



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:** Katherine Kahley, [kkahley@maimonidesmed.org](mailto:kkahley@maimonidesmed.org)

## **Brooklyn Communities Collaborative Announces Inaugural Economic Democracy Fellowship**

*The fellows will take part in training, seminars, and fieldwork that will allow them to use their experiences to contribute to Brooklyn's economic development*

**Brooklyn, NY (March 28, 2022)** – Today, [Brooklyn Communities Collaborative](#) (BCC) – a non-profit focused on strengthening health, leadership, and economic development in Brooklyn – announced its inaugural class of Economic Democracy Fellows in partnership with the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU). The Fellowship is geared toward those who live and work in Brooklyn and want to participate in improving the borough's health care and economic development efforts.

"We are proud to announce our Economic Democracy Fellowship program, which will equip this cohort of Brooklynites with the tools and experience they need to contribute to strengthening Brooklyn's local economy, leadership and civic infrastructure," said **Gretchen Susi, Ph.D. and Deputy Director of BCC**. "This impressive group of fellows shares BCC's mission to improve wellbeing in Brooklyn communities, as well as the economic and health care ecosystems that serve them. We're excited for them to join us in growing the Brooklyn Health Enterprise Hub, and to seeing their visions come to fruition."

The fellowship offers graduate-level seminars, training, and fieldwork that equips fellows with the necessary background, skillset, and connections to develop and/or contribute to enterprises that can foster local, sustainable growth for Brooklyn's community members and local economy. The fellowship, and the businesses developed through them, are part of the [Brooklyn Health Enterprise Hub](#), an ecosystem of local and regional institutions, agencies, organizations, and enterprises committed to building community health and wealth in Brooklyn.

The 2022 Economic Democracy Fellows are:

- **Leah Asha Allen**, a Board Member at Central Brooklyn Food Co-op focused on opening the doors of the co-op. Leah is interested in building a framework to understand and approach the work of opening a mission-driven food cooperative that centers on Black, long-term residents of Central Brooklyn, as well as ensuring its longevity and impact on food sovereignty across Brooklyn.
- **Sabrina Bazile**, an Advanced Certificate in Workplace Democracy and Community Ownership candidate interested in helping to build out a housing cooperative network for construction job training and developing repair cooperatives.
- **Alexis Harrison**, Partnership Lead at IDEO and Central Brooklyn Food Co-op Committee Co-Chair and member.
- **Natasha D. Joseph**, an employee of the NYC Department of Small Business Services focused on sustainable community and economic development using the solidarity economy framework.



- **Ellie Kahn**, a Senior Policy Advisor at the NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. Ellie aims to build economic justice into environmental policy in New York City, and is interested in democratizing energy systems and promoting community ownership of healthy, affordable, and resilient housing.
- **Androniki Lagos**, a Senior Consultant at Urbane is focused on supporting the capacity of neighborhood anchors to advance their solidarity economy goals and build all forms of community wealth.
- **Bill Oberkehr**, a Project Manager at New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Bill is focused on exploring and implementing models for community-led and community-owned renewable energy development. He would like to help realize a just transition from a fossil fuel based economy to a clean, sustainable, thriving economy.
- **Nicolas Savvides**, a Real Estate and Construction Advisor at Universe City, NYC. Nic runs We Build US, a mission-based construction and real estate project management consultancy through which he is an advisor to University City - a food equity business incubator and urban farm based in East New York's Industrial Business Zone.

"The Economic Democracy Fellowship Program is an outstanding opportunity for individuals interested in increasing the stability and equity of Brooklyn's economy, and we look forward to the impact that our 2022 fellows will have applying cooperative principles to their work both during the fellowship and in the years to come," added **Rebecca Lurie, Program Director for the Community and Worker Ownership Project at CUNY SLU.**

The fellowship launched with the Spring 2022 semester.

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### **About Brooklyn Communities Collaborative**

Brooklyn Communities Collaborative (BCC) is a not-for-profit based in New York that works with local institutions and stakeholders to address longstanding health inequities in the borough. BCC was founded in 2019 with the goal of leveraging the financial power of anchor institutions and community resources to address the economic factors that improve the social determinants of health – whether it's supporting housing stability, advancing economic empowerment, expanding care management services, or strengthening CBOs in the area. BCC builds upon years of collaborative efforts with anchor institutions and community partners in Brooklyn, which have helped connect 80,000 complex-need patients to care management services, produce 30,000 pounds of fresh produce annually, and develop 3,400 units of housing. Visit <https://brooklyncommunities.org/> for more information.

### **About CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU)**

The CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU) is the 25th and newest unit of The City University of New York and the only one explicitly dedicated to public service and social justice. The School offers undergraduate and graduate certificate and degree programs in labor relations, public policy, public administration, health care administration, community studies, labor studies and urban studies. SLU's mission derives from its core values: access to education, diversity at every level, social justice, and equality for all. Its goals are to expand higher education opportunities for workers; prepare students who aspire to careers in public service and social justice movements; promote civic engagement; provide leadership development for union and community activists; and help workers achieve greater economic security. Visit us at [www.slu.cuny.edu](http://www.slu.cuny.edu).