

JIM OWLES LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB CITY COUNCIL

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate Name: Farah Louis

Campaign Website: www.FarahLouis.com

Campaign Telephone: (347) 893-5464

Campaign Social Media Handles (Facebook/Twitter): @FarahNLouis

Campaign Contact (name/phone/email)

Debbie Louis (347) 497-9462 FriendsofFarahLouis@gmail.com or DebbieELouis@gmail.com

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

A. As part of my role in Public Advocate-elect Jumaane Williams's City Council office, I led our annual budgeting efforts as his Budget Director. One of the budget priorities I am most proud of spearheading for then-Council Member Williams is our office's work to ensure that the Brooklyn Community Pride Center received funding through the annual Schedule C funding process. It is critically important that the Brooklyn Community Pride Center receive support from districts such as Council District 45, where for a long time openly gay persons may not have felt like a support mechanism existed for them when help was needed. Bringing that kind of support -- budgetarily and through hosting events at the Center for then-Council Member Williams -- was incredibly important to ensure CD 45 knew about its services and persons in-need felt they had a safe space to seek help or assistance of any kind.

Have you participated in press conferences, marches, protests or demonstrations in support of the LGBTQ community?

A. During my tenure at the City Council, I attended LGBTQ press conferences and events organized by the Speaker's office during Pride Month.

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

A. Over the past five years, I have been a part of countless rallies for, demonstrations against, protests against the issues mentioned above. From the Community Safety Act and all subsequent criminal justice legislation through the City Council, to the unfair treatment of Ravi Ragbir at the hands of federal immigration enforcement, to press conferences advocating for the City Council to pass the "Boss Bill," I've been proud to be a part of larger movements to protect women, to reform the criminal justice system and to protect immigrants--documented or otherwise--and New Americans from unjust targeting by the federal government. I also helped organize a press conference to rally against and call for the suspension of DJ Cipa Sounds, a local disc jockey from HOT-97, regarding his offensive and negative comments toward Haitian women. In addition, I joined 1199 and a plethora of organizations at a Time Square rally to denounce inappropriate and derogatory comments by Trump regarding Haiti and Africa and helped organize a march, along with the Haitian American Caucus and the March 4 Justice Coalition against Haitian denationalization.

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

A. Yes.

Will you seek or accept endorsements of anti LGBTQ rights and anti-choice people such as Ruben Diaz Sr., Fernando Cabrera, Chaim Deutch, or anti gay religious people? If such individuals endorse you will you pledge to denounce their homophobia and anti-choice attitudes.

A. As the Council Member for the 45th Council District, I intend to work with any colleague who will be willing to support and pass legislation that ensures/protects the rights of any minority group in the City. That relationship will be important to ensuring I can be an effective legislator and advocate. However, wherever necessary, I will denounce bigotry or homophobia or anti-choice stances where they are and push my colleagues to understand the harm those stances cause and the threat they pose to ensuring and protecting everyone's freedoms and rights.

Will you pledge to not campaign in religion institutions that are known to speak out against the LGBTQ community?

A. People of faith and faith-based institutions are a large part of the 45th Council District and an incredibly important part of my life and identity. My hope is to always engage with them and help foster change from within to bring those institutions away from anti-LGBTQ stances.

Will you advocate, including introducing legislation, to remove public funding from religious schools when permissible by law?

A. I will advocate to ensure all of our public school students are enrolled in schools with adequate funding to cover their educational needs. I will also take great care to investigate whether there are disparities that unduly burden students attending private/religious institutions and ensure that those students receive the kind of state support necessary to enable them to receive a holistic education. However, I will not advocate for laws or budgetary priorities that defund our public schools in favor of private schools.

Do you support a woman's unrestricted right to medically covered reproductive services and the right to choose in regard to abortion?

A. Yes.

What is your position on the Right to Know Legislation. Would you support restrengthening it?

A. The Right to Know legislation was a key reform to follow the Community Safety Act, which I worked on intimately with then-Council Member Williams. RtK ensured police must take the active step of informing people of their rights, and in our current climate of working to improve police-community relations, that's a key reform that was much needed.

If there is a concrete proposal to further strengthen that, I'll be on board in supporting and working on it to ensure it reflects the needs of those communities most affected by over-policing.

What are your concrete plans for NYC to defend the rights of racial minorities, women and LGTBQ individuals from the Trump administration?

A. I helped then-Council Member Williams develop and advocate for a variety of legislative initiatives on these fronts:

- “Boss Bill” - a bill currently under consideration in the City Council that would protect a women’s right to chose and a variety of other reproductive health decisions from employment discrimination.
- “Community Safety Act” - broader than the LGBTQ community but incredibly impactful, the Community Safety Act fought to protect all minority communities from over-policing and place greater controls and accountability on the police department so traditionally over-policed and targeted groups could hold sworn law enforcement officers accountable for their actions.
- Protecting immigrants - New York City is already a sanctuary city and one of the bulwarks of government for immigrants at a time when federal law enforcement is unjustifiably and discriminatorily targeting all new Americans. I have long-supported every effort and protest by then-Council Member Williams to call out targeted enforcement against immigrant communities.

Will you join our efforts to have legislation passed in Albany 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?

A. Yes.

Do you support complete legalization of marijuana and immediate suspension of arrests for possession of such for medicinal or recreational purposes?

A. I support the legalization of marijuana for medicinal or recreational purposes. The prohibition on its use for adults for recreational purposes and the strict enforcement of use of marijuana for under-age persons (up until the City of New York began a change in policy, but not law, last year) only served to punish generation after generation of young and old persons of color. Enforcement, which was protected by the law, simply served to hurt people who were doing nothing violent and hurting or damaging no one else in the community. It’s time to remove this enforcement mechanism and it’s time to review past sentences for persons convicted to determine how we can help them restore their lives without the influence of the criminal justice system keeping persons from gainful economic opportunity.

Do you support or oppose the death penalty?

A. Oppose. Morally wrong by any standard.

Do you support outlawing solitary confinement?

A. Yes. Morally wrong by any standard.

Will you affirmatively seek to hire formerly incarcerated individuals?

A. Yes. I am proud to have a history of helping formerly incarcerated individuals return to work by helping then-Council Member Williams fund the Crisis Management System, Gangsters Making Astronomical Community Changes, Wildcat and the Doe Fund.

Do you support the decriminalization and legalization of prostitution?

A. Yes. Sex workers shouldn't be stigmatized and then penalized. Sex workers should receive the full protection of the law and find themselves in a society that provides support.

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

A. I support the change of our laws, both City and State, that target persons as sex workers whether or not the individual has been observed committing a crime. Loitering is a statute from a previous era that allows law enforcement to target individuals merely for congregating and should be removed from the criminal code.

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

A. While I have yet to encounter this situation in the 45th Council District through my work, I would not allow any business or institution that has a right to apply for a liquor license to be derailed simply because of non-legal or non-code-based issues.

Do you commit to visit constituents who are incarcerated in state/city and federal prisons including Bedford Correctional Facility?

A. Yes.

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

A. Over the past five years working for the City Council, I have participated in many protests/demonstrations for wrongfully incarcerated individuals or persons whose conditions in prison were inhuman (most recently for Ravi Ragbir's unjustified detention by federal immigration enforcement and for the individuals who were suffering inhumane conditions at the MDC in Brooklyn). I am eager to continue to support the rights of the incarcerated and to fight for clemency and parole for individuals whose punishments do not fit the crime or for individuals who should never have been brought into our criminal justice system in the first place.

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?

A. Yes.

What proposals will you advocate for the protection of immigrants and to further New York City being a Sanctuary City?

A. I would forcefully advocate to keep local law enforcement from contacting federal law enforcement for anyone arrested and/or anyone interacting with the NYPD. In addition, I would unequivocally support resolutions and bills that protect immigrants and provide them with access to resources to fund immigrant legal services, basic healthcare and drivers licenses.

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

A. I have not been a candidate before, and so have not had the opportunity to lend my voice as a public figure to another candidate, but as part of then-Council Member Jumaane Williams's Lt. Governor campaign, I was proud to support Cynthia Nixon's candidacy and carry support for her through my work on the Lt. Governor's campaign.

Who did you support for office in the following primary races: (a) Mayor in 2017 (b) Governor and Attorney General In 2018 (c) Public Advocate in 2019 and (d) President in 2018?

A. I have not been a candidate before, and so have not had the opportunity to lend my voice as a public figure to another candidate. However, in my work for then-Council Member Williams, I worked alongside and in support of the campaigns of Mayor De Blasio, Cynthia Nixon and then-Public Advocate Letitia James for Governor and Attorney General, respectively, and I campaign on behalf of then-Council Member Jumaane Williams for Public Advocate. Though as I have stated, this is my first time as a candidate, I can assure you as a private citizen I was not working for anything affiliated with Trump for America.

What is/was your position on Amazon opening their headquarters in Queens.

A. Amazon should never have been given the economic deal the City and State offered and in the way that it was provided to Amazon. However, if we had a truly inclusive public vetting process for Amazon's HQ2 and the public's concerns about housing, transportation infrastructure, economic development and the larger effect on worker's rights and the right to unionize were addressed in meaningful ways, then Amazon would have been a welcome addition to the City.

Do you support the closing of Rikers Island prison? Would you support the placing of a prison in your community?

A. I support the closing of Rikers Island prison. I also support the relocation of prison facilities but those institutions should not be solely placed in communities of color. The exact locations of smaller prisons in the boroughs requires greater study to determine how best to evenly place correctional facilities. These smaller facilities must be in central locations that are accessible for incarcerated individuals and their families.

As there have been the removal of statues and names removed from streets due to one's past history of blatant racism, do you support the renaming of the Ed Koch bridge and will you work towards the renaming?

A. Yes, I do support the removal of controversial statues. However, I am not familiar with the controversy around the Ed Koch Bridge but I would like to further explore and receive more information about the topic.

Do you support the establishment of supervised drug consumption spaces?

A. Yes

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

A. I have not been a candidate before, and so have not had the opportunity to lend my voice as a public figure for or against another candidate.

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

A. See answer to 21