

# New York Mayor-elect Mamdani appoints transition team of right-wing Democratic Party operatives

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At a press conference Wednesday in Queens, New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), introduced the five members of his transition team—all veteran Democratic Party operatives who played key roles in implementing pro-capitalist policies against the working class under previous mayoral administrations.

The announcement followed Mamdani's victory in Tuesday's election, where he decisively defeated disgraced former Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo as well as the Republican candidate, Curtis Sliwa.

More than 1 million people voted for Mamdani in the highest turnout for a New York City mayoral election since 1969—a clear repudiation of the fascist policies of the Trump administration and an expression of popular anger over the soaring cost of living, especially the unaffordable housing crisis.

Since winning the Democratic primary in June, Mamdani has worked to reassure the corporate and financial elite by meeting with executives and real estate moguls. He issued an apology to the New York Police Department (NYPD) for previously calling to defund it, and pledging to retain Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch, a veteran of the NYPD's Counterterrorism Bureau and heiress to one of the wealthiest families in the United States.

In response to attacks from the Trump administration and sections of the corporate oligarchy, Mamdani is lurching rapidly to the right in the immediate aftermath of the election.

The executive director of the transition team is Elana Leopold, who joined the Mamdani campaign only after his primary victory in June. She has worked closely

with Elle Bisgaard-Church, Mamdani's senior adviser. Leopold previously served as a senior adviser to Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio before founding her own political consulting firm, which has extensive ties to the political establishment.

Leopold has been recognized by *Fortune*'s "40 Under 40" and *City & State*'s "Political Consultants Power 50" as a key figure in forging connections between the wealthy and influential. According to *City & State*, her role in the Mamdani campaign has been to "seek to further" ties with the city's "wealthiest residents," drawing on "her time in the private sector."

The second member of the transition team is Maria Torres-Springer, who served after 2002 as senior policy adviser in the office of the deputy mayor for economic development and rebuilding under billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Torres-Springer later took the position of executive vice president and chief of staff at the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the city's official development agency, which is notorious for functioning as a conduit between real estate interests and municipal government.

She then served as commissioner of the New York City department of small business services under the de Blasio administration, before being appointed CEO of the NYCEDC. Following that, de Blasio named her commissioner of the department of housing preservation and development.

Torres-Springer was also a member of the administration of Eric Adams as deputy mayor for economic and workforce development, during which her office was implicated in fast-tracking fire safety inspections for the massive 50 Hudson Yards

development—at the expense of schools, apartment buildings and a city college—on behalf of the owner, Related Companies, a major donor to the Adams campaign.

Adams appointed Torres-Springer first deputy mayor in 2023 after the resignation of Sheena Wright during the federal investigation into the corruption of Adams and figures in his administration. Torres-Spinger only resigned from her role in February.

The third member of the committee is Lina Khan, who was appointed by President Joe Biden as a commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in 2021 and later elevated to chair in 2024. Both appointments were confirmed with bipartisan support from Senate Democrats and Republicans.

Under Khan's tenure at the FTC, employee morale declined significantly, according to surveys conducted by other government agencies. Khan also imposed a ban on public statements by staff.

Despite receiving praise from far-right figures—including Vice President JD Vance, who called her “one of the few people in the Biden administration that I think is doing a pretty good job,” and fascist adviser Steve Bannon, who declared, “I would be a huge supporter of Lina Khan remaining, and I would love to see her given more power”—she was ultimately replaced under the Trump administration.

Grace Bonilla, the fourth member of Mamdani's transition team, is currently the CEO of United Way, one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the world. From 2004 to 2014, she held a series of key roles in the Human Resources Administration (HRA) under the Bloomberg administration. She later joined the de Blasio administration, serving first as executive director of the task force on racial equity and inclusion, and then as administrator of the HRA.

The final member of the transition team is Melanie Hartzog, currently president and CEO of New York Foundling, one of the oldest charitable organizations in the city. Under the Bloomberg administration, she served as family services coordinator in the office of the deputy mayor for health and human services, as well as deputy commissioner for early childhood services at the Administration for Children's Services.

Hartzog held a number of prominent positions in the de Blasio administration, but her most pernicious—and arguably criminal—role came after her appointment in

October 2020 as deputy mayor for health and human services, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the city's point person overseeing the pandemic response, she assumed this role after more than 24,000 New Yorkers had already died. In the months that followed, daily deaths surged again to between 40 and 50 per day by December.

Hartzog's appointment came shortly after de Blasio, alongside then-Governor Andrew Cuomo at the state level, reopened New York City schools, despite widespread recognition that they were major vectors for COVID-19 transmission. At the time, the city remained an epicenter of the pandemic.

Under Hartzog's watch, the de Blasio administration launched a campaign of systematic misinformation, claiming that schools were the “safest places in the city” based on deceptively low test positivity rates. There is no doubt that Hartzog played a central role in the deliberate under-testing of children, educators and school staff to sustain this narrative.

These are the figures who will oversee the selection of personnel for the incoming Mamdani administration and ensure it is staffed with officials acceptable to the financial aristocracy.



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