

# Democratic Rural Conference of New York State

## DRAFT 2022 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE

CANDIDATE'S NAME and ADDRESS:

Position for which you are a candidate: **Lieutenant Governor of New York**

Candidate's Address for All DRC Correspondence: 73 Cambridge Place, #3, Brooklyn, NY 11238

Telephone: 5166987157

Cell Phone: 9173305337

Fax:

E-mail: [ama@anamariaforny.com](mailto:ama@anamariaforny.com)

THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE POSTED ON THE DRC WEB SITE.

Name, cell phone number and e-mail address for the person on your staff who will be your liaison with the DRC. Sasha Ahuja, [sasha@anamariaforny.org](mailto:sasha@anamariaforny.org), 516-698-7157

List your qualifications for this office including but not limited to other offices you have held, educational background, etc.

I was the co-founder of Make the Road New York, one of the largest people's organizations in the state, with offices in New York City and Long Island and an ambitious agenda to serve working families across the state. I was also the co-Executive Director of the Center for Popular Democracy, where I helped steer a national network of community organizations fighting for working families across the country.

**Please address these questions, but make your answers brief so the entire questionnaire does not exceed 4 pages.**

1. **ABILITY TO LEAD THE ENTIRE STATE** – What contact and experiences have you had with parts of the state, other than where you currently reside, which demonstrate your recognition of the geographic, demographic and economic diversity of the state and your ability to provide leadership on behalf of all New Yorkers?

I have spent my entire adult life in New York and for the past two decades I have been a leader across the state in the fight for immigrant rights, worker justice, LGBTQ rights, and women's rights. I co-founded and led several grassroots progressive organizations, including Make the Road New York and the Center for Popular Democracy. I have dedicated my life to fighting for the rights and dignity of working people throughout the state. If elected, I will be the first Latina and the first LGBTQ+ statewide elected official in New York.

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I fought for years across New York State so that every young person would be able to access high-quality education--helping lead campaigns to fully fund public schools, create school-based college access programs, and pass the New York Dream Act. I was also deeply involved in the fights for paid sick days, raising the minimum wage, and a range of other economic, racial, and justice campaigns.

In my work at Make the Road New York, I worked deeply with communities in New York City and Long Island, where I opened our office. During the campaign, I have traveled and held events in New York City, Long Island, Albany County, Orange County, Rochester, and Buffalo. I am very eager to spend extensive time visiting additional communities across the state during the remainder of the campaign and once I am in office.

2. KNOWLEDGE OF THE ISSUES – What issues do you believe are of most concern to voters in rural counties, and what will be your message in addressing those issues?

There are issues that affect New Yorkers across the state which I believe are important for everyone, regardless of the region where they live: issues like affordable housing, education, universal childcare, universal health care, improving wages and conditions for workers, and tackling climate change to ensure a liveable planet for our children and grandchildren. These universal issues are at the center of my campaign.

Nonetheless, there are nuances to these issues and additional challenges specific to our rural communities which we must prioritize. As I have done in all of my advocacy work, I believe it is necessary to address these through a collaborative, inclusive approach. These include the accessibility of healthcare and incorporating telehealth options, and reliable access to the internet, which enables entrepreneurship, education, and engagement, especially throughout the pandemic. Farm workers in rural areas should benefit from overtime protections. The past two years have also highlighted the importance of investing in our rural workers, through job security and subsidies for seasonal agricultural workers. We must ensure that the resources New York State receives are distributed equitably, and that we use them to address the challenges unique to each community.

3. PARTY BUILDING – How have you expressed and demonstrated a commitment toward building our party statewide and what are your ideas for future party building, specific to rural counties?

My entire career is rooted in building community and building organizations that serve communities. The organizations that I have led are grounded in the belief that when people come together, there is power to make change. I believe that community can be built across geographies, demographics and experiences when we take the time to understand how our goals are and can be shared. I am

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committed to taking the time to recognize and understand the needs of our rural counties and continue the work I have done to reach collective goals, especially as the Governor and Lt. Governor seek to build the party statewide. As we build community across the state, we will bring people together, learn from each other, and fortify the movement toward serving our neighbors well.

4. In the event of a primary for the office you are seeking, will you support the winner of the Democratic primary? (This calls for a YES or NO answer ONLY.)

Yes.

5. FAIRNESS IN SHARING POLITICAL POWER - How have you and how will you defend and further the rights of small counties to be represented in the decision making process and in governmental and political positions?

I have always advocated for and stood by the rights of groups of people who deserved to be listened to and valued. The challenges specific to small counties are important because they affect people that we serve. I believe there is an opportunity for state leaders to encompass voices who accurately and authentically represent their people. I intend to spend time holding listening sessions across the state, including in rural communities, and draw from the wisdom of local leaders and the invaluable insight they have to offer as part of the decision-making process.

6. INCLUSION – If elected, how would your administration include the people from DRC counties and address the issues of concern in those counties?

My desire is to see a New York that fights for all of its people, not just those in power. My administration will make sure that everyone has a seat at the table because we can't serve people if we don't know them and won't listen to them. I believe it is our administration's responsibility to meet the people from DRC counties where they are at, and take the time to understand their valuable perspectives and listen to their voices as together, we tackle the issues of concern. No matter the space I am in, I always ask myself: who is here and who is missing? Who can we serve better? What voice or perspective is left out? This mindset will enable me to effectively include people from our DRC counties.

7. VOTER APPEAL – What qualities or experiences do you have that would attract support from voters in DRC counties, not just from Democrats but also from non-enrolled voters and cross-over Republicans?

I want people to see the work that I have done in communities that have been overlooked, those who have been underserved, and believe that I am here to fight for them, too. While I am a progressive, I have experience bring people together from across the political spectrum by focusing on the real needs that people

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have—and that unite us. While there is partisanship in our political climate, I believe that when you really listen to people and engage them, you can identify the things that we all want: to have good schools and good jobs, to be able to meet our basic needs, to be heard and represented. That will be my approach to this campaign and to this office—to listen first, build connections, and identify and focus on the things that connect us to one another.

8. CAMPAIGN IN DRC COUNTIES – How would you campaign in DRC counties? Will you personally appear with local candidates?

I am a campaigner by nature. I love being out at public events with community members, and I have made that the key dimension of my campaign since Day 1. I am excited for the opportunity to campaign in rural areas and I would be excited to campaign alongside local candidates who share my commitment to a New York that puts the needs of the many before the whims of the ultra-wealthy and the powerful.

9. OTHER CRITERIA – Please set forth anything else you want us to consider.

The Lieutenant Governor's race has of course been shaken up recently by the arrest of, and resignation by, the incumbent. This is a dark moment for our state's democracy and also reinforces the need for a Lieutenant Governor committed to real accountability. I am committed to using the Lt. Governor role to shine a light on the darkness of Albany, and to continually demand that our state put working families first. I'm running because Albany needs a Lt. Governor who will be laser focused on realizing this vision—not on cutting ribbons. This is a position that can and must be used to meet the needs of working families across this state.

4/14/22

Date



Signature of the Candidate

Please return THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE at your earliest convenience but no later than **January 24, 2022** to Judith Hunter, DRC Chair via e-mail at **judith.hunter@gmail.com**. Ms. Hunter can also be contacted at (585) 615-2986.