

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

1. In the event of congressional action leading to a ballot initiative in the District that would take away the civil marriage rights now enjoyed by same-sex couples, will you publicly oppose the initiative and defend civil marriage equality?

I have been a forceful public advocate for District marriage equality since June 2008. While I had been a supporter of marriage equality prior to this point, June 2008 marks the time when I came out in favor of marriage for all in my Republican primary for DC Council. I went on the record as a supporter in various media and in my door-to-door effort during a campaign against a Republican incumbent who was not then a supporter of marriage rights for same-sex couples.

There were many who told me "Don't take that position" during the primary, but I believed support of marriage equality was the right thing to do. In 2009, I went on to testify in favor of DC marriage equality before the DC Council. My testimony can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBgbekn-Ar8> or by searching "Patrick Mara" at YouTube.com.

Of the seven candidates running, I am the only person running in the At-Large Special Election who took the time to testify.

As the national campaigns for Congress and the White House gear up, DC often becomes a whipping post for elected officials – Republicans and Democrats -- back in their home districts.

This ongoing pattern of Congressional interference needs to stop and I am the only candidate currently running that has a proven record of working with Republican Members of Congress to preserve marriage equality.

Over the last several years, the Washington Post, Metro Weekly and Washington Blade have written stories about my efforts to meet with Republican Members of Congress and senior staff members. To date, I have met with dozens of GOP Members of Congress and Senators to discuss "staying out of DC." As a Republican, I can make a strong case for Federalism. In these meetings I stress the need for DC's 600,000 residents to decide our own fate. A strong argument for marriage equality is made in each of these meetings.

The elected officials in DC are not doing a sufficient job of communicating DC interests to Republican Members.

When Members of Congress are first elected, they are new to DC and we must build relationships with them. We cannot continue the practice of ignoring Members of Congress who may not agree with us. We must work with them; educate them and their staff on important DC issues including DC's marriage equality laws.

It's one thing to protest, declare your support for marriage equality at a forum or write an op ed. It is another to meet with GOP Members in their offices and explain to them why we may disagree.

In short, I am the only candidate running who has a record of advocating for marriage equality on Capitol Hill to our harshest critics. I am the candidate who is best suited to fend off any type of Congressionally mandated action on marriage. I understand the urgency of protecting our unique laws and will continue to be a champion of this cause. Should there be any type of ballot initiative, I will most certainly continue to defend all District citizens' rights to marry no matter what Congress does or does not do.

2. Will you support Bill 20-0032, the Surrogacy Parenting Agreement Act of 2013, to legalize surrogacy agreements in the District and protect all parties to such agreements?

Yes. 100%.

PUBLIC HEALTH

3. Will you support legislation giving the directors of the Office of the GLBT Affairs and the Office of African Affairs the authority to issue competitive grants as other minority constituent office have, that will be open to organizations serving the populations within the offices' purview?

Absolutely. DC's diversity is one of the reasons I love this city so much. For all that we do to help disadvantaged constituencies in the District, there are still significant gaps in how we treat certain offices, particularly when it comes to funding. Fairness and equality dictate that we give the Office of the GLBT Affairs and the Office of African Affairs the authority to issue competitive grants.

4. Will you defend the District's hard-won and life-saving medical marijuana program against attacks or further restrictions, whether from Congress, federal officials or D.C. officials?

Yes. 100%. I will also review some of the restrictions that the Council has placed on the program so that it can be expanded and available to more patients.

5. Describe steps you will support to improve performance at the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA), including in HIV prevention, HIV/AIDS surveillance, and mental health services.

When Councilmember David Catania was Chairman of the Committee on Health, he was a leader on this issue. One thing I will do as a Councilmember is encourage and support Councilmember Yvette Alexander, the new Health chair, to be equally responsive and engaged in HIV/AIDS and other LGBT community health issues.

As the Ward 1 State Board of Education member, I know the struggles of our neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, the District of Columbia has a high rate of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly among young people. In 2008, 7% of all District teenagers were diagnosed with Chlamydia; 1 in 100 youth is HIV positive and teen pregnancy rates have increased.

Our Health Department offers free screenings for DCPS students and treatments for some STDs. I think one way we can improve screening is to implement a way to screen young people during the summer months. One possible screening location could include sites at the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program and popular youth recreation centers.

DCPS standards emphasize the ABCs of STD prevention, which is "Abstinence", followed by "Being Faithful" and monogamous and finally discussing the effectiveness of "Condoms." We cannot stress these points enough to our youth. These are lifelong lessons that if taught properly at a young age could influence their decision making for the rest of their lives. DC's HIV infection rates for our youth are alarmingly high. Unfortunately, DC tops many of the national averages for Gonorrhea, Chlamydia and HIV infections. That is why, as a Ward 1 State Board of Education member, I am trying to reach out to my community and share with them the dangers that our young people face. On April 11th, I have arranged for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the DC State Board of Education to host the "Ward One HIV/AIDS Awareness Workshop for Parents and Teens." I am honored to be the moderator and hope to continue these types of meetings with the community as our next At-Large DC Councilmember.

Many of the reforms that DCPS and the Health Department are trying to implement in our schools for our young people to combat against HIV infections and STDs, we can apply for adults. But in order to do this, our elected officials must begin to understand the urgency and to push for stronger reform measures.

I think it's a tragedy that as recent as 2005, the District did not incorporate routine HIV testing into the provision of medical services. I applaud the city for ensuring that our hospitals (7 of the 8) have adopted HIV testing as part of their emergency room procedures. As our next Councilmember, I would continue to support these types of reforms.

We have seen significant gains in screening mothers to be for HIV testing. Unfortunately in 2005, DC accounted for 9% (10 children) of all mother to be child transmissions of HIV in the nation. The city responded by the Department of Health ensuring that HIV testing become a norm for screening women in all labor and delivery sites. Since then our city has drastically improved and this is a tangible area to see improvement and be proud of.

Councilmember David Catania proposed and implemented a simple yet common sense solution that has made DC a national leader. He proposed that to make it an institutionalized and automatic practice to HIV test all persons upon intake.

As our next At-Large DC Councilmember, I will continue to make these concerns a top priority of the Council.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUDICIARY

6. Will you press for increased oversight of the Metropolitan Police Department's gathering and analysis of crime statistics to ensure greater comprehensiveness and objectivity, including transgender-related hate crime data?

Yes. As we saw with the recent Human Rights Watch report, we must continue to press MPD. As a Councilmember, I will work cooperatively with MPD and, when necessary, hold their feet to the fire. MPD must be factual and objective in order to do their job most effectively. In turn, we must be factual and objective in our evaluation of MPD's effectiveness.

7. Will you support funding for MPD to hire or contract qualified trainers to provide LGBTinclusive cultural competency training including the handling of intimate partner violence?

Yes.

8. Will you support legislation to repeal the so-called Prostitution-Free Zone (PFZ) law, which facilitates anti-transgender profiling?

Yes. There is no indication that PFZs do anything to improve public safety. Additionally, anti-transgender profiling and other collateral damage to the transgender community is an unacceptable by-product of PFZs.

HUMAN RIGHTS

9. Do you agree that the Director of the Office of Human Rights should be required to have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement?

Yes. However, I think it's important that potential candidates who seek the Director position but don't have this training not be excluded from the interview process. A desirable candidate who lacks civil rights law enforcement training could be required to undergo training as terms of employment.

10. Will you support legislation to allow the issuance of new birth certificates for individuals who undergo treatment related to gender transition, end the requirement for

publishing notice of a name change in the newspaper, and allow issuance of new birth certificates via administrative process instead of a court order?

Yes, yes and yes. Government should not place restrictions or undo burdens on individuals who undergo gender change. Most certainly, there should be no requirement that name changes be published in newspapers. As well, a simple administrative procedure is sufficient for people who seek to amend a birth certificate. This is not a matter for the courts.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

11. Will you oppose both federal and local voucher programs that fund students in religious schools that are beyond the protections of the D.C. Human Rights Act?

The place we find ourselves in our public school system did not happen overnight and it will take some time before we see an across the board improvement in our schools. I do believe that until our traditional public schools are where they should be, we will continue to need alternatives. The Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) is part of a three sector approach to Federal funding that includes \$20 million in funding for traditional public schools, public charter schools and OSP programs. The OSP brings with it an additional \$60 million to educate children in our city. Unlike most voucher programs, it does not take money away from the public school system, but brings with it additional Federal resources and saves the DC Public Schools money.

While I understand GLAA's opposition to the program, I think the best possible thing we can do is to make sure all our children have a solid shot at life with a minimum of a basic education.

I was educated in both Public and Catholic schools, but am by no means a person who does not accept others who are different. Further, I testified in favor of marriage equality before the DC Council sitting right next to Dr. Joseph Palacios, a Catholic Priest. Dr. Palacios offered data that overwhelmingly showed rising support for marriage equality among Catholics.

Admittedly, I am not where GLAA would like me to be on this issue, but this does not make me any less of a fighter for the LGBT community.

12. Will you support legislation to ensure equal Medicaid spousal impoverishment protections for same-sex partners, including providing local funding to pay for benefits that are denied at the federal level due to the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act?

I support equal rights for all married couples. There should be no distinction at the local or Federal level between married couples of any gender.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

13. Do you support the right of adults in the District to choose adult-oriented entertainment for themselves, and the right of appropriately licensed and zoned businesses to provide it, without excluding any ward?

Yes, I believe adults should be free to make their own entertainment decisions. As well, laws should not be made that exclude adult entertainment from one ward while allowing it in another.

14. Will you support legislation to eliminate legal standing for ad hoc protest groups and citizens associations in liquor licensing cases, to permit input by all community stakeholders via the great weight already accorded Advisory Neighborhood Commissions?

In many ways, the District regulates alcohol establishments as though we are living in the Victorian era. We need a comprehensive review of regulations.

Citizen input on government is critical. It is, indeed, Democracy. I do not support limiting peaceful protests or the rights of citizen associations to engage in the political process. However, giving legal standing to one group and not another is a dangerous precedent. Government should not pick winners and losers, or decide who to hear and who to ignore.

15. What will you do to provide alternatives to incarceration for marginalized and at-risk populations like homeless youth and transgender people who resort to prostitution for survival?

First, we need better programs that address the challenges associated with homeless youth. We need to develop safe housing that is attractive to youth. We need to provide education, counseling, job training and jobs.

With regard to incarceration for homeless youth who are arrested for prostitution, I believe a first step should be to place youth in housing, get them back in school, provide counseling and healthcare. Jail is not the answer.

With regard to incarceration for transgender adults who are arrested for prostitution, we need to develop programs and incentives that direct adults to other sources of income. Job training, job placement, other career counseling, and access to healthcare where needed are good first steps. Chronic repeat offenders who are involved in drug trade, theft and/or violence should be subject to laws that include possible incarceration.