership with the Bridge Rockaway Housing Development in Brownsville.

YANG: As mayor, I will fight to build more supportive housing that will give people the tools they need to transition out of homelessness. One way I'll do so is by converting limited-service hotels, into supportive housing, giving people the resources they need to find permanent housing and build a sustainable life, creating more deeply affordable units, including micro units for single adults who might otherwise be in the shelter system and expanding supply overall, which will lead to more housing opportunities and options, particularly for low income New Yorkers. Homelessness is the end result of the housing instability that affects millions of New Yorkers. The same policies that I would use to prevent displacement and assist rent burdened New Yorkers will also help to make sure more working families have a permanent, affordable place to live. Above all, we must ensure our most vulnerable have access to the mental health, jobs and supportive services they need.

STRINGER: It's time for leadership that understands that housing is health care. [As Mayor](#), I will review existing supportive housing contracts and ensure that the system has the wealth of services necessary to serve individuals who are housing insecure and have mental or physical health needs. Further, with homelessness among single adults rising by 1,000 individuals per year, the pace of development of supportive housing is too slow. I will work with the State to expand our supportive housing network by an additional 30,000 beds over the next 10 years to meet the growing need. And I will expand the use and value of vouchers to help New Yorkers move from shelter to permanent affordable housing, relieving pressure on the shelter system.

The primary tool that New York City provides to homeless people to help them exit shelter is the CityFHEPS voucher. Unfortunately, CityFHEPS fails to move most homeless families and individuals out of shelter because the voucher's payment standards are impossibly low compared to New York City rents (on average falling \$400 below market rate based on household size). If elected, will you work to pass Intro 146 - a bill to increase CityFHEPS value to reflect market rents in New York City?

WILEY: Absolutely. As Shams DaBarron, Da Homeless Hero, and many others have made clear, the city's \$1200 rent subsidy (FHEPS) is simply not enough. In November 2019, of the 5255 shelter residents eligible for the voucher, only 150 could find a placement. That's under 3%. The city must increase the rental subsidy and allow outside income to be used to supplement it. I support Intro 146, and have a plan to reform the city's rental assistance program to get homeless individuals and families into permanent housing.

DONOVAN: I support Intro 146. Additionally, in order to help prevent families from becoming homeless in the first place, we must create a new, flexible rental assistance program that could serve 200,000 low-income households per year when the program fully ramps up. The administration would commit \$330 million from reducing reliance on shelter, with an additional \$500 million coming from state matching funds, and \$1 billion from the federal government.

MENCHACA: Yes, I will work to pass Intro 146.

MORALES: Yes. I would organize closely with the new Speaker of the Council (assuming they support the bill) to ensure the legislation passes. As necessary, I would also use the mayoral bully pulpit to call attention to the bill and pressure Council Members to pass it. I would also like to highlight that the rent is too high in the city. While raising the CityFEPHS value is critical to house people now, we must also aggressively work to socialize more housing, build more truly affordable housing, and create more permanent supportive housing.

GARCIA: Absolutely. Having a voucher program is pointless if it cannot get New Yorkers into homes. CityFHEPS value should be increased to keep up with the actual cost of rent in New York City, and as Mayor, I would work with colleagues in the Council to get it done. I would also explore potential improvements at the State level to enhance voucher programs.

ADAMS: I support Intro 146. I would consider any measure to reform the CityFHEPS program that has shown to not adequately meet the market realities in New York City, but also is implemented in a way that doesn't assist in keeping homeless families and individuals in their existing homes.

YANG: An important tool to reduce shelter population is rental assistance programs. Although there has been some success in the past with these programs, we are now at a point where the city's payment structure is substantially less than what landlords will accept and the average length of stay in shelter has skyrocketed. The City's FHEPS program is a perfect example of the dysfunction. CityFHEPS vouchers will only pay approximately \$1,600 a month for a family of four while Federal Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers pay \$2000 a month. This difference results in landlords refusing to accept FHEPS vouchers while they wait for a Housing Choice Voucher. It is ridiculous that due to a gap of a few hundred dollars a month, families are remaining in shelters which cost \$6000 a month. I will immediately move to make the city's rental

assistance program equivalent to the section 8 standards. As mayor, I would also support Intro 146, which does away with arbitrary time limits (now 5 years) for rental assistance and provides assistance for as long as the household meets eligibility standards.

STRINGER: We can work to end homelessness by helping New Yorkers on the brink to stay housed. To do so, we must work with our state and federal partners before evictions resume unchecked. One critical tool the City has is its voucher system, which can provide individuals facing economic and housing instability with immediate relief. However, CityFHEPS vouchers are overly restrictive and underutilized as a prevention tool, too often requiring individuals at risk of housing instability to enter shelter before they qualify for assistance. Individuals and families who do not wish to brave the often dangerous conditions in shelters are left without resources. [As mayor](#), I will end this practice and ensure that sufficient vouchers are available before entering the shelter door.

The value of CityFHEPS vouchers is also far too low to actually provide meaningful access to housing in this city. I support Intro 146, and would call on the Speaker to immediately schedule a vote and for the Council to pass the bill. The current City voucher is worth only \$1,323 for a household of two in a one bedroom, while a comparable HUD voucher would be \$1,714. For the City's vouchers to be useful, they must be worth at least the fair market rent. At the same time, we must also be more flexible and do a better job of centering individuals' circumstances in the structure of the City voucher program. No one should be denied stable housing, especially after being issued shopping letter after shopping letter over many months if not years, because they had picked up an extra shift at work. But rigid income eligibility requirements make that all too common.

Prospective tenants who receive rental assistance programs like HASA, CityFHEPS, or Section 8 are often unable to find housing because of rampant and illegal source of income discrimination. What will you do to ensure that the New York City Commission on Human Rights has the resources it needs to fight source of income discrimination?

WILEY: Income discrimination is morally indefensible and illegal, and I will do everything in my power as Mayor to ensure that it ends. As a lifelong Civil Rights lawyer and racial justice advocate, I have fought against all forms of discrimination for my entire career. In fact, as a law student at Columbia Law School I worked at a clinic to provide support for AIDS patients facing housing

discrimination and joined the fight against Mayor Koch when he tried to shut the clinic down. When I was in City Hall, the Commission on Human Rights was one of the agencies in my portfolio. I know from my own experience that the agency has been underutilized and underfunded. As Mayor, I will bolster the resources at the Commission on Human Rights and expand its real estate testing program to ensure fair access to housing and root out discrimination in the rental market. In addition, I will work to increase and enforce penalties against landlords who discriminate against voucher holders

To further address source of income discrimination, my administration will partner voucher programs with housing and financial literacy programs, focused on budgeting and affordable housing opportunities in HUD, Mitchell-Lama, HCR, Section 8, and other longer term permanent housing options. We will also increase the number of housing counselors, who help renters find better quality housing in less segregated neighborhoods. These housing search intermediaries can also reduce discrimination by building relationships with landlords.

DONOVAN: We will expand the use of “paired testing” to enforce the strong fair housing protections we already have enshrined in law and include income discrimination in this. Paired testing, in which multiple applicants who are similar except for a relevant characteristic (like race) apply for the same housing, is one of the most effective tools we have to root out discrimination.

MENCHACA: I will ensure that the Commission’s budget includes all the funds it needs to conduct public education campaigns on housing rights and continue its housing discrimination testing program.

MORALES: Income-source discrimination is one of the many terrible side effects of profit-driven housing. My administration will not allow for this practice to continue, and I will act swiftly to evaluate the enforcement funding needs of the Commission on Human Rights. I will fill those needs by opening new revenue streams and freeing up funding elsewhere, such as by reducing the NYPD budget by \$3 billion.

GARCIA: Source of Income discrimination is a crime, it does not reflect the values of this City, and it undermines the programs designed to help New Yorkers access housing. While the City has taken a step in the right direction by expanding source of income discrimination protections to more buildings, we need to be proactive in preventing these cases. We can’t wait until a New Yorker has faced a discouraging discrimination before we intervene. CCHR’s source of

income discrimination unit needs to be fully funded to conduct testing and investigations of these crimes, and penalties for problematic landlords should be higher. In order to actually deter this behavior, landlords who don't comply need to face consequences including limiting their ability to conduct business.

ADAMS: The laws we have to combat discrimination are only as meaningful as their enforcement, and enforcement requires resources. The Commission's Law Enforcement Bureau must be sufficiently staffed to handle the volume of complaints it receives, and there must be a real-time evaluation of complaint workload such that it necessitates a shift in resources. We must also fairly and promptly compensate the critical partners in the non-profit community who are essential to combating housing insecurity and source of income discrimination.

YANG: I will ensure that there is a task force within HPD that investigates and enforces penalties against discriminatory practices, including illegally hiking up rents on rent stabilized units and other forms of discrimination against tenants who use rental assistance programs to pay rent.

STRINGER: We must invest more resources to prevent source of income discrimination. As VOCAL-NY and TakeRoot Justice's recent report on source of income discrimination demonstrated, too often vouchers go unused because landlords illegally discriminate against subsidy holders. The City must increase penalties and do more to aggressively fine landlords who discriminate based on source of income, educate voucher holders of their rights, and ensure credit is not a barrier to safe housing by eliminating the need for credit checks for all voucher holders. The Commission on Human Rights is a critical partner in this work, and as mayor, I would back that up in the Executive Budget. The Commission's source of income unit and law enforcement bureau must be better resourced and expanded such that our enforcement of existing housing protections is proportional to the crisis.

Would you support an immediate moratorium on the sale or lease of all city-owned land to for-profit developers?

WILEY: Yes, we should stop public land being privatized for profit, and build affordable housing on vacant lots. According to LivingLots NYC, a publicly sourced map showing public vacant land, there are currently 1346 sites across the city, covering 1039 acres. Rather than selling these lots to private developers, these assets should be turned into public goods, providing affordable housing and other community benefits through options like community land trusts

and non-profit affordable development Communities should be consulted on the kinds of needed developments in their neighborhood, with the possibility of acquisition and ownership.

DONOVAN: No, We do not want to prevent the city from leasing or selling to private developers. We need to be strategic and make sure we aren't giving away assets. However, if we do sell to private developers we will make sure there are restrictions for use or a requirement that a significant amount of units are for affordable housing.

When I was HUD Secretary, we were able to solve the housing crisis with innovative ideas and I wouldn't want to prevent the city from working toward solutions.

MENCHACA: Yes, I would support an immediate moratorium on the sale or lease of all-city owned land to for-profit developers.

MORALES: Yes, and it is part of my public platform.

GARCIA: We need to be open to all levers to build more housing in the city of New York, to maximize affordable housing construction.

ADAMS: I am open to a moratorium. As Mayor I would call for an analysis to see which nonprofits/faith based institutions could have first right of refusal and ensure they are prioritized. I have long called for City-owned land to be prioritized to non-profit developers to ensure 100% permanent affordable housing. I believe development rights on City-owned land should be given to a faith-based developer, locally-based non-profit, or community land trust, with either that entity retaining a role in the building, or serving as a contractor while the building is turned over to another non-profit entity.

YANG: No.

STRINGER: Yes. My [housing agenda](#) would put city-owned land to work for communities, in partnership with communities — not for-profit developers. That's why I have long championed the creation of a New York City Land Bank. A land bank would allow the City to maintain title to the land and work with nonprofit developers to achieve deeper and permanent affordability. Unlike HPD, which has left scores of City-owned lots vacant for a half-century or more, a land bank would have the sole mission of transforming City-owned and tax delinquent

properties into deeply affordable housing, enhancing the City's ability to advance projects quickly and enforce affordability thresholds over generations.

I would also partner with community-based land trusts as part of building a new generation of social housing. Community land trusts can guarantee that land is used for affordable housing in perpetuity. By working with community land trusts, the City can ensure that new housing remains permanently affordable and democratically controlled. As Mayor, I will exempt Community Land Trust-owned properties dedicated toward affordable housing from property taxes to help create viable rental and homeownership opportunities.

Would you require that any housing built on public land be 100% permanently affordable to low- and extremely-low income New Yorkers?

WILEY: Yes, as stated previously, housing built on public land should be affordable, and accessible to low income New Yorkers. There are many public sites that can be used for affordable housing, like parking lots and smaller one-story government buildings such as post offices, libraries or daycare centers. Developments like the Sunset Park library show that these one-story buildings can be redeveloped and turned into 100% deeply affordable housing with a new and renovated community asset on the first floor.

DONOVAN: We want to create mixed-income neighborhoods where everyone can thrive as a community. As HUD Secretary, I codified and strengthened the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing and disparate impact rules established in the Fair Housing Act that outlawed housing discrimination. In 2013, under my leadership, the agency issued a formal disparate impact regulation based on decades of unanimous judicial consensus. And in the most important civil rights decision involving housing in a generation, the Supreme Court upheld the disparate impact principle in 2015, recognizing it as consistent with the "central purpose" of the Fair Housing Act.

Proceeds from these sales should go to support housing low and extremely-low income residents.

MENCHACA: Yes, I would require that any housing built on public land be 100% permanently affordable to low- and extremely-low income New Yorkers.

MORALES: Absolutely. Public land belongs to the people, not profit-driven developers. No one deserves to live waiting to be displaced when the landlord is

just waiting for a higher income tenant to come along, and the very least we can do is ensure that never happens on publicly owned land.

GARCIA: We need to work with communities to ensure that we are using public land not only for housing but also to support essential services and guarantee open space.

ADAMS: Yes. It has been my administration's policy that any housing built on public land be 100 percent affordable. It is for this very reason that I disapproved of the Bedford-Union Armory project in my ULURP role. This affordable housing on public land must not only be deeply affordable, but also tiered so we can ensure that our working middle class like our teachers and sanitation workers can also access affordable housing and remain the communities where they were born and raised.

YANG: No.

STRINGER: Yes. My campaign recently undertook a new count of City-owned vacant lots and found that there are nearly 3,000 around the five boroughs. [As Mayor,](#) I will build 100% permanently affordable housing for low- and extremely low-income New Yorkers as part of my plan to build a new generation of social housing in New York City.

My housing plan would increase HPD's budget so that new construction of affordable housing on city-owned land would be developed for extremely low and very low income New Yorkers based on measurable needs: 77% of all new construction subsidized by the City would be set aside for extremely low income or below individuals and families, 21% for very low income or below, and the remaining 2% for all other incomes. Rents would be set to 30% of income using HUD income levels based on family size. Currently, extremely low income is defined as below 30% of AMI, or \$30,720 per year for a family of three, and very low income is below 50% of AMI or \$51,200 for a family.

Do you support Third Party Transfer, and other mechanisms that allow the City of New York to seize buildings from negligent landlords and transfer them to non-profit owners?

WILEY: While the intent behind the Third Party Transfer program is laudable and should have ensured that the City can maintain its housing stock, the implementation of the program has led to rampant discrimination and the loss of

homeownership and equity in primarily Black and Latinx communities. Homeowners with nominal tax liens have found their homes taken away by the City as opposed to finding support from City government that will help them stay afloat. I therefore support a reform of third party transfer, as the current program is too broad. It ensnares long-time residents in communities of color with low levels of tax debt. The program needs comprehensive reforms and must move away from clustered seizures and establish more equitable guidelines for potential transfers.

DONOVAN: Yes.

MENCHACA: Yes, I support Third Party Transfer and similar mechanisms.

MORALES: Yes. I support expanding the city's ability to purchase vacant apartments, hotels, commercial and office spaces facing foreclosures and turn them into housing, with a priority for permanent housing for homeless families and individuals. I also support utilizing eminent domain, when necessary, especially for buildings with significant OATH/ECB fines, to create more supportive and low-income housing.

GARCIA: For decades communities of color have been the targets of racist housing policies- from the history of redlining to the lack of access to health care. Holding negligent landlords accountable is absolutely necessary. However, the Third Party Transfer program has disproportionately undermined homeownership in communities of color. We certainly need to hold landlords accountable, but it cannot be at the expense of wealth and homeownership in communities of color.

ADAMS: The Third Party Transfer program is a program that may have begun with good intentions but since its most recent phase has gone into effect, has seen an abuse by the City primarily targeting Black and Brown small homeowners. When news broke of the rampant abuse occurring under the guise of TPT, where in some instances \$2.2 million brownstones were being seized for bills that were as little as \$3,000, I led the charge in calling for greater oversight and reforms for this program to better protect homeowners and Black and Brown generational wealth. I convened a hearing in early 2019 bringing together elected officials and agencies overseeing this program and supported the creation of a task force to look at needed reforms to the program. I had called for the Task Force to have robust homeowner representation and we eagerly await the

recommendation of the task force to prevent the City from seizing homes from homeowners unnecessarily.

YANG: My top priority will be protecting tenants rights and ramping up enforcement against bad landlords through HPD and DOB. In severe cases of negligence, I would consider all options.

STRINGER: The Third Party Transfer system should be used to take buildings away from slumlords, but instead is too often weaponized against lower income New Yorkers to take away the equity they had in the property, and turn them into renters. [I support mechanisms](#) that empower New Yorkers to stand up to negligent landlords, but use of the Third Party Transfer system must be used judiciously to make sure we are not hurting the very families we hope to help.

Drug Policy and Public Health

The drug war has led to mass incarceration and mass death. Prohibitionist and ‘tough on crime’ policies have resulted in a drug supply that is less safe and more deadly, and has put people who use drugs at risk of police violence and criminalization. What is your vision for a public health approach to drug use rather than punishment and criminalization in New York City?

WILEY: I will ensure that our drug policies no longer arrest, incarcerate, disenfranchise and harm millions, particularly young black and brown New Yorkers who have been disproportionately affected by the failed war on drugs. Substance use disorders are medical issues, and not criminal concerns, and should be treated as such. As part of a public health approach to drug use, some of the programs I will look to maintain, create or expand are:

Support and Connection Centers facilities that offer short-term, stabilizing services for people with mental health and substance use needs who come into contact with the police, as an alternative to avoidable emergency room visits or criminal justice interventions.

Respite care centers, mental health urgent care centers, and drop-in centers for those with mental health concerns to avoid incarceration and involuntary hospitalization. These should be services people can access without a court order, with culturally competent training and language accessibility.

Drop-In Centers - multi-service facilities for homeless New Yorkers that provide a variety of services including food, social work, and referrals to needed programs. Five of these centers currently exist in the City, but they are not equitably located. For example, Queens does not have one at all. I would expand the number of these centers and use city data to locate the centers where there is the most need.

Mental Health Urgent Care Centers to provide individuals experiencing a mental health crisis with a short term alternative to hospitalization. This tactic has yet to be implemented in New York City, but has seen success in LA County, more specifically with reduced overcrowding in emergency rooms and reduced escalated crises. This is especially important during COVID, as our hospitals are already experiencing immense strain. Mental Health Urgent Care Centers are also far more cost-effective than jailing people.

Safe havens for those with mental health concerns and/or substance use disorders. These safe havens would provide immediate temporary housing for homeless individuals and offer supportive services, including mental health and substance abuse programming. Individuals are not required to be sober upon entry or during their stay, which will be instrumental in helping those with substance abuse issues. Additionally, I would integrate homelessness outreach and mental health services to build on this model, and utilize caseworkers to help find stable permanent housing.

DONOVAN: More New Yorkers die of drug overdoses than homicides, suicides, and motor vehicle crashes combined. After seven consecutive years of increases, the number and rate of overdose deaths in New York City finally declined in 2018. Despite that, data show that these decreases are not evenly distributed across neighborhoods, and that gains are not uniform across race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

While much progress has been made, we need to go further and focus especially on neighborhoods where treatment has been limited. Through a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach, we will focus on prevention, treatment, and recovery.

The goal is not to shame anyone into not seeking treatment and help for their addiction but rather give them the tools they need in a harm-reduction approach to support recovery and reduce relapse. Our goal is to prevent opioid misuse and to do that we will invest in evidence-based prevention programs in schools,

hospitals, and in partnership with communities. In coordination with our 15 minute neighborhoods, we will make connections to our health care services, including primary care physicians, to help residents sustain their recovery.

We will also aim to develop multilingual and culturally competent education campaigns so that the necessary information reaches the greatest number of people.

We must work on reducing inappropriate opioid prescribing, and that takes coordination with our health system. Through improved data sharing, education, and guidelines, we can change prescribing practices. This will encourage evidence-based alternatives that will lead to fewer people having their first exposure to opioids be through legal means.

The next step in assisting those struggling with opioid addiction is working toward preventing overdose deaths. With a focus on high-need communities, we will put Naloxone, an overdose-reversal medication, in the hands of everyone who needs it. We will provide training on how to administer this medicine so that those who are in dire need can be saved.

In the communities hit hardest by the opioid crisis, we must start by establishing the city's first Safe Use Community Centers, taking substance use off the streets and making treatment options more accessible. Similar centers outside the US have been shown to lower drug-related deaths, ambulance calls, and HIV infections, all without increasing crime, injection drug use, or return to use.

We also need to reconsider who is responding to these overdose incidents. To reduce avoidable arrests and hospitalizations, we will strengthen the emergency response to crisis events by trained clinicians and peers, and keep the police focused on the most violent crimes.

Lastly, for those residents that are on the path to recovery, we need to offer support to help them get over the finish line and stay addiction free. To do this, we will expand access to medication-assisted treatment services.

For those who are both homeless and suffering from addiction, we will work toward housing them by investing in supportive housing units with high-quality, on-site services that are targeted toward those in recovery. We will also invest in street outreach service programs.

MENCHACA: We must build a public health approach to drug use that emphasizes rehabilitation while respecting bodily autonomy and utilizing harm reduction strategies to protect those who continue to use drugs. The city must build a free/affordable health insurance program that will allow all New Yorkers struggling with drug addiction to access high-quality substance abuse services. In the meantime, we must fully fund programs like NYC Care—a lifeline for underinsured and uninsured individuals in need of healthcare, including rehabilitation services—and Intensive Mobile Treatment units, which provide immediate treatment and service referrals for substance users. The city must collaborate with PWUD and community advocates to identify and fund the most effective harm reduction services.

MORALES: I have worked in human services for over 25 years and, if there is one thing my experience has taught me it is that criminalization and punishment never help individuals become safer or healthier. In a city that is majority people of color, immigrants, and the working class, it is imperative that we finally address the root causes of drug use and reject the idea that policing will stop people using drugs (or keep any of us safe).

As Mayor, I will reallocate \$3 billion of NYPD's overall budget towards services that actually keep us safe by improving our quality of life, such as addiction treatment services. But the most pressing thing is to end as many people's contact with the criminal justice system as possible. I will move to decriminalize all drug use within the city and decriminalize the possession of a limited amount of drugs. This means instructing the NYPD to cease all arrests for this behavior and violation-level enforcement for drugs (e.g., cease issuing summonses for marijuana use). I will heavily pressure all city District Attorneys to decline to prosecute drug charges and advocate at the state level for all drug use to be decriminalized. I will also remove police from social services, including in outreach to homeless New Yorkers and in drug intervention.

I will also work to create a network of integrated community health clinics across the city to provide preventative primary care. These clinics could help prevent addiction by providing accessible, high-quality care and help connect people struggling with addiction to specialized city resources. Further, I plan to use money from the NYPD and other revenue streams to bolster and expand the city's existing treatment services.

GARCIA: The War on Drugs has failed too many communities across the country, and we need a new approach. Addiction is a public health issue that

needs to be met with a public health response. We need to expand harm reduction efforts by enhancing our public hospital system and networks of nonprofit experts to change the narrative surrounding drug use. Communities that have been ravaged by disproportionate enforcement of drug crimes should benefit most from the revenue that will be generated by eventual legalization of marijuana. Not only must we offer compassionate, tailored treatment options, but we also must address many of the underlying causes of drug use by ensuring every New Yorker has access to housing, comprehensive healthcare, jobs with quality benefits, and other vital support systems.

ADAMS: A public health approach to drug use is the only way we will treat addiction as the disease it is. I have been a strong proponent of the legalization of marijuana, with revenues earmarked to the communities that have historically borne the brunt of over-policing due to the “War on Drugs”. That means expunging records related to marijuana convictions and empowering those that have been involved in the drug trade to become vendors once legalized.

I have championed the siting of additional rehabilitation centers in Brooklyn as a way to provide the needed support services that those living with addiction need, with a focus on an equitable distribution of these sites and supportive services that promote the health and safety of clients and community residents alike.

I organized and conducted dozens of Narcan training to combat the scourge of overdoses in Brooklyn, and we are in the final phases of certifying Borough Hall as an official Narcan distribution site.

YANG: Substance use disorders are unequivocally a public health issue and my administration will properly treat them as such. Recent estimates suggest that roughly 20 million adults need treatment for a substance use disorder, and that only 10.8% are receiving the care they need. It is both unjust and bad policy to approach under-treatment with over-criminalization. We know that the “tough on crime” approach is clearly insufficient – more overdose deaths were recorded in the year ending in May 2020 than ever before.

My administration will replace criminalization with comprehensive social and medical services. In part, this will involve the decriminalization of low-level drug possession, buprenorphine, and syringes/paraphernalia, as will be discussed below. Our approach will streamline coordination between City agencies, including the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and New York Health + Hospitals to ensure that those struggling with

substance use disorders are identified and connected with city-wide services. We will also reinvest savings from decreased incarceration in expanded social and health programs for these individuals. My administration will also target root causes of drug abuse, including poverty, inadequate employment and housing for those who need support.

STRINGER: We need to fundamentally reimagine public safety, as I recently laid out in [an expansive report produced by my office on ways to transform](#) our approach to building community safety. As mayor, I would take a multi-agency, public health-focused approach, transitioning responsibilities away from NYPD and investing in alternative responses and services. Outreach and responses to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness and mental health or substance use challenges should be conducted by trained professionals in agencies and nonprofits other than the NYPD, and married with investments in long-term supports like drop-in centers, supportive housing, healthcare, employment services, and safe consumption and overdose prevention facilities.

We need to recognize that mental health and substance use are medical matters, not criminal offenses. As of February 24, more than half of the nearly 5,500 individuals in DOC custody were known to have a mental health diagnosis. Jail is a place where these challenges are exacerbated, not remediated.

New York City has an array of drop-in centers, respite care, safe havens, and other emergency and non-emergency services – though demand outstrips the supply and many sections of the city are lacking. These facilities, however, are not adequately woven into the City’s first response system. Enshrining these relationships and ensuring that crisis response teams are transporting clients directly to these facilities is essential to a robust community safety model.

We also must link response teams to an expanded public health and social service infrastructure. It is not enough to simply dispatch crisis counselors and social workers to respond to issues of substance use, mental health, or homelessness — we must help New Yorkers access long-term health and social services—rather than emergency rooms and jails.

Finally, we must continue to advance the cause of decarceration, which is not only a moral imperative but a fiscal necessity. As my office’s latest report on DOC spending outlined, we now spend some \$400,000 a year to keep one person in custody for a year. That money would be far better spent invested in

the public health interventions described above — harm reduction tools that would actually begin to lift up communities, while reducing recidivism and opportunities for harmful interactions with the criminal legal system to begin with. We can tackle the interdependent challenges of our rising jail population, the failed War on Drugs, and overdose deaths by ending drug enforcement and decriminalizing a number of offenses, as expanded on below.

Recently, Oregon decriminalized low-level drug possession of all drugs following the Portugal model that decriminalized in 2001. Under this model, individuals possessing drugs for personal use are connected to the public health system, rather than the criminal legal system. Since adopting this policy, Portugal has seen a significant decrease in the number of overdose deaths (which were rapidly rising prior to adoption), decreases in the number of new HIV and hepatitis infections, decreases in problematic drug use, and increases to entry into treatment. Portugal now has the lowest rate of overdose deaths in Western Europe. Do you support the decriminalization of low-level drug possession? Please explain your answer.

WILEY: Yes, decriminalization clearly benefits communities in numerous ways, and I support legalizing marijuana, and reinvesting revenue into black and brown communities. In addition, I support expunging all low-level drug convictions. The City can be a leader in this fight even if Albany fails to act. As Mayor, I will convene the District Attorneys, the NYPD, DOHMH and others to create a unified approach to minimizing enforcement of outdated laws and replacing the cost associated with that enforcement with proven supports and non-criminal justice interventions.

DONOVAN: As we've explained above, we do not want to criminalize addiction and drive drug users deeper into the shadows where health risks increase. We will provide resources for residents struggling with addiction to use safely and without the fear of overdose.

MENCHACA: As co-chair of the Progressive Caucus, I advanced the #MarijuanaJustice legislation packet, which advocated for legalization while reducing the collateral consequences of marijuana criminalization and rectifying its disproportionate effects on communities of color. Similarly, I fully support the decriminalization of all low-level drug possession as criminalization leaves the root causes of drug usage and addiction unaddressed. Instead of punishing and incarcerating drug users, we provide them with better access to rehabilitative services and harm reduction strategies. We must also reinvest in social

infrastructure, a lack of which is a gateway into drug experimentation and dealing.

MORALES: Yes, I strongly support decriminalizing drug use and my administration would take decisive steps to make that a reality in the city. When an issue is complicated, like drug use, our instinct as a society is often to criminalize it. I will fight to undo the harm this has caused and to stop us from jumping to criminalization in the future. The war on drugs has not only deeply harmed Black and brown people and exacerbated existing inequities, it has hurt the public health of the entire city and country.

As I explained in the previous question, I will move to decriminalize all drug use within the city and decriminalize the possession of limited amount of drugs by instructing the NYPD to cease all arrests for this behavior and violation-level enforcement for drugs (e.g., cease issuing summonses for marijuana use). I will work with all city District Attorneys to ensure that we decline to prosecute drug charges. Further, I will advocate at the state level for all drug use to be decriminalized. I will also further reduce the possibility of contact with police by removing them from social services, including outreach to homeless New Yorkers and drug intervention.

GARCIA: I support decriminalizing low-level drug possession as a means to shrink our justice-involved population and get New Yorkers the help they truly need. Incarceration and criminal records only create additional barriers to recovery, and doesn't come close to solving the problem at hand. These promising models in Portugal and Oregon are encouraging, and as Mayor, I would evaluate them closely to see how we could apply these strategies in NYC. Additionally, we should use marijuana legalization as an opportunity to right past wrongs, including automatically clearing past criminal records for marijuana possession.

ADAMS: Yes I am supportive of the legalization of marijuana

YANG: I support the legalization of marijuana and the decriminalization of some low-level drug possession, such as the possession of opioids. My administration will change how the city handles drug policy by placing an emphasis on public health. Drug addiction is a public health crisis and must be treated as such. Criminalizing low-level drug possession can do the opposite of what we want by pushing people away from using city resources and public health institutions out

of fear of retribution. Our policies should help people find help, not push them away from it.

STRINGER: Yes. People struggling with substance use need help, not handcuffs. As Mayor, I would push to decriminalize a wide range of offenses—from drug possession to low-level dealing. The State must also pass legislation to legalize adult-use marijuana this year, investing the resulting tax revenue, as my office has previously advocated for, in communities most harmed by the racial inequities in enforcement.

I also believe that the City does not, in many cases, need to wait for legislative action, but can unilaterally deprioritize a number of offenses—just as District Attorneys choose not to prosecute several infractions and the NYPD chooses not to enforce dozens of outdated laws that are relics of previous eras. Specifically, as states around the country move to decriminalize marijuana and drug possession and opiate overdoses continue to soar, it is clear that the City must end its own War on Drugs and invest in support, harm reduction, and public health services.

Experts have pointed out that some of the overdose fatalities and public injection that has increased during COVID-19 could have been prevented by the implementation of Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs), also known as safer injecting facilities. OPCs are even more important now, as physical distancing and shelter in place efforts have led to more people using alone. These centers offer sterile supplies and controlled settings for people to use pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained professionals who can intervene in case of an overdose or other medical event, and link people to services. Although OPCs don't exist yet in the United States, they have been operating for over 30 years across the world with zero fatal overdoses in these centers. Do you support the implementation and funding of Overdose Prevention Centers in New York City?

WILEY: I support the establishment of Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs). As Mayor I will push for the State Department of Health to approve the use of safe injection and overdose prevention sites in the City. Overdose deaths in New York City have risen to record levels, in accordance with data from the rest of the country. According to the City Department of Health, in the first three months of 2020 overdose deaths reached their highest level in years. 444 New Yorkers died of overdoses from January to March, 41 more deaths than the previous

highest quarter. We must begin seriously addressing these preventable fatalities, and overdose prevention centers are a crucial step in this direction.

DONOVAN: Yes, see answer to the first question of this section.

MENCHACA: Yes, I support the implementation and funding of OPCs in New York City.

MORALES: Absolutely, this is part of my public platform. My administration will establish Overdose Prevention Centers and fully fund programs to allow safer consumption, and provide resources and harm-reduction services.

GARCIA: We need to implement data-driven policies that work, and that often means looking beyond our borders to see what's working elsewhere. I would explore OPCs as part of our comprehensive public health response to drug use.

ADAMS: Yes.

YANG: Yes, I support the implementation and funding of Overdose Prevention Centers in New York City. As mentioned above, during the year ending in May 2020, our country experienced the highest number of overdose deaths ever. Access to Overdose Prevention Centers could have prevented at least some of these tragic deaths. Experience with Canada's first center, Insite, showed clearly the benefits of these programs. Studies have found an over 35% decrease in overdose deaths in surrounding neighborhoods, reductions in syringe sharing, and increased uptake of addiction treatment, with no corresponding increase in community drug use. The broader community also benefited from declines in public injection and discarded syringes.

My administration will advocate broadly for Overdose Prevention Centers. In particular, we will educate the community about their efficacy and potential benefits. We have to shift the conversation from stigma to public health, treatment, and prevention, at all levels of discussion.

STRINGER: Yes. Safe injection facilities have proven to save lives, and as Mayor, I would support establishing overdose prevention centers across the city.

Harm reduction programs (including syringe service programs) are uniquely positioned to conduct essential outreach and engagement to people at risk for

overdose who are not connected to services. Harm reduction programs provide education, counseling, referrals, and support to people at risk of overdose. These services are a critical pathway toward health and recovery for people who use drugs – particularly those outside of the treatment system, however are incredibly underfunded and are struggling to serve the increased need during the COVID crisis. Will you commit to drastically increasing the funding for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to adequately fund and support the infrastructure of harm reduction services and programs?

WILEY: Yes, harm reduction services and programs are essential to a public health approach to substance use, and should be built out across the City. In addition, we should train our social service providers in harm reduction models, and move away from practices that treat those with substance use disorders as criminals.

DONOVAN: Yes, see answer to the first question of this section.

MENCHACA: Yes, I will drastically increasing the funding available to the DOHMH to adequately fund and support the infrastructure of harm reduction services and programs.

MORALES: Yes, absolutely. As Mayor I will explore ways to increase revenue and free up funding, including by defunding the NYPD by \$3 billion, that will allow the City to invest in the services that keep us safe and secure, including harm reduction programs. Our campaign stands firmly against austerity policies, particularly regarding cuts to public services that disproportionately impact marginalized communities and their quality of life. Recovering from the COVID pandemic will require structural changes and prioritizing investments that strengthen public institutions and reduce inequality across the board. Significant investments to support and treat people who use drugs is a critical part of that.

GARCIA: Harm reduction programs are more critical than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated risk factors for overdose. Connecting New Yorkers to the services they need is a top priority. We absolutely need to invest in trusted messengers and organizations in our communities to help people at risk for overdose link up with the housing, employment, and clinical resources that they need to succeed.

ADAMS: I have championed harm reduction strategies through my Narcan trainings and turning Borough Hall into a Narcan distribution center. In addition, I

have put my money where my mouth is allocating \$600,000 to help finance VOCAL's new headquarters and syringe distribution center in Brooklyn. DOHMH must do more to support the expansion and operation of such programs.

YANG: When you start treating drug use and addiction as a public health issue rather than a criminal issue, then investing heavily in harm reduction services and programs immediately becomes an obvious solution to reduce the potential for tragic overdoses. That is exactly what my administration will do, and we will also invest in other crucial programs to get struggling New Yorkers back on the road to recovery.

STRINGER: Yes.

Medication-assisted treatment (buprenorphine and methadone) is considered the gold standard for opioid use disorder treatment. Because of stringent federal regulations and barriers to access, many people turn to diverted buprenorphine to manage and prevent withdrawals (evidence proves withdrawal drastically increases the risk of overdose), self wean off drugs, and maintain abstinence. Yet, people continue to be arrested and criminalized for intent to sell this life saving medication, even when they have a prescription for their medication. Do you support decriminalizing buprenorphine?

WILEY: Yes, Buprenorphine can be a lifeline for those struggling with opioid addiction and its use can prevent the use of deadlier alternatives. Increased buprenorphine access has been proven to decrease overdose mortality in communities. Decriminalization is even more important now due to drug overdose deaths during the pandemic rising to the highest levels ever recorded.

DONOVAN: Yes, we support the decriminalization of buprenorphine. This will take coordination with the federal government and I am uniquely qualified to work with our leaders to get this done.

MENCHACA: Yes, I support decriminalizing buprenorphine.

MORALES: Yes. I will move to decriminalize possession and use of buprenorphine and methadone along with decriminalizing all drug use. Decriminalization is a critical way to decrease New Yorkers' interactions with the police and incarceration system.

GARCIA: We need to have every tool at our disposal to fight addiction instead of criminalizing it. I would work with medical professionals and advocates to better understand the potential challenges of managing the decriminalization of buprenorphine, and figure out what it would take to safely execute it.

ADAMS: Yes.

YANG: Yes, I support decriminalizing buprenorphine. Public health experts and district attorneys both have advocated for decriminalization as a strategy to reduce opioid deaths – an even more pressing goal in light of the significant increase in opioid deaths throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. My administration will also advocacy strongly with the Biden administration to expand the caps on the numbers of patients providers can prescribe with buprenorphine, and to streamline the process of receiving buprenorphine waivers. Buprenorphine is a critical component of the public health response to the opioid epidemic and my administration will ensure that it is affordable and accessible to all who need it.

STRINGER: Yes. Buprenorphine is a medication that saves lives. As such, we should not only be decriminalizing it, we should be making it more available through primary care practices and training all frontline providers in its use.

Access to sterile syringes is critical in drug user health, and has long been demonstrated through research to reduce HIV and hepatitis C infections, as well as abscesses and endocarditis. New York has a draconian law that puts people at risk of being arrested for simply possessing syringes and limits the number of syringes people can purchase at a pharmacy. In New York City there were nearly 1000 arrests in 2019 in which criminal possession of a hypodermic instrument was the most serious charge, and Black and Brown New Yorkers have the highest rates of arrests. Many people are arrested each year for this charge in order to increase leverage during plea negotiations. This undermines public health and can lead to people sharing or reusing syringes. Do you support decriminalizing syringes and drug paraphernalia and removing all caps to syringe purchasing?

WILEY: Absolutely. Our criminal justice system should be focusing its resources on actual crime, not policing mental health and addiction. , The current system leads to unnecessary incarceration, is incredibly confusing, and harms substance

users, as well as those with conditions like type one diabetes. Caps for syringe purchasing should be removed, and possessing syringes should be decriminalized.

DONOVAN: Yes, and these policies impact more than just opioid users - residents who need insulin injections are also impacted by these policies. Like we've said, we do not want to criminalize addiction and our Safe Use Injection Sites will give people safe places to use and avoid the risk of infection from shared syringes.

MENCHACA: Yes, I support decriminalizing syringes and drug paraphernalia and removing all caps to syringe purchasing.

MORALES: Yes, and I will do everything in my power as mayor to effectively decriminalize possessing syringes or other drug paraphernalia by mandating that the NYPD cease making arrests for these "crimes." I will also advocate at the state level to officially decriminalize this behavior across New York and to remove caps on syringe purchases.

GARCIA: Criminalization of drug paraphernalia is counterproductive. This is not the way to reduce drug use, and it is definitely not the way to reduce risk. I support evidence-based policy, and studies show that this approach makes sense.

ADAMS: Yes

YANG: Yes, I support decriminalizing syringes and drug paraphernalia and removing syringe purchasing caps. Research has conclusively shown the numerous health and societal benefits of increasing access to syringes without a corresponding increase in drug use. Decriminalization is also likely to increase participation in New York City's incredibly successful syringe exchange programs. Studies found that the legalization of syringe exchange programs in California without decriminalization of syringe possession may have resulted in a higher arrest rate in clients of the exchange programs. My administration will take a stand against this injustice as one part of our comprehensive, public health-focused approach to drug policy.

STRINGER: Yes.

Public Safety, Policing, and Civil Rights

Do you support moving resources away from police, prosecutors and jails to be invested in the communities (low-income communities of color) most impacted by police violence and most in need of investment? If so, how would you reinvest that money into other communities?

WILEY: Yes, we need to put the Public back in Public Safety. This means a top to bottom restructuring of the NYPD, beginning with strong civilian oversight at the front end of policing -- policies that make clear what policing is and is not, what conduct will not be tolerated, as well as the priorities of policing, which I describe as problem-oriented, rather than punitive. When I am Mayor, I will do the following:

1. Freeze the incoming NYPD and DOCCs cadet classes for two years, reducing the NYPD headcount by 2,500 officers, and use the savings to fund a Universal Community Care income, which would give our city's lowest income families a \$5,000 annual caregiving income.
2. Run a full audit of the NYPD's budget -- including the out of budget expenses such as settlements -- to assess the facts and make necessary cuts, including to the number of uniformed officers.
3. Move mental health calls, routine traffic violations, and school safety out of the NYPD.
4. Assert civilian oversight of all policies and priorities of the NYPD on the front end. We cannot only assert civilian oversight to engage in discipline. We must prevent the nefarious acts from happening at the outset.
5. Hire a police commissioner that has not just moved up the ranks of the NYPD rank and file. We need a new model of leadership to work as a partner with the people to transform policing.
6. Create a shift from "containment and control" policing that produces strategies like unconstitutional "stop and frisks" and make "community and problem-oriented policing" the model, which requires collaboration and partnership with other agencies and communities. This approach focuses on underlying conditions identified and understood with communities and drawing in

and working with other governmental partners to solve them. Eric Garner lost his life because he allegedly sold an untaxed cigarette. A community and problem-oriented approach would have worked with store owners, who were complaining, and also other agencies to address that poverty meant people were selling untaxed goods and how to find solutions that did not require an arrest for being poor. Too often the NYPD responds to problems of poverty, not of crime. We need to ensure that if the NYPD receives a call about a poverty problem, the right city agencies are involved and cycling people through prison is not the solution.

7. End the criminalization of poverty and close Rikers while creating more alternatives to incarceration and re-entry programs.

8. Invest in what keeps our communities safe like youth programs, job and workforce creation and other community-sourced safety initiatives. The Gun Violence Prevention Plan that I released in November is an example of this approach. This plan is entirely focused on investing in the programs that actually keep our communities safe, including the creation of an \$18 million Participatory Justice program that will give communities the resources they need to decide what and how they want to invest in their neighborhoods.

DONOVAN: Yes! Recent incidents of police violence in New York City and across the country have put a spotlight on the wide-ranging tasks we ask police officers to carry out, and have left many questioning whether the police are suited to handle some of these situations. As mayor, DONOVAN will facilitate a wholesale evaluation of the policing within our City to identify circumstances where truly dangerous conditions exist that warrant armed police response.

By focusing their efforts on those problems and reallocating resources for issues like mental health response and school safety toward social services professionals with more appropriate skill sets, we can ensure that police officers have the tools they need to do their jobs well and that all New Yorkers are getting the support they need from those best equipped to help them.

We are committing to the following policies and programs:

- Targeting the out-of-state gun pipeline, working with other mayors, governors, and the Biden administration
- Fast-tracking gun cases
- Establish a non-police mental health first responder system

- Remove police from schools and provide resources for transition
- Create a task force to identify additional areas better served by non-police responses
- Stop crackdowns on immigrant New Yorkers

You can read more about my plan for Criminal Justice at shaunfornyc.com/issues/criminal-justice

MENCHACA: We must defund the NYPD: it is immoral that we have been firing fire teachers, healthcare, and social workers during this pandemic while sustaining a multi-billion police budget used to disproportionately arrest and incarcerate people of color. Under my leadership, the NYPD's entire \$8 billion budget will be under review for reallocation to the city agencies and services aiding and healing the communities impacted by police brutality. As opposed to upping police presence in neighborhoods struggling with crime, my administration will invest in social infrastructure (i.e, housing, education, healthcare, employment opportunities, etc.) for these communities as it is a crucial component to tackling the underlying causes of crime effectively. I will also look to fund an array of non-police solutions, such as Intensive Mobile Treatment Units and CURE Violence programming.

MORALES: Yes, I fully support the diversion of funds from the carceral system and a reinvestment of that money into the communities that have been most harmed. I will cut \$3 billion from the NYPD budget and reroute the funds to social housing, establishing a basic income program, and expanding healthcare coverage. This is with the understanding that housing, food, and stability are the foundation of public health and safety. Additionally, I would establish a Community First Response Department to assist community members dealing with crises surrounding mental health, homelessness, and general safety concerns. The goal of this is to foster an environment of care and justice opposed to the status quo of the unjust criminalization of brown and Black communities, people with mental illness, and those that lack resources.

GARCIA: We can find cost savings by reducing inefficiencies and redundancies in every agency. However, I don't believe defunding the NYPD will get to the root of the problem. To get to real police reform, we need to take actionable steps towards changing the culture from a "warrior" culture to a "guardian" culture.

I would work to overcome the "us vs. them" mindset by implementing the following reforms: (1) Require NYC residency for new cops and increase

community policing - we need every member of the NYPD to be fully bought into rebuilding the City and fully committed to the community they serve. (2) Increase the recruitment age from 21 to 25--the age at which you can rent a car. Police officers face the most challenging moments of the human condition; we need to make sure new recruits have life and job experiences that bring a mature perspective. (3) Require continual implicit bias training at all levels- but especially mid management such as sergeants.

My approach will be to allocate resources to better serve neighborhoods that have been historically underserved--and finding savings in our existing budget across the board through productivity savings, right-sizing maintenance practices, better negotiating contracts, and reducing redundancy.

Additionally, a Garcia administration would use tax revenues generated from marijuana legalization for community reinvestment in low income communities of color, and to pay for intervention programs, such as cure violence and anti-violence programs, and alternatives to incarceration programs.

ADAMS: Yes. As outlined in my “Real Recovery Plan”, diverting wasteful spending from the third-largest agency operating budget in our city is essential to combating our deficit, and ensuring that budgetary waste is redirected toward Black and Brown communities is necessary for a real recovery, one where the City goes upstream to proactively tackle the feeders of the criminal justice system. I have tangible solutions on how to reinvest \$500 million into addressing the underlying causes of crime in order to improve public safety in communities of color. Solutions such as over-policed communities, including greater civilianization of certain areas of the police force, cutting back on overtime, and conducting a forensic auditing of the notoriously opaque NYPD budget. With these savings, I would invest in proven safety measures like fully funding violence interrupter programs, summer youth employment, universal dyslexia screening at schools (studies suggest that up to 40 percent of those in prisons are dyslexic), and Fair Futures programming which provides mentors for those aging out of the foster care system who are more likely to have negative interactions with the criminal justice system, among other investments.

YANG: During my presidential campaign and following the George Floyd murder, I shared my plans for police reform on a national scale. It is absolutely unjust that those who are supposed to be keeping us safe are often instead violating our civil rights and treating communities of color with unnecessary violence.

I will appoint a civilian NYPD Commissioner whose background is not one primarily in law enforcement so that we can integrate the NYPD into a more just criminal justice system that is far less punitive in how it is structured, and ensure serious accountability for officers who violate the rights of New Yorkers.

We will also work to decriminalize certain crimes, including sex work, so that the police focus on neighborhood policing and not on criminalizing nonviolent actions. We will also work to legalize marijuana and decriminalize opioids. And individuals who have criminal records for these past crimes should have their records expunged.

We will also expand violence interrupter programs so that communities are empowered to keep neighborhoods safe without having to rely solely on law enforcement.

STRINGER: Yes. As New Yorkers and people across the country are crying out for justice and the sanctity of Black lives, we can and should shift responsibilities and dollars away from the NYPD toward vulnerable communities most impacted by police violence and structural racism.

The NYPD's responsibilities have ballooned over the years and now include dealing with a host of social challenges. I support moving those responsibilities away from armed officers to mental health professionals, peer counselors, crisis intervention experts, social workers, school psychologists at other city agencies, as well as advocates and trusted community leaders with greater expertise. I have also proposed disbanding and downsizing a number of specialized units -- including the Vice Squad, Strategic Response Group, Narcotics Division, School Safety Division, and the Citywide Traffic Task Force-- and discontinuing the NYPD Youth Coordination Officer program and substantially reducing the police auto fleet. This will produce significant savings to be reinvested in our communities.

This, together with a reduction in our jail population and cuts to the Department of Correction, will free up funds to invest in Black and brown and underserved communities. As Mayor, I will make long-term investments in housing, healthcare, education, mental health, workforce development, childcare, and neighborhoods to finally address systemic inequality.

We have approached public health and public safety too narrowly for too long at

an enormous cost to the Black and brown New Yorkers entangled in the criminal legal system and their families, neighbors, and communities. In June, I was the first elected official in the city to present a tangible plan to begin scaling back the department's multi-billion dollar budget. That proposal moved at least \$1 billion away from the NYPD over four years, and I believe additional cuts can and should be made. More recently, my office released a detailed blueprint outlining how the city needs to take a "public health first" approach to public safety, responding to homelessness, mental health crises, substance use, wellness checks, youth at risk of violence, and so many other challenges not with armed police officers but with wraparound services and deep investments in public health interventions. We need to take alternative approaches to building safety — through investments in community health, supportive housing, youth programming, and more.

Do you support removing the police from ALL responses to homelessness, drug use and overdose, and mental or behavioral health issues? Why or why not?

WILEY: Yes, we must move from a punitive model of policing toward a problem-oriented approach. As Mayor, I will ensure we are responding to mental health calls, homelessness, and substance use issues from a public health position, rather than a criminal justice standpoint.

I support the expansion of the CAHOOTS model that is used in Eugene Oregon and is currently being tested in New York. The CAHOOTS model is referenced as one of the most successful models for mental health crisis intervention. In this model, teams composed of mental health crisis workers and EMT are dispatched through the local 911 dispatching system to respond to calls with police. The model also includes a non 911 dispatch line for non-emergency mental health situations. New York is currently testing the model in two pilot areas, and I will expand its usage.

DONOVAN: No, not for all responses. In the rare occurrence that these situations are violent, the police are best equipped to assist in the response.

MENCHACA: Yes, I support removing the NYPD from all responses to homelessness, drug use and overdose, and mental or behavioral health issues. We need to get these individuals the assistance and social services they need on the spot, which means funding more non-police solutions such as Intensive Mobile Treatment Units (IMT) and violence interrupters.

MORALES: Yes, I fully support removing the police from situations that would be much better resolved by professionals trained in mental health and de-escalation approaches. NYC must establish a Community First Response Department, separate from the NYPD. This team would serve as first responders to community public safety issues related to non-criminal public safety issues: homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, emotional distress and other behavioral health issues. The department would be staffed by trained professional first responders including social workers, crisis response workers, medics, mental health counselors and others, all of whom would be trained in crisis intervention and de-escalation. They will connect people to healthcare, social services, mental health services and other critical supports that can help remedy the root causes of crises. I believe we have to reimagine the system completely and shift to a model routed in transformative justice.

GARCIA: We can fundamentally change policing by embedding qualified professionals that can help address non-violent situations, focusing on mental health and domestic violence. Each year we have tens of thousands of calls that don't require an armed professional--and we can use data and predictive analytics to make sure that we are sending a combined team of mental health professionals and police officers to the calls that are most likely to need that combination to reduce harm to individuals in crisis and those around them. The close working relationship between civilian and uniformed professionals will help shift the culture from a "warrior" to "guardian" mindset.

ADAMS: No. That said, I believe that NYPD must be better at understanding these issues and I would work to develop a Crisis Response Team at every precinct, modeled on Seattle's successful program which pairs specially trained officers with mental health professionals to assist in those in need who are experiencing homelessness, substance abuse, and mental or behavioral health crises. I have long said that every officer is not uniquely qualified to respond to each call, much like you wouldn't ask a pediatrician to conduct brain surgery. We need specialized responses with support from health professionals to address these calls and ensure that we are not responding to those experiencing trauma with more trauma and to make certain that we are diverting those with health needs away from the criminal justice system and into programs and services that would assist with their mental and physical health challenges.

YANG: I know that every problem in our City does not require a response from a police officer. However, in situations where someone poses an immediate physical danger to themselves and others, I believe it is appropriate for a police

officer to respond. As much as possible, I would shift responsibility for responding to homelessness, drug use, and mental health issues to non-law enforcement agencies and professionals, particularly when evidence shows that those professionals would be more effective in doing so.

STRINGER: Yes. As described above, I've outlined a detailed blueprint for realigning our public safety with public health and responding to homelessness, mental health crises, substance use, wellness checks, youth at risk of violence, and so many other challenges not with armed police officers but with wraparound services and deep investments in public health interventions.

We have seen the limitations of police reform under the de Blasio administration, leading to calls for defunding and reducing the footprint of police. In New York City, a majority of residents support defunding the police. Do you support limits to the NYPD headcount and are you committed to using hiring freezes and/or lay-offs in order to reduce the NYPD headcount and budget?

WILEY: When I am Mayor, I will run a full audit of the NYPD's budget -- including the out of budget expenses such as settlements -- to assess the facts and make necessary cuts to the department. I strongly believe that we must right-size the NYPD and, yes, that means reducing the number of uniformed officers in the force. First, I have already announced that I will cut future cadet classes by 2,250 cadets in order to fund my Universal Community Care plan. In addition, I will move mental health calls, routine traffic stops and school safety out of the department as well as get rid of the Vice Squad. For years the NYPD has made unsupported statements to defend their budget. This has in part lead to a bureaucracy that is top heavy, with a senior leadership that is bloated and redundant, where too many resources go to funding administrative positions that don't impact the department's ability to respond to and investigate serious crime, illegal guns, and threats of terrorism.

DONOVAN: Crime and violence are caused primarily by cycles of trauma, systemic absence of opportunity, and lack of legitimacy of governing institutions. But for too long, responses have revolved primarily around arrest and prosecution, ignored these driving forces, and made matters worse with heavy-handed, racially-disproportionate enforcement.

By the end of my second year in office, I will invest \$500 million annually in community-focused public safety and racial justice initiatives as the best way to

achieve health and safe communities, primarily by redirecting funds currently allocated to police and corrections. By the end of my first term, I will dedicate roughly \$3 billion or 20% of the city's public safety budget for these efforts, directed to the neighborhoods with the greatest needs and guided by community input. As some initial examples: community-based anti-violence programs, targeted investments in impacted communities and NYCHA developments, services for victims, mental health care, and services and housing vouchers for people leaving jail and prison to end the prison-to-shelter-pipeline.

One of the problems with NYPD spending is that the public has little insight into how the NYPD's massive resources are allocated. Once in office, I will work quickly to identify spending cuts to ensure we appropriately define the scope of the NYPD and reduce the budget accordingly to meet my campaign promise. Limits on hiring will likely be part of that process.

MENCHACA: I support limits to the NYPD headcount and am committed to using hiring freezes and/or lay-offs to reduce the NYPD headcount and budget.

MORALES: Yes, I am willing to halt hiring and have lay-offs as necessary. I do not believe, however, in contributing to the unemployment of NYC residents and would work to ensure a just transition by having programs in place to train police officers for other jobs. I would also enthusiastically spread awareness and advocacy for a Federal Jobs Guarantee bill and actively explore what a municipal version of a jobs guarantee could look like.

GARCIA: I would not reduce patrol strength, however, as I mentioned above, we can find cost savings by reducing inefficiencies and redundancies in every agency- including the NYPD. For example, when I was at DEP, I identified and implemented more than \$100 million in recurring annual savings over four years -- that's nearly 10% of the utility's operating budget. We identified opportunities to right-size maintenance practices, more efficiently deploy field staff and use DEP's buying power to negotiate better rates for products. And all of this work happened in partnership with frontline workers and their union representatives. I don't believe we need to reduce the amount of patrol cops; instead I believe we should be restructuring NYPD so that it is primarily a service for communities, in which they are held accountable for prioritizing community engagement and protection.

I will effectuate real police reform by using my experience managing a uniform agency to hold police officers accountable with clear and consistent

consequences and a zero tolerance policy for depraved acts. I am the only candidate that has both the commitment and the practical experience to reform the NYPD and keep our communities safe. As the leader of a uniform agency with a 98% male force and law enforcement division, I was tough but fair -- and fired Sanitation Workers that crossed the line. That's what accountability looks like. Just like I held Sanitation Workers accountable for showing up on time to work, I will have a zero tolerance policy for police officers that don't follow the law.

ADAMS: I am a strong advocate of strategic civilianization of NYPD units where the existing ratio of police officers is simply not necessary. In general, this would entail an 80/20 split of civilians to police officers going forward in these units. Civilian titles are not only less costly to the City, they largely tend to be held by Black and Brown public servants who live within the five boroughs and thereby contribute more directly to the local economy. These savings would be coupled with a uniform headcount loss via attrition in these civilianizing units.

YANG: The City faces a severe budget crisis and the NYPD will have to share in the burden that other agencies and departments also face. There are meaningful ways to reduce the NYPD's budget without taking away their ability to combat crime or improve their neighborhood policing practices. Real overtime reform is one example. And while New Yorkers and their families who bear the brunt of police misconduct deserve justice, we must ensure that there is more robust external oversight of the NYPD to reduce the hundreds of millions of dollars we spend on civil settlements, which are ultimately paid for by City taxpayers. I would advocate reallocating NYPD funds for non-police functions that evidence shows could be better performed by other non-law enforcement agencies and professionals. Mental health responders and violence interrupters are two examples. Not every problem requires an armed police officer.

STRINGER: The NYPD's uniformed headcount can and should be reduced as we transfer certain responsibilities away from the NYPD. I was the first elected official to come forward with a detailed plan last summer to reduce the NYPD's budget by more than \$1 billion over four years, of which some savings came from suspending new police classes, and as mayor I will build on that. There is no reason why the NYPD should be shielded from hiring freezes imposed on every other City agency.

Over the past 10 years arrests in NYC have decreased considerably, but staffing and resources for prosecutor offices have grown. Will you commit to cutting

funding from prosecutor offices and diverting those resources to housing, services, and care?

WILEY: Yes. I will move resources from the NYPD and the Department of Correction to support caregivers and provide other social services through my New Deal New York plan. Our budget must ensure that all New Yorkers are safe -- safe from violence and from over-policing and incarceration. Just as I will audit the NYPD budget, I will take a hard look at what we are spending on District Attorney's offices. We must stop criminalizing poverty and prioritize spending in a way that ensures public safety and quality of life in a structural way by preventing the scenarios that lead to crime to begin with. And let's not forget that our public defender and civil legal services providers are chronically underfunded- a related issue that deserves our attention.

DONOVAN: I have set specific targets for redirecting funds currently devoted to law enforcement towards community resources for housing, services, and care (see above). One of the fundamental principles of my approach is to reduce the number of people entering the system and reduce the amount of time that people spend once in the system, to reduce the footprint of the criminal legal system from beginning to end. As part of achieving these goals, my administration will look comprehensively at all law enforcement spending, including the district attorney budgets, which are around 4% of the City's total law enforcement budget, while recognizing that reducing DA budgets without a comprehensive evaluation and plan could lead to case delays and slower discovery, with the unintended side effect of keeping people stuck in jail for longer.

MENCHACA: Yes, I will commit to diverting funding from prosecutor offices and reinvesting those resources in housing, service, and care.

MORALES: Yes, I believe that prosecutor offices should be part of the divestment process, as they are a part of an unjust and inequitable carceral system. There are far too many cases of people being held on Rikers Island because they cannot afford to pay bail for misdemeanor charges. This unjust practice leads to mental, economic, familial, and bodily harm, and even death - as was the case for Layleen Polanco Xtravaganza and Kalief Browder. Part of my decarceration plan for NYC includes pushing District Attorneys to vacate and decline to prosecute offenses, and reducing the number of people subjected to pretrial detention by 80% immediately. Prosecutor offices are an arm of the

discriminatory system and must be addressed alongside the demilitarization and defunding of the NYPD.

GARCIA: We need to cut excess costs in the City's operations across the board in order to find more money for the resources and services New Yorkers truly need. When I was at DEP, I was able to identify millions of dollars in savings, and as Mayor, I would take this approach to the entire City budget.

ADAMS: No, in order to have a fully functional criminal legal system our prosecutors need resources to ensure that justice is met for victims and that the laws put in place by our representative government are fairly enforced.

YANG: Our money should be invested in services that lift up New Yorkers. As mayor, I will look to reallocate funding towards housing, mental health and other supportive services, and other programs that improve the lives of New Yorkers.

STRINGER: Yes.

In 1971 President Nixon launched his infamous "War on Drugs." That same year New York City became the only city in the nation to create a Special Narcotics Prosecutor responsible for felony narcotics investigations and prosecutions. Despite growing recognition of that Drug War policies have driven mass incarceration and mass death - by promoting criminalization over public health and care - New York City continues to be the only city in the nation to have and fund an Office of Special Narcotics. Do you support eliminating the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor?

WILEY: Yes, part of recovering from the "War on Drugs" means doing away with its attendant systems of power, which includes the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor.

DONOVAN: The SNP was created by state executive order fifty years ago. It is fair to say that times have changed, particularly in how society has increasingly recognized that drug use is best addressed as a public health challenge. As Mayor, I would not oppose elimination of the SNP as consistent with that approach.

MENCHACA: Yes, I support eliminating the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor.

MORALES: Yes, I support the elimination of the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. We must decriminalize drug offenses, and instead get to the root issues and ensure that people have their basic needs met. This is a part of my philosophy on enacting a transformative justice model, as opposed to the current carceral system, which only disappears people - not social problems. I also believe that the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor holds too much unchecked power, as it is a state level position which overrides the City's jurisdiction, but does not apply to the rest of the state. Eliminating this office is a key part of fighting mass incarceration in our city.

GARCIA: I would support a review of the effectiveness of this office to determine whether it is necessary, and whether its goals may be accomplished through other means.

ADAMS: No

YANG: Yes, I support eliminating the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor.

STRINGER: Yes.

For decades Rikers Island -- the largest penal colony in the US -- has been a stain on the moral fabric of our City. Many campaigns have risen up to close Rikers Island once and for all. While the City Council ostensibly voted to close Rikers Island last fall, that decision is not binding and has been pushed almost 10 years down the road. Do you support the closure of Rikers Island? On what timeline?

WILEY: Closing Rikers Island is a moral imperative. Rikers Island has long been a disgrace to New York City and closing it needs to happen as soon as possible. I support the Close Rikers plan and the recently passed Renewable Rikers bill.

To decarcerate NYC, I will ensure that the NYPD polices crime, not poverty. We need to ensure that if the NYPD receives a call about a poverty problem, the right city agencies are involved and the NYPD is not. This will significantly cut down on incarceration, as will expanded alternatives to incarceration and re-entry programs.

As Mayor, rather than investing in prisons, I will invest in what keeps our communities safe like youth programs, job and workforce creation and other community-sourced safety initiatives. The Gun Violence Prevention Plan that I released in November is an example of this approach. This plan is entirely

focused on investing in the programs that actually keep our communities safe, including the creation of an \$18million Participatory Justice program that will give communities the resources they need to decide what and how they want to invest in their neighborhoods.

DONOVAN: Yes, our approach to incarceration will be based on two premises. First, the system of incarceration that we have is closely linked to racial injustice in our society, including the decades-long legacy of disinvestment and discrimination in these same neighborhoods. The numbers are shameful and staggering: 90% of the people at Rikers today are Black or Latinx.

Second, incarceration should be reserved only for the most necessary cases. Putting people in jail can do serious harm to them and their families and communities and is often counterproductive. Removing people from their lives, work, educational opportunities, and family and subjecting them to the chaos and brutality of Rikers usually only worsens the problems that led them into trouble in the first place.

We will focus on ensuring that jail is used only as a last resort, in situations where there are no other alternatives. We know from experience over the past two decades that we can do this and keep the City safe. We will invest in communities and programs to prevent violence and instability, work with the DAs and courts so that only the most serious cases result in incarceration, and build mental health resources and capacity so that we stop using our jails as a warehouse for impoverished people with mental illness. We will advocate for policies in Albany that advance these priorities, including parole reform so that people are no longer jailed for allegations of non-criminal, technical violations of parole rules.

For those who are incarcerated, we will recognize that nearly everyone who is locked up, even those accused of the most serious charges, will ultimately return to their communities. To this end, we will stop solitary confinement and reorient the culture and operations of our jails. We will be committed to the safety, health, and welfare of the staff and people who are confined in jail.

Removing all incarcerated people from Rikers Island before the end of 2027 will be a high priority, because the location and condition of the jails there contributes to the dysfunction, inhumanity, and incredible costs of today's jail system—nearly \$500,000 per incarcerated person per year. Closing Rikers is the only acceptable path forward for our city and a smaller, more humane, more accessible, more

accountable jail system will ultimately save lives, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars each year, if not more, that will be reinvested in communities.

MENCHACA: I support the closure of Rikers Island and will do so during my first 100 days in office.

MORALES: I will work to close Rikers as soon as possible. To start this process, I will establish a bail voucher program to decrease the number of people who are awaiting trial in jail. I will also reject any plan to build new jails to replace Rikers. We must reduce the number of people we incarcerate, not build “better” jails to detain them.

GARCIA: I support closing Rikers Island as quickly as possible. Additionally, I support the Renewable Rikers plan to develop infrastructure for renewable energy, composting and wastewater treatment, and investments in renewables will allow us to shutter dirty peaker plants in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx.

ADAMS: I have supported the closing of Rikers Island on the original timeline and support the concept of community based facilities that allow families to be closer to those that are incarcerated. That said, we have not done enough to avoid incarceration to begin with, the pipeline to Rikers itself. I have called for fully funding Fair Futures programming to provide those young people aging out of the foster care system with mentors to assist in their transition into adulthood. Studies suggest that up to 40 percent of prison populations are dyslexic which is why I have called for universal dyslexia screening to ensure earlier intervention in the education system. But we must do even more at an earlier age which is why I support universal doula for families and resources to assist new families as they navigate early childhood and their children’s education career.

YANG: The City has made tremendous strides in expanding alternatives to incarceration and real rehabilitation for people who become involved in the criminal legal system. I am committed to closing Rikers Island and want to set a realistic timeline for doing so with the organizations at the forefront of reform, criminal justice experts who led the clarion call of the Lippman Commission, and people who have experienced the horrors of Rikers firsthand. I will also expand alternative and rehabilitative programs.

STRINGER: I have visited Rikers Island and, like everyone who passes through those gates, I was appalled by what I witnessed. The experience certainly helped to inform my decision in 2015 to become the first citywide elected official to call

for the shutdown of Rikers Island, a full two years before the mayor finally agreed, and I was proud to work with the Close Rikers Coalition to help force that decision.

Since then, we have not worked hard enough to advance the cause of decarceration. Rikers Island is a stain on this city, and we must move quickly to shut it down. To close its doors for good, we must take a more aggressive approach in reducing the jail population, especially the pretrial population, which has been steadily increasing over the last eight months of this pandemic. That must include ending incarceration for technical parole violations, increasing the use of alternatives to bail like partially secured bonds while fighting for the elimination of the money bail system, and identifying individuals who can serve the remainder of their City sentences at home. It is shameful that in the middle of a pandemic - when three people in DOC custody have already died after contracting COVID-19 - that the number of people in City jails is continuing to climb. While I will continue as Comptroller to call on the Mayor, State, and District Attorneys to release more people, particularly those at serious risk of illness, the DOC is in need of wholesale reform, and as Mayor, I will make this a top priority of my administration.

As Comptroller, I have also worked side-by-side with VOCAL and other partners, including the Brooklyn Community Bail Fund, to research, develop and produce reports on our courts and our exploitative bail system -- one calling for the abolition of commercial bail in the city and another urging the city and state to eliminate criminal justice finances and fees. The bail reform package at the state-level was an important step in the right direction and I was opposed to its rollback. We have criminalized poverty for too long in this nation, and as Mayor I will work to change that.

I have always thought that the City's 10-year timeline to close Rikers was far too elongated, and that we should be moving much faster to eliminate what is effectively an ongoing humanitarian crisis in our city. I have supported calls in the past to get the job done in three years instead of 10, but obviously this administration has failed to move with any real urgency. As Mayor, you can be sure I will expedite the completion of Rikers shut-down to the greatest extent possible. And by advancing a comprehensive set of strategies to decarcerate and fund public health investments, there will be no need for the mammoth new jails proposed by the Mayor.

As part of the City Council vote last year, the body adopted a position of building 4 new borough-based jails. The justification was that these new facilities would facilitate the closure of the 9 jails on Rikers Island. VOCAL-NY did not support the City's plan and we demanded more resources be moved to our communities. We also recognize the on-going need for conditions inside City jails to be improved. Do you support the City's plan to build new borough-based jails? Why or why not? If not, what is your plan to close Rikers and ensure that conditions improve in the meantime?

WILEY: I supported the CloseRikers plan that was passed by the City Council because I believe that it represented the only possible way to ensure Rikers Island is closed and that New Yorkers who are incarcerated can be housed humanely. For those who are still incarcerated, we must make jails humane environments that help rehabilitate individuals and ensure they are ready to re-engage upon release. The current borough jails are not in the condition necessary to provide humane housing options.

I will however do everything in my power to actively reduce the population of incarcerated New Yorkers. To decarcerate NYC, I will ensure that the NYPD polices crime, not poverty. We need to ensure that if the NYPD receives a call about a poverty problem, the right city agencies are involved and the NYPD is not. In addition, I fully support ATI programs and the expansion of rehabilitative services in communities. This will significantly cut down on incarceration, as will expanded alternatives to incarceration and re-entry programs.

As Mayor, rather than investing in incarceration, I will invest in what keeps our communities safe like youth programs, job and workforce creation and other community-sourced safety initiatives. The Gun Violence Prevention Plan that I released in November is an example of this approach. This plan is entirely focused on investing in the programs that actually keep our communities safe, including the creation of an \$18million Participatory Justice program that will give communities the resources they need to decide what and how they want to invest in their neighborhoods.

DONOVAN: I have not seen any convincing proposal for "fixing" jails on Rikers, nor have I seen an actual plan for shutting down Rikers and holding incarcerated people in a way that is safe and humane without rebuilding jail facilities in the boroughs. The reality is that in order to close the seven operating jails on Rikers and the jail boat anchored off Hunts Point, we need to provide alternatives that allow us to hold a limited number of people in jail, and the current borough

facilities do not provide the housing, visiting areas, medical facilities, and space for reentry services. For those reasons, I support rebuilding modernized, more humane borough jails and the formerly incarcerated people, families, and advocates who have fought for a smaller and more just NYC jail system. This plan will reduce the City's overall jail capacity by more than two-thirds and also bring incarcerated people significantly closer to their home communities, making family and attorney visits easier and more accessible, and it will reduce the transportation and climate costs associated with bussing hundreds of incarcerated people to and from courts around the boroughs every day. The plan is not a perfect fix, and my administration will work hard to ensure the culture of the jails and the experience of the staff and people who are incarcerated there never mirrors that of the jails on Rikers. We will also work directly with the communities around the borough facilities, including in lower Manhattan, to minimize the challenges of construction and the impact on the surrounding area.

MENCHACA: In the Council, I voted against the city's borough-based jails plan as it did not guarantee investments in our communities to address poverty and inequality. Instead, it only enriched the developers who will profit in the short-term from constructing the new facilities. I plan on closing Rikers during my first 100 days in office and cancelling Mayor de Blasio's multi-billion dollar jail expansion plan. The funds divested from the construction of the borough jails will go into funding Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs and rehabilitative services and investing in social infrastructure (housing, education, etc.) in the neighborhoods most impacted by incarceration. I will also allocate a portion of the funding to rectifying the inhumane conditions inside our City jails and bolstering the social services available to inmates.

MORALES: I do not support the building of new jails to replace Rikers. Simply warehousing people in a different location does not do anything to end mass incarceration or address the fact that we hold human beings in such conditions to begin with. Issues of overcrowding can be addressed through keeping people out of jail. We will examine the entire criminal code and repeal any laws that reinforce racial targeting by law enforcement. We must end the failed war on drugs and direct and encourage substance users to seek treatment, versus criminalization and stigma. To reduce the number of incarcerated people, I will pursue decriminalization, including for drug users and sex workers. We should pursue restorative means of justice and employ trauma-informed practices, as we move away from a racist and classist culture of criminalization. In the meantime, I will end the inhumane practice of solitary confinement and make sure there is more accountability for violent prison employees. Additionally, I will

further reduce the imprisoned population by heavily pressuring the District Attorneys to end all forms of cash bail.

GARCIA: It is not morally just or sustainable to continue operating the jails on Rikers Island. My Administration would do everything in our power to close the jails as quickly as possible and launch a plan to get us to a Renewable Rikers.

But VOCAL-NY is right, the City needs to dramatically improve upon the plan for the new jails. As proposed, the borough-based jails are far too large to adequately serve each detainee. We need to identify ways to decrease the jail population, including ending the practice of detaining technical parole violators and identifying detainees who may be better served by clinical settings. The facilities should be fully integrated into communities, and detainees and their families should have access to wraparound support services.

We still need to improve conditions on Rikers in the interim. That means reducing the population, and increasing release services.

The first place we can prevent New Yorkers from being entangled in the criminal justice system is at school. We must make more efforts to set students of color up for success. That means hiring more teachers of color, shifting resources from administrative costs to the classroom, and connecting youth in underserved areas with paid internships that lead into permanent, good jobs. For youth that become justice involved, we must invest more in programs such as Friends of Island Academy, which provides pre and post release care for youth and works to reduce the likelihood of justice involvement by connecting them with daily needs services such as school, housing and mentorship.

For older adults that are justice involved, I would work through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice to them at multiple points to connect them with resources: at release, at application of social services, and maintain sustained contact after release. Every District Attorney's office has an alternative to incarceration unit. We need support and defer people to substance abuse, job training, or community service programs. AmADAMSa Works is an excellent full service model that trains and places people with employment.

ADAMS: In my official role in the ULURP process I voted down the city's proposal to close Rikers Island and build a borough-based jail in Downtown Brooklyn, not because I didn't believe that Rikers needs to close, but because of the size of the proposed new facility. I support the creation of a borough-based

jail system as a way to close Rikers but more importantly to ensure that those in the penal system are closer to their families and networks of support. Until the time that Rikers closes, we must ensure that those that are incarcerated are treated humanely and protected from COVID. It's one reason that my office is in the process of delivering PPE to inmates. I also strongly believe we need to improve the nutritional quality of meals served in our jails, and institute other programmatic efforts that advance the physical and psychological wellbeing of those in our jail system.

YANG: We must continue the work advocates and families of loved ones who fared the worst at Rikers to shut down the island. I will work with the City, advocates, families and people who have been held at Rikers to put forth a timeline that we can stick to without delay.

STRINGER: Building bigger and bigger jails—instead of investing in communities—is a backwards, self-fulfilling prophecy and it's time for a fresh approach in New York that modernizes our corrections system to get more people out of prison and back home. Incarceration can no longer be our answer to poverty, substance use, mental health, and homelessness.

To close Rikers the right way, I believe we need alternative facilities with reduced capacity — but nothing like what the Mayor has proposed. The Mayor's jails plan has been a failure of community engagement and does not reflect the direction our criminal legal system should be heading in. For this reason, I have significant concerns and believe the plan should be revisited with an eye toward reducing its scale. Right now, that means minimizing the Rikers' population by limiting pretrial detention, ending criminalization of poverty, and investing in the services that create stable communities.

This can be achieved by eliminating criminal penalties and enforcement for a number of offenses that pose no threat to community safety, granting amnesty for open arrest warrants for low-level offenses, and ending incarceration for unpaid court debt, among other strategies. Decarceration should also be advanced by dramatically improving re-entry services, creating more supportive housing, reforming parole, and ending incarceration for technical parole violations.

In the immediate term, the City must do more to protect those detained and working on Rikers Island, as I wrote to the mayor last spring. That means providing access to PPE, ensuring those in custody are able to see their loved

ones and that programming resumes safely, and providing commissary items at no or reduced cost.

HIV/AIDS

Research finds that the fastest rising number and proportion of HIV cases are among young gay and bisexual men of color and transgender women. Although this trend is particularly concentrated among black and Latino youth, research indicates that differences in risk behaviors like unprotected sex or drug and alcohol use do not explain racial disparities in HIV infections. Will you continue to support NYC's effort to end AIDS as an epidemic, including increasing funding to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to fund targeted interventions to communities at high-risk due to historic divestment?

WILEY: Yes, communities that are experiencing more HIV cases should have the programs and services they need to provide culturally relevant education, interventions and the services they need to address the rising incidence rate. Too many of our communities receive little or no sexual health services, and those services that do exist often do not provide targeted resources for LGBTQ+ populations.

DONOVAN: Yes! First, we will enhance community-based education and outreach programs. These will be focused on the highest-need communities that are without other forms of support and where the disease is prevalent. We will also expand access to PrEP and PEP to reduce the spread of new infections.

MENCHACA: Yes, I will continue to support NYC's efforts to end the AIDS epidemic, including increasing funding to the DOHMH to fund targeted interventions to communities at high-rise due to historic divestment.

MORALES: I believe the most impactful and effective way to target this issue is to follow the lead of impacted community members. In my role as Mayor, I would ensure that intervention resources are fully funded and accessible, and I would work with the community leaders to disseminate the information. By fully funding DOHMH, my administration will create easily accessible affirming healthcare, mental health, housing, and job training services. Specifically, I have committed to fully funding public hospitals in order to increase access to preventative care

and inclusive practices that understand and respond to the specific needs and life experiences of communities served. Integrating a culture of healthcare as social transformation will be critical in helping us end HIV/AIDS.

GARCIA: Yes, it is critical that we fund interventions to end the epidemic, with a specific focus on populations that have faced historic racism and disinvestment. In particular, we should fund our nonprofits and local organizations that New Yorkers trust to support this work, in order to ensure that we are reaching communities with appropriate cultural and linguistic sensitivity.

ADAMS: Yes, and I support clubhouse models such as Fountain House. While they are focused on mental health issues, that sort of supportive atmosphere with appropriate medical resources would be the ideal setting to replicate for New Yorkers living with HIV.

YANG: Yes, my administration will strongly support NYC's efforts to end the AIDS epidemic. Immense scientific progress has been made since the height of NYC's epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s. Current antiretroviral therapies are successful for most individuals with HIV, and my administration will ensure that they are affordable and accessible for all New Yorkers who need them. AIDS is also a preventable illness. We will also ensure that all New Yorkers who want pre- or post-exposure prophylaxis are able to access it affordably. Focusing on increased access is particularly important for historically-underinsured populations such as undocumented immigrants and young, LGBTQ individuals.

We must also increase the quality of care provided; we know that low-income and uninsured patients are more likely to experience harsh or abusive language when seeking health care. My administration will expand NYC Health + Hospitals' Pride Centers and continue to support related training and education across our City health care system. My goal is to make New York City Health + Hospitals the most trusted hospital system in the country.

STRINGER: Yes. Many communities have virtually no sexual health services, especially low-income communities of color. As Mayor, I will make sure that DOHMH is increasing outreach to LGBTQ+ New Yorkers in the communities in which they live to ensure access to information about safe sex practices, the breadth of sexual health services, the availability of preventive measures against HIV, transgender health care services, mental health services for LGBTQ+ people, and other issues.

Housing status is one of the strongest determinants of access to HIV care, retention in treatment, viral load suppression, and mortality. In 2016, thanks to a change in state regulations, New York City became the first jurisdiction in the world to guarantee shelter and housing assistance to homeless people living with HIV. Despite NYC's robust non-profit housing providers, many poor New Yorkers living with HIV are still forced into medically inappropriate "commercial" SROs (Single Room Occupancy) hotels. Would you support ending NYC's use of commercial SROs and guaranteeing access to non-profit managed transitional or supportive housing?

WILEY: Yes. Supportive housing is not a one-size fits all solution and New Yorkers living with HIV or AIDS often have specific needs. We need to ensure that the supportive housing we provide as a city is safe and meets the needs of all residents, including those living with HIV and AIDS. This means adding appropriate and adequate wrap around services, which non-profit providers have experience in providing.

DONOVAN: Yes, see answer to question 3 in the Housing section.

MENCHACA: Yes, I support ending the city's use of commercial SROs and guaranteeing access to non-profit managed transitional or supportive housing.

MORALES: To advance the health and wellbeing of our city, we must improve the resources that are available to people living with HIV/AIDS. We know that people living with HIV/AIDS are often discriminated against, and are marginalized for other aspects of their identities. My housing for all initiative has an emphasis on housing with dignity and safety - not just four walls and a roof. There cannot be a one size fits all approach to the solution to sufficient housing. In this case, I would support the ending of the use of commercial SROs. I would approach this issue by having the community that this affects at the forefront of the conversation to help guide my plan.

GARCIA: All of our housing needs to be safe and healthy for residents. Single-adult households constitute approximately one-third of households in New York City. We need to legalize basement apartments and accessory dwelling units in order to dramatically expand the available options and ensure we have a

safe, sustainable and efficient means of providing housing. In addition, housing for our most vulnerable New Yorkers must include on site wraparound services.

ADAMS: Yes. We must do more to educate and destigmatize the conversation around HIV/AIDS in Black and Brown communities. This includes making PrEP very accessible to these at risk communities and funding their trusted community groups to lead education and individualized peer-to-peer support. Funding is also needed to provide public and mental health interventions for at-risk communities. This must include support for those survivors of violence that have been victimized due to their gender identity, sexual orientation, and positive status.

YANG: I believe housing all homeless New Yorkers- including those living with HIV- must be a priority and that we should expand the housing stock and supportive services to do this. SROs, when used appropriately, especially in a supportive housing environment can be beneficial, so I would want all options on the table offered to each person based on their individual needs.

STRINGER: Yes. I have long been a champion of dedicated housing for those living with HIV. It's one reason why, as Comptroller, I chose to audit the city's HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) housing. What we found was not encouraging -- incomplete inspections, a lack of fiscal accountability, an inaccurate and unreliable inspections database -- but I was pleased that HRA Commissioner Steve Banks stood with us in releasing the audit and committed to fixing what was broken. As Mayor, I would make sure that individuals living with HIV would have the housing and supports they need to lead healthy, independent lives.

Caring and Compassionate New Deal

Do you think New York City has adequate access to services for people struggling with drug use, mental health issues, homelessness, incarceration or extreme poverty? What does New York City need to adequately address these issues?

WILEY: No. The City has approached these issues from a punitive, rather than problem oriented standpoint, which has left marginalized communities with disproportionate mortality, incarceration, and homelessness rates. As Mayor, I will reorient our approach to each of these issues, and provide support, rather than punishment, to struggling New Yorkers. This is evidenced in my Universal Community Care platform, which proposes a care income of \$5,000 annually to

100,000 of the most high need families to use toward caregiving expenses, recognizing that poor families are being criminalized for poverty, resulting in child welfare interventions that separate children from their parents.

DONOVAN: No. I have several plans that address these issues. From working to create more supportive housing, to providing an apprenticeship program for students, to investing directly in neighborhoods that have been historically forgotten, we will work to lift up those currently in poverty and prevent more families from entering poverty.

In terms of extreme poverty, apart from creating 500,000 jobs, I have developed an innovative Equity Bonds Proposal. Generational wealth disparities play a fundamental role in systemic inequality, and as such, any efforts to mitigate those inequalities need to focus on closing the gap in wealth. Shaun has put forth an ambitious plan to do this at a massive scale through his Equity Bonds Plan, which would provide \$1,000 to every child in New York City, followed by up to an annual \$2,000 for each year until they turn 18, with payments scaled based on family income.

What this means is that a child born in poverty under this program will have roughly \$50,000 waiting for them when they graduate high school. We know that this money can change the economic trajectory of an entire family over generations—a college education, home ownership, opening a business, erasing debt—and that can transform our children’s lives and turbo charge the recovery and development of our city.

You can read more about all of my policy plans at <http://shaunfornyc.com>

MENCHACA: The city does not provide adequate access to services for individuals struggling with drug use, mental health issues, homelessness, poverty, and incarceration. What the city must do to rectify this includes the following:

1. Fund a robust mental health program in the city’s public school system, including wrap-around services for students with severe behavioral issues.
2. Increase the capacity of critical care and long-term care in the H+H network while also fully funding through the DOHMH the incredibly successful Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) Teams.

3. Tackle the crippling high turnover rate at our mental health institutions, which leaves significant vacancies.
4. Build a free/affordable health insurance program that will allow uninsured New Yorkers to access all of the mental health and substance abuse services available in the city. While universal health care is in development, we must fully fund programs like NYC Care.
5. Standardize the housing resources available in the city's various shelter systems and allow homeless individuals and families to access rental assistance immediately.
6. Construct 100% affordable housing that has an AMI inclusive of the city's lowest earners.
7. Fund more Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs and rehabilitative services.
8. Launch a universal basic income (UBI) pilot program, which would give \$1000 per month to all New Yorkers (regardless of immigration status) over 21 who live at or below the federal poverty level.
9. Support the community partners and organizations who are essential agents in facilitating access for all New Yorkers to city services.

MORALES: I think that New York has drastically underserved those grappling with drug use, mental illness, homelessness, incarceration, and/or extreme poverty. There are many steps that we need to take to strengthen our city's social safety net - without investing in structures of policing and incarceration. This means investing heavily in establishing new supportive housing developments for those who are coping with the often traumatizing impacts of drug use, mental illness, homelessness, incarceration, and extreme poverty. New York can better serve these vulnerable populations through initiatives that pair supportive housing with wraparound services such as educational programs, childcare services, on-site job training, mental health/substance abuse treatment, and re-entry services for those who are returning from incarceration. These programs will bolster our safety net and protect our vulnerable neighbors by connecting them directly with housing and the basic social services they need to survive and thrive in our city.

For many people struggling in our city, finding high quality and gainful employment can also be a serious challenge, especially for those who have previously been incarcerated. Instead of investing so heavily in the police state, we must invest in jobs for all people, including those with a criminal history. The city must create thousands of union jobs with low barriers to entry so that those who are coming out of incarceration or living in extreme poverty have access to high quality employment that will allow them to support themselves and their families.

Additionally, we need to fund programs such as safe injection sites in New York City to help those who use drugs do so safely without the threat of being brutalized, arrested, or attacked by the police. Safe injection sites will help reduce the rates of serious overdoses, while also ensuring that Black and brown drug users do not continue to suffer disproportionately at the hands of the state and can live to treat their addiction.

GARCIA: While New York City has many programs to address these challenges, they aren't going far enough and they are too disparate and inaccessible. As Mayor, I would evaluate existing programs to see what's working and what isn't, and I would invest in the programs that we know successfully serve these populations.

In general, we need to improve and streamline the way New Yorkers can access services. New Yorkers should not have to wrangle bureaucracy to benefit from the programs designed for them. For New Yorkers who need to access services, they need a one stop shop where they can get all the support they need.

ADAMS: No, they do not have adequate access. It is a full-time job to be poor in New York; families in need have to spend hours dealing with multiple agencies, all just to prove again and again that they deserve benefits. Billions of dollars in vital services that New Yorkers need desperately right now is being left on the table simply because the system for accessing them is too complicated and too time-consuming. Government inefficiency is the dumbest and most unacceptable reason for failing New Yorkers in need during a dual health and economic crisis. My MyCity plan will connect New Yorkers to the services they qualify for by utilizing technology and prioritizing service delivery by bringing these benefits directly to the communities that need them, rather than waiting for New Yorkers to come to the City. With MyCity, creating one online portal with a universal

application and verification process so that New Yorkers can qualify for multiple benefits simultaneously, we would combine all City agencies' data onto one universal platform so that any agency can assist any New Yorker with any benefit; bring the City to the community by equipping City workers with computer tablets that are connected to the City's unified digital platform and sending them into the areas with the greatest need for City services, setting up shop in open storefronts, NYCHA complexes and even parks, and coordinate the delivery of services such as food, health, employment, housing, and public assistance across both government agencies and non-profit groups through real-time reporting and a unified dashboard.

YANG: It is clear that New York City is not providing adequate services to those who are struggling the most in our City. One immediate and tangible solution I will implement to get the boot off of struggling New Yorkers' necks is the largest basic income program in the country to provide direct cash relief to 500,000 New Yorkers. Additionally, in a City as wealthy as New York, it is unacceptable that between 50,000 - 60,000 New Yorkers live in the shelter system with no clear pathway to permanent, affordable housing. Our city spends tens of thousands of dollars to house people in shelter per year, rather than investing in the permanent, affordable housing that New Yorkers truly need. A Yang administration will ensure that there is a clear pathway to permanent affordable housing for New Yorkers who are currently living in shelter, with the access to the services that residents need within reach and will make the expansion of our affordable housing stock a priority.

STRINGER: Absolutely not. As I've laid out above, we as a City must invest across the board in supports that New Yorkers need to overcome challenges of substance use, mental health, homelessness, incarceration and poverty with short and long-term solutions. For example, expanding drop-in centers for New Yorkers outside the shelter system, to creating more Safe Haven and community-based drug treatment facilities, to supportive housing, employment, and behavioral health investments. On a fundamental level, we cannot continue to shuttle New Yorkers between prisons, shelters, and hospitals — and must take measures, as outlined, to break the cycles of poverty, incarceration, and health care.

Police, criminalization, and mass incarceration have been the tool to address everything from violent crime to "quality of life" offenses. Yet we continue to have historically high overdose deaths, homelessness, and fluctuations in shootings and violent crime have long shown to be uncorrelated to changes in policing.

How do we reinvest resources and realign government to truly address these deep-seeded problems of poverty, while also improving the lives of all New Yorkers, primarily those in Black and Latinx communities?

WILEY: As Mayor I will rightsize the NYPD, and stop the policing of poverty that has been so destructive to our low-income communities and communities of color. The NYPD has an annual budget of \$6 billion, bigger than that of the Departments of Health, Homeless Services, Housing Preservation and Development, and Youth and Community Development combined. The city budget is a moral document, and in a moment of economic crisis, we need to ensure that we are spending our resources on investing in communities.

DONOVAN: A budget doesn't just decide where money goes - it is a statement of values for the city and the administration. We will invest in equitable change through a city budget which reflects our values as New Yorkers and applying a racial equity lens to designing, planning, and delivering equitable resources allocations that alleviate burdens on communities of color.

For example, by the end of my second year in office, I will invest \$500 million annually in community-focused public safety and racial justice initiatives, primarily by redirecting funds currently allocated to law enforcement and corrections. We will dedicate roughly \$3 billion or 20% of the city's public safety budget for these efforts by the end of his first term, directed to the neighborhoods with the greatest needs and guided by community input.

MENCHACA: To address the deep-seated issues of poverty and improve the lives of all New Yorkers, the city government must prioritize funding and expanding the social services that will bring equality and equity to New York and allow its diverse communities to prosper. We must abandon a carceral approach to justice, divest from the NYPD and the Department of Corrections, and reinvest those funds in services such as a UBI, non-police solutions, universal health insurance, etc. To make our city a safer and fairer place to live, we must invest in more social infrastructure, not increase the police presence in communities of color or build more jails.

MORALES: My mayoral campaign is centered around principles of defunding the police and funding the people, as I believe that incarceration is not the solution to the challenges we face. To solve the "quality of life issues" that our city faces, we will fight to defund the police by \$3 billion and reallocate those funds to community resources like housing, healthcare, workforce development, violence

prevention programming, and education. These resources help our communities thrive and will do more to actually develop public safety than policing ever will.

GARCIA: My fundamental approach will be to dedicate resources equitably to ensure that all communities receive the best quality services--that means allocating resources to better serve neighborhoods that have been historically underserved. Racial equity must be a part of every single policy proposal--from education, police reform and housing to transportation, climate and even governance. As an adopted woman growing up in a multi-racial household, I didn't have to look farther than the dinner table to understand that diversity makes us stronger. I took that experience with me throughout my public service career. I was proud to fight for environmental justice solutions for waste infrastructure at DSNY and change the promotion process to ensure a more level playing field. But it's not just about recruiting--it's about listening to and valuing the experiences of everyone at the table--and reflecting a commitment to racial equity in our budget, policies, and governance.

ADAMS: I believe in the civilianization of certain functions within the NYPD and conducting forensic audits in order to save significant sums of funding to be reinvested into upstream programs like Fair Futures and universal dyslexia screening.

YANG: I will be New York City's anti-poverty mayor, and invest in programs that meaningfully and directly lift people out of poverty, which is at the heart of so much pain and suffering in New York's Black and Brown communities. In New York City, poverty is an issue that overwhelmingly impacts communities of color, above and beyond our City's white residents. As an anti-poverty Mayor, I will bring a strong and principled racial justice lens to governing. New York City also has a rich history of activism in New York City led by people of color who have been most directly impacted by poverty and its many tentacles. I will lean on that history, and build relationships with activists and organizations like VOCAL-NY that have been in this fight for the long haul to address these deep, deep problems.

STRINGER: In addition to the proposals outlined earlier, as Mayor, I'll move an anti-poverty agenda forward with major investments in truly affordable housing, workforce development, improving our healthcare and transportation networks, and investing in child care.

Revenue

The vast majority of progressive tax policies can only be enacted at the state level. Despite this reality, what role do you think the New York City Mayor should play in winning critical revenue through progressive tax policies in Albany? What actions would you take if elected, to support this state-level fight?

WILEY: I was proud to be the first candidate for Mayor to endorse Invest in Our NY. NYC is a city of assets. Some people have resources and others have ideas and grit. To recover from COVID we must look to New Yorkers and ask them all to contribute what they can. That means that we must raise taxes on the wealthiest among us. I support expanded revenue options such as a millionaires tax, stock-transfer tax, a wealth tax, and vacancy tax on commercial properties. These are taxes that will be resolved in Albany, but there is a new progressive wind in our capitol so the chance to pass these types of taxes has never been higher.

Coalitions like Invest In Our New York are leading the charge on ending tax breaks for the wealthiest New Yorkers, and ensuring revenue benefits the most vulnerable among us. I look forward to partnering with them to ensure an equitable economic recovery, in addition to the economic reforms already laid out in my New Deal New York plan.

I will also partner with our delegation in Albany. When I was in City Hall, I saw ego get in the way of progress for our people. I saw a failure of partnership both with our state electeds, as well as with our communities and stakeholders. I witnessed first hand how the politics of personality and power would get in the way of ensuring that our people got the support and services that they needed from the government. When I am Mayor, I will not repeat the mistakes of the past. I will proactively partner with the New York City delegations in the Assembly and Senate to develop the priorities for the City and partner with them on a plan of action to make those priorities become a reality. I will also build coalitions with stakeholders within the City who are aligned with our priorities so that there is a united front pushing for the City's need in Albany. I will also not let personality politics get in the way of progress. I will lead with clear principles and work with anyone who will work with me to turn those principles into reality. I will not let petty disagreements get in the way of getting results. Personality does not put food on the table -- principled leadership and real partnership will.

DONOVAN: As the former Budget Director during the Obama administration, I know the mechanisms that go into budget discussion. I look forward to working

with organizations like yours as we advocate on the state level on behalf of progressive tax policies that help allocate funds and resources to our communities and residents.

MENCHACA: As the leader of a city where around 1/3 of its residents live in poverty and cannot afford necessities—let alone pay taxes—the Mayor of New York City must be a strong proponent for progressive tax policies at the state level. If elected, I will collaborate with state legislators to develop and advocate for pro-progressive tax legislation that eases the financial burden of over-taxation from the city's neediest.

MORALES: I am inspired by the organizing work that has been done through the Invest in Our NY coalition. I am proud to have rallied alongside members of the Invest in Our NY coalition such as Make the Road NY to fund excluded workers who have been left out of our state's unemployment system. In the post-COVID19 era, our city's recovery is dependent on our ability to raise revenues for vital services like New York City Health and Hospitals. The Mayor of New York can (and must) act as a high profile advocate for taxing the wealthy, and must be willing to use political will to push Albany to make the wealthy pay their fair share. As Mayor, I will stand staunchly in support of taxing the wealthy, and will go up to Albany with my neighbors to fight to make the affluent pay their share so that working class New Yorkers can access the services they need and deserve.

GARCIA: I will review each of the proposals on the table to raise revenue and will work with State colleagues to push for the ones that make sense, including the stock transfer tax. However, I believe that we first need the tax base to stabilize before raising taxes. We've seen this year that high earners in white collar jobs have the ability to work remotely and are highly mobile. We can't afford to lose the tax revenue and need to invest in building communities that are multicultural and diverse in economic status. The key to our recovery is to provide the necessary support and day to day quality of life investments—clean parks, safe transit, reliable childcare, access to fresh healthy foods—that allow all New Yorkers to thrive.

My priorities to restore our economic health will be refinancing the debt, working with unions to find productivity savings, and reducing redundancy that has proliferated under the current admin (ie: we don't need a Chief Technology Officer, Chief Cybersecurity Officer, DOITT Commissioner etc).

I will also work with Albany to make sure tenants as well as small landlords who both need real and urgent economic relief in the next year so come out whole. Our partners in the state legislature must work on a long term solution that stabilizes housing and resets debts once our economy is back up and running.

ADAMS: New York City elected officials, especially the Mayor, have an obligation to fight for New York City's fair share of resources. In order to do this, it is imperative that any advocacy strategy incorporate a broad-based coalition of elected officials and constituents to present the most effective message. This, however, is simply the short-term solution. New York City must eventually be able to enact its own tax policies. The economic situation that gave New York State oversight of New York City's tax decisions has come and gone. It's time for New York City to be given the full power to enact its own tax policies.

YANG: If elected mayor, my goal will be equity and a higher quality of living for New Yorkers across the income distribution. The first proposal announced by my campaign was a guaranteed minimum income to get all New Yorkers to at least 50% of the poverty threshold. This is not a destination, but an important first step to a New York in which all constituents can thrive. I have also proposed a People's Bank to increase access to checking accounts and financial services for the unbanked and underbanked and to help make small business loans available in underserved communities.

I am focused on equitable vaccine distribution and health equity broadly, as well as making sure low income students have bridge programs to catch up after this devastating year and, going forward, have access to critical internet infrastructure to be productive at home. At the same time, I'm realistic that what pays for all these programs is a large and growing economy. I will consider a range of revenue generating measures, including supporting a pied-a-terre tax, eliminating the Madison Square Garden tax exemption and that of other major nonprofit institutions that depend on City services, as well as a retail vacancy tax.

My campaign is also looking at other proposals, including a vacant land tax that would raise revenue while incentivizing the construction of more desperately needed housing. In all these questions, my primary focus is building a fairer, more equitable City and also being sensitive that policy design on these matters is critical to make sure new revenue generators actually increase revenue for City programs when taking account of their economic impact.

STRINGER: During the pandemic, I stood up to reject the false choice of cutting programs for vulnerable New Yorkers, especially children, or laying off 22,000 workers. The budget is now balanced without any layoffs, but we need more revenues to support much-needed investments in a more equitable society. As I have often said, we can't reopen the economy the same way we closed it. The pandemic laid bare systemic inequities in our society that we must address. We need massive amounts of help to support not just the city's ongoing COVID-19 response, but for transportation, public housing, education, health care, child care and paid family leave, affordable housing and more, and as mayor I will continue to fight for every dollar.

We cannot afford to impose the immense costs of austerity onto the working people that most need government services and support to survive. As Comptroller, I've called on Albany to pass legislation that asks the wealthiest among us to pay more to avert cuts to vital programs and to build out a more sustainable economy that lifts up working families and communities of color.

As Mayor, I'll work with a board coalition of progressive legislators to get it done — from the Invest in Our New York Act, to the payroll tax on the largest companies I've proposed with Sen. Jessica Ramos and others to raise revenues for universal affordable child care.

With the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, and with our victories in Georgia to seize control of the U.S. Senate and Sen. Schumer elevated to majority leader, I am also actually more optimistic than I have been in years that the federal government will become a real partner in our recovery as a city. That's why I recently wrote to President Biden and our Congressional leaders, detailing the many fiscal needs of the city and how important it is for Washington, D.C. to step up and help New York City, which despite the devastation of COVID remains the economic engine of the nation.