

Public Advocate Candidate:

Below is the Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club's Public Advocate Candidate Questionnaire. Please fill it out and return to jimowles@gmail.com

Candidate Name: Michael Blake

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Campaign Contact (name/phone/email): Sabrina Philson, 917-734-8734, sabrina@blakefornyc.com

- 1. Do you now support or have you ever supported an openly LGBTQ candidate for public office? If so, please identify any and all candidates.**

Yes. Matt Titone for Surrogate Court Judge, Harry Bronson for New York State Assembly

- 2. If applicable, what legislation directly affecting the LGBT community have you introduced or co-sponsored? (indicate accordingly)**

I was a proud co-sponsor of GENDA, which just passed in the State Senate, and a bill banning Conversion Therapy in the New York State Assembly.

- 3. What LGBT organizations have you been involved with, either on a volunteer basis or professionally?**

Jim Owles Democratic Club, Stonewall Democratic Club, BOOM Health

- 4. If applicable, what LGBT organizations have you allocated funds to?**

I have supported several LGBT organizations including Stonewall Democratic Club and allocated public dollars to Boom Health and SAGE.

- 5. Do you consider yourself a member of the LGBT community?**

I am honored to be a proud and vocal ally of the LGBT community. I have been a consistent progressive on marriage equality, gender-neutral birth certificates and was a co-sponsor for GENDA and the ban on conversion therapy. I believe that the city can and should do more to support the rights and gender identities of all New Yorkers.

- 6. Have you marched in Pride? Which marches and for approximately how many years?**

I've marched the last three years

7. Have you employed openly LGBT individuals previously? Do you employ any currently?

Yes and Yes.

8. If you receive the endorsement, do you agree to identify the club using its FULL name on all literature and electronic materials where you list endorsements?

Yes

9. What press conferences, demonstrations, rallies and protests in support of LGBT issues, pro choice legislation, criminal justice issues and the Resist Trump Movement have you attended?

Everything from demanding funds for LGBT Homeless youth to Black Lives Matter marches to each of the Women's marches, I have been very engaged in the movement organizing.

10. Have you ever been arrested? If so please explain why and outcome of arrest.

No.

11. Will you advocate in Albany for legislation to mandate the review of sentences of incarcerated individuals over the age of 55 who have served in excess of 15 years to determine if they warrant release?

Yes.

12. Do you commit to visit constituents who are incarcerated in state prisons such as Bedford Correctional Facility?

I believe we need to do much more to support those who enter our criminal justice system but do not want to commit without knowing that I will have time for these trips.

13. Do you believe sincere remorse, risk of reoffending and actions taken while incarcerated should be considered over the original crime in determinations of parole?

Yes.

14. Do you consent to having your name added to a letter of elected officials to the New York State Parole Board advocating for the release of Judith Clark?

Yes.

15. Have you participated in any demonstrations or protests in relation to the issues of clemency and parole?

Absolutely. Consistently being a voice in support of parolees and protests in support of providing clemency

16. Will you affirmatively seek to hire formerly incarcerated individuals?

Yes. Employment is essential to reducing recidivism. As a city and as a country, we need to do a much better job of helping those involved in the criminal justice system transition into employment and into their communities. As Public Advocate I will proactively seek to hire formerly incarcerated individuals.

17. Do you believe in the legalization of sex work?

I believe we need to be doing much more to provide services, especially healthcare, to sex workers. I support the decriminalization of sex workers and holding johns responsible.

18. What proposals will you advocate for the protect immigrants and the further New York as a Sanctuary City?

As the son of Jamaican immigrants who represents tens of thousands of proud immigrants in our assembly district, I understand how critical immigrants are to the vitality of New York City. New York City is one of the most diverse cities in the nation, and I am proud to be an assembly member who represents the most diverse county in the country. Immigrants make New York City stronger and help power the economy. As Public Advocate, I will continue to fight the Trump Administration's recent proposed rule change on Inadmissibility of Public Charge and do everything in my power to make immigrants feel safe and at home in New York City. I will work to ensure that the city and state support the health, housing and benefits needs of immigrants and will support Tish James' plan to establish an anonymous hotline for victims of discrimination based on immigration status. I will investigate landlords who use intimidation tactics to frighten and exploit immigrant families and will use my experience supporting MWBEs to develop a stronger infrastructure for immigrant families to start and sustain businesses that enable them to build a secure life for their families. I will also explore strategies to strengthen our ability to protect the data of immigrants so that the city is not exposing immigrants to abusive and counter-productive exclusion strategies.

19. Will you advocate, including introducing legislation, to remove public funding from religious schools?

I am a proud product of the New York City public school system. My elementary school was featured in Jonathan Kozol's critical book, "Savage Inequalities." I have first hand experience with underfunded public schools. As a member of the State Assembly, I helped win historic increases in education spending for New York City public schools, including more resources for struggling schools and I consistently demand that New York City get its full share of state funding, Foundation Aid. I am also a lay minister and understand both sides of the issue. I am strongly committed to the separation of church and state and deeply committed to low-income children of all faiths and no faiths. And I want to bring us together, not divide us. With these values and principles in mind, I will work with all stakeholders to understand and review the federal, state and local funding sources we are talking about to determine the impact on children and the quality of their education. I will absolutely and unequivocally fight for the enforcement of the separation of church and state and for the

needs of students. I will not take a unilateral position on funding for religious schools, given the Supreme Court's rulings on the permissibility of funding under certain circumstances.

20. What is your position on Amazon opening their headquarters in Queens?

We have a serious problem when deals like Amazon occur in the shadows and our ability to track whether it produces the city and community benefits it claims it will produce. I will focus on publicly available information that will ensure transparency and accountability to jobs and justice. We need to fight for jobs and justice. We need to find out where the jobs are, including those coming from Amazon, and do everything we can to help New Yorkers get them. The jobs that Amazon is promising local residents need to be good paying jobs with quality benefits that create a pathway to a better future. Cause right now Amazon is promising a lot. 25,000 new jobs by 2029 and up to 40,000 jobs by 2034 with an average salary of \$150,000. We need to be tracking whether Amazon is delivering on these promises before they get their tax credits.

21. Do you support removing the loitering statute from the state criminal code?

Yes. The criminalization of loitering has disproportionately affected poor black and brown residents of our city and other marginalized groups.

22. Do you support the legalization of marijuana?

Yes. The future of the medical and recreational marijuana industry in New York City creates real opportunities for our labor force and our economy. I support labor peace agreements and other initiatives that ensure that medical marijuana workers in New York are paid fairly and given good benefits that allow them to provide for their families. I also believe we should be creating more opportunities for women and minority-owned businesses to become involved in this growing industry. These business owners and the communities they help support have been undervalued and excluded from our economy for too long.

23. Do you support the establishment of supervised drug consumption spaces?

Yes. Harm reduction strategies are incredibly important if we are going to curb the number of fatal overdoses, however they are not a comprehensive solution to the country's drug epidemic. We need to provide better, and more holistic care to those affected by substance use disorder and support more people into treatment and rehabilitative services.

**24. Have you ever endorsed any member of the IDC or any candidates who challenged IDC members?
Please identify all candidates**

Yes. Zellnor Myrie, Alessandra Biaggi and Robert Jackson.

25. Do you support reform of the CCRB? If yes, please explain.

Yes. We need to prioritize transparency and accountability in policing and I will work with New York City Police Department and the Civilian Complaint Review Board to track the types and quantity of complaints about officers by police precincts and to provide public

information about the number of police officers in risk management and the outcomes of risk management.

26. Please identify 3 boards on which the PA serves and 3 appointments the PA makes that are of the utmost importance to you.

The Public Advocate has a seat on the board for the New York City Employees' Retirement System, the Commission on Public Information and Communication, and the Contract Performance Panel. In terms of appointments, the Public Advocate appoints members to the Independent Budget Office Advisory Board, the NYC Transit Riders Board and the City Planning Commission.

27. What reforms to the powers and duties of the office would you advocate for?

I believe that the Public Advocate's office should have subpoena power to strengthen oversight of government agencies. Currently, the Public Advocate can request data and information from city agencies, including the Mayor's Office. But subpoena power makes the request enforceable by a judge, if there is a dispute over the request. Additionally, as Public Advocate, I will fight for a seat on the MTA board to better advocate for a fair and resilient public transportation system for New Yorkers. Both these changes could be accomplished by amending the City Charter. The Charter could be amended to require the Mayor to appoint the Public Advocate as one of the four Mayoral appointees (who the Mayor nominates for appointment by the Governor). As an elected official, this would essentially give the people of New York an elected seat on the MTA board.

28. Will you commit to hiring a member of the LGBT community to serve as a liaison to the community?

Yes.

29. Will you commit to ensuring diverse LGBT representation among your staff?

Yes. Our campaign staff already includes members of the LGBT community and I will continue to make this a priority in my office.

30. Who did you support for office in the following races A) Mayor and Public Advocate in 2013 B) President in 2016 C) Governor and Attorney General in 2018

A) de Blasio and Reshma Saujani

B) Hillary Clinton

C) Cuomo and Tish James

31. Do you support Habitat for Humanity's proposal for gay-friendly low income housing on Elizabeth Street?

As Public Advocate, one of my top priorities expanding and improving affordable housing options in New York City. Seniors are a particularly vulnerable group, which is why I will fight to expand SCRIE. However, we cannot sacrifice our city's limited green space, especially in the neighborhood around Elizabeth Street Garden, for new construction. We need to be making better use of vacant lots and existing housing.

32. Would you speak in favor of an establishment applying for a liquor license when the opposition is based on Nimby and or unreasonable concerns?

Yes. We need to empower and support small businesses, and protect individuals against discrimination. It is important for local businesses to work with the community and be responsive to community needs, but we cannot let NIMBYISM prevent small businesses from thriving.