

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC 2014 Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Will you act to ensure that the District provides transgender-inclusive health insurance to all D.C. Government employees, to include coverage for sex affirmation surgery (also known as sex reassignment surgery)? [Note: this question has been overtaken by events since it was drafted at the start of 2014. Study the Mayor's executive action here: <http://tinyurl.com/kn2dzty>]

Yes. I have a background in health care policy and health insurance reform and have had conversations with staff at the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund about my support for this position. I hope to serve on the Council's health committee and work on issues like this (private insurance coverage would also come under the business committee, on which I'd also like to serve) and I will support the Mayor's action and ensure it is carried out and strengthened if necessary.

2. Will you support budgets that target funds to address health disparities in the LGBT population, including in mental health and substance abuse treatment?

Yes. As a Dupont Circle ANC, I care deeply about these issues which affect so many of my constituents and their friends/loved-ones. I have worked on health disparities issues in the past, am aware of the disparities in health outcomes in the LGBT community and will work to mitigate them, hopefully by serving on the Council's health committee. Mental health issues, in particular, need to be addressed. There is a terrible shortage of mental health professionals in the DC area.

3. Will you support reforming the medical marijuana law and regulations to delete the outdated list of qualifying conditions and rely instead on a physician's diagnosis of medical needs?

Yes I would be interested in implementing such reforms. I have many physicians in my family and trust that doctors, who know their patients best and must be licensed, are best qualified to make this determination of medical necessity.

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

Some of the efforts of the DC Department of Health have been commendable, but more needs to be done. I have a strong background in health policy and hope to serve on the Council's health committee.

I worked to implement President Obama’s health care law in DC. I was part of the team that planned and executed the outreach program that helped DC Health Link enroll over 57,000 people. I worked in close partnership with the Whitman-Walker Clinic in this successful effort. This is one of my areas of strength and passion, and I will absolutely be an ally for the LGBT community in advocating for testing and accessible and affordable care (including mental health, which I know to be absolutely vital), and other services that have been proven to be effective.

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

5. 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. Greater transparency would be in everyone’s interest. I am a former journalist and crime reporter and the current Public Safety Chair of the Dupont Circle ANC. I have a lot of experience with crime statistics and have pushed the MPD to improve their reporting of all crimes, including transgender hate crimes. I have spoken with GLOV (Gays and Lesbians Opposing Violence) about this and worked with them on community outreach regarding hate crimes

In June 2014 I helped my ANC pass a resolution supporting the repeal of “Prostitution-Free Zones” that unfairly result in biased targeting of transgendered individuals. On July 9, 2014, I even took time off from the campaign to testify before the Council about rectifying this injustice and look forward to the repeal passing this fall. I will certainly continue such work if elected to the Council.

I worked with Darby in Councilmember Grosso’s office on this and was thanked by the Councilmember personally for these efforts.

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

I would support outreach efforts to ensure their access to job training programs. Specifically, with my health care background, I want to fund more health care job training to serve all the newly insured people in DC. I worked with my ANC to secure a grant from a developer to provide additional funding for Sasha Bruce Youthwork, which provides shelter and social services to homeless LGBT youth.

7. Will you support funding to hire qualified trainers to provide LGBT-inclusive cultural competency training to all police officers, including in the handling of intimate partner violence?

Yes. As Public Safety Chair of my ANC I have strong ties with the GLUU and MPD in general and would definitely support funding for such training. We also need to support, strengthen and fully fund the MPD Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit. As

GLUU is housed in my neighborhood (Dupont Circle), I am familiar with and very appreciative of their work.

HUMAN RIGHTS

8. Will you insist that anyone appointed as Director of the Office of Human Rights be required to have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement?

Yes this very important and I support it completely.

9. Given the limited results from trans-inclusive Project Empowerment training, will you push to establish a project at the Department of Employment Services to increase government hiring from under-represented populations, including the chronically underemployed trans population?

Yes, this population is particularly vulnerable and suffers greatly from job discrimination and needs our support.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

10. Will you support improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth and seniors, including transitional housing?

Absolutely. I am a strong believer in the Housing First model (ably put forward by Pathways To Housing). It actually costs government less to house someone with services than to let them live on the streets and inevitably end up in emergency rooms. This is especially true for vulnerable LGBT seniors and youths. Philadelphia just opened their first gay-friendly senior citizen high-rise, and there is no reason we cannot follow suit.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

11. Will you support strengthening Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) reforms by eliminating license protests filed by citizens associations and ad hoc groups, requiring stakeholders to participate in the community process provided by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission?

I worked with my fellow East Dupont commissioners to lift the outdated liquor license moratorium on 17th Street, NW to allow responsible restaurants and stores to sell alcoholic beverages once again. The moratorium was stifling commercial interests in East Dupont and I was proud to help remove it. Such blunt tools are not good policy and I believe the community will see that they are unnecessary if ANCs and policymakers do their jobs.

I believe that ad hoc and similar groups are not elected to represent the community and that ANCs should have much more weight in the debate regarding reforms. I have supported such efforts as an elected ANC Commissioner. As a matter of principle, we must be vigilant against any protest actions that are based on anti-gay prejudice.

12. Will you defend 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?

Yes.

Your record is part of your rating. Please list any actions that you have taken that may help illustrate your record on behalf of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

- Worked with my ANC to pass a resolution supporting the repeal of “Prostitution-Free Zones”; **testified before the Council in July; repeal to pass this fall.**
- Worked with GLOV-DC on addressing hate crime reporting and outreach with the MPD.
- In coordination with gay adult sports leagues like Stonewall Sports, I worked hard to revitalize Stead Park so that the field is nicer for athletes, to create an entrance to 17th Street, NW (in back of JR’s) to give park-goers easy access to the gay-friendly businesses there, and to also create amenities for the whole community to enjoy TOGETHER (running track, performance stage, splash park)... **That’s how I will govern – to make sure the LGBT community is always at the table so we can improve our city together and to include everyone...**
- Met with staff at the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund regarding transgender-inclusive health insurance and subsequently publicly supported the Fund’s position.
- Worked in planning and executing DC Healthlink outreach and enrollment program resulting in over 57,000 people, gay and straight, attaining affordable coverage.
- Worked with my ANC to secure a grant from a developer to provide additional funding for the Sasha Bruce Youthwork.
- Have improved bus service and bike lanes for low-income residents citywide who depend on public transportation.
- **I worked with my fellow East Dupont commissioners to lift the outdated liquor license moratorium on 17th Street, NW to allow responsible restaurants and stores to sell alcoholic beverages once again. The moratorium was stifling commercial interests in East Dupont and I was proud to help remove it. Such blunt tools are not good policy and I believe the community will see that they are unnecessary if ANCs and policymakers do their jobs.**