

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC

2014 Questionnaire for D.C. Mayoral 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 will continue to support the actions taken by the District to provide transgender-inclusive health insurance to all DC Government employees. That will include coverage for sex affirmation surgery.

I will work with the transgender community including individuals and organizations like CASA Ruby on an ongoing basis to ensure that none of health needs of the transgender community are going unmet.

I support all the major strides the District has made in recent years in this area and I applaud and support all the actions taken by Mayor Gray in the last year. I particularly appreciate and support the steps that Mayor Gray announced on February 27, 2014 to prohibit discrimination in health insurance based on gender identity and expression. In his statement the Mayor announced that, *"the District of Columbia advanced the rights of the city's transgender community by prohibiting discrimination in health insurance based on gender identity and expression."* In addition the Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking (DISB) issued a bulletin to District health insurance companies addressing the application of anti-discrimination provisions in the insurance code, including recognizing gender dysphoria, or gender identity disorder, as a recognized medical condition. I strongly support the policy that individuals diagnosed with gender dysphoria should not have to pay exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses for medically necessary treatment when those without gender dysphoria do not.

Back on March 15, 2013 a DISB bulletin notified health insurers to remove language that discriminated on the basis of gender identity and expression from their policies and permit those with gender dysphoria to obtain medically necessary benefits. That action was another step in protecting this community's health insurance rights by affirming that gender dysphoria is a recognized medical condition and thereby treatment, including gender reassignment surgeries, is a covered benefit.

My administration will ensure that the District remains in the forefront of advancing the rights of transgender individuals and during my Administration I will actively support the rights of transgender individuals. We will share with other localities the wording of our Human Rights Act that incorporates gender identity and expression as protected classes in the District's health insurance laws.

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

Yes: As Mayor the budgets that I present to the Council will include funds within the Department of Health (DOH) to ensure that there are programs in place to address the health disparities in the LGBT population including in mental health and substance abuse treatment. I have read and agree with the report on *How to Close the LGBT Health Disparities Gap: Disparities by Race and Ethnicity* issued by the Center for American Progress (CAP) in September of 2013. That report makes it clear that, "Even though in the past decade lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people have made rapid progress in winning and securing equal rights," that many issues remain to be dealt with. My administration will focus on the part of the report that stated, "Despite this progress, however, members of the LGBT population continue to experience worse health outcomes than their heterosexual counterparts. Due to factors like low rates of health insurance coverage, high rates of stress due to systematic harassment and discrimination, and a lack of cultural competency in the health care system, LGBT people are at a higher risk for cancer, mental illnesses, and other diseases, and are more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, use drugs, and engage in other risky behaviors." I am also aware that the National Coalition for LGBT Health notes, "a black gay man faces disparities common to the African-American community as well as those suffered by the LGBT community, and a transgender Spanish-speaking woman, regardless of her sexual orientation, must navigate multiple instances of discrimination based on language, ethnicity, and gender". As mayor I will direct the DOH to develop policies to focus on and address these issues.

My administration will be committed to ensuring fair and equal treatment for all people of the District with recognition that it will be crucial to ensure that this includes providing needed healthcare services to the LGBT population in our city who are often not receiving the care they need.

My administration will also have the DOH include sexual orientation and gender identity and expression as specific risk factors. I will work with the DOH and the Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs to ensure that we distribute some intercity funds as grants to LGBT health organizations.

3. 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.

I am acutely aware that there are issues surrounding how the District deals with what is still an HIV/AIDS epidemic. My administration will work through HAHSTA to redouble our efforts to not only prevent new cases but to help those living with HIV/AIDS live long and productive lives. My administration will expand testing and education initiatives to help us do that.

As we work to reduce HIV/AIDS my administration will have a renewed focus on preventing people from getting STDs, TB and Hepatitis. We know that today these are all preventable. While HAHSTA has improved over the years and has implemented several of the reforms that were first recommended by an Appleseed report in 2005, there is a long way to go.

Today in the District we do a better handling of epidemiologic data; we run a much more effective citywide HIV testing campaign; and are better at distributing condoms. But my administration will ensure that HAHSTA will also focus on issues that still need attention such as upgrading our ability to manage grants; HIV surveillance; monitoring and evaluations; and have a focus on sexual health education.

The issue of charter schools is an important one as approximately 44% of our children attend a Charter School. My administration will work with the Charter School Board to promote putting in place mandatory sexual health education programs in all Charter schools, as required at DCPS.

My administration will also work through HAHSTA and use the clout of the entire Department of Health (DOH) to insist that the medical community – both public and private- do a better job of testing for sexually transmitted diseases. While we know that many see HIV as a chronic and treatable disease my administration will focus on educating people on how to avoid it. That could involve the appropriate use of the drug Truvada.

We need to eliminate the stigma of HIV and now that there is a drug like Truvada available my administration will work to develop education programs to help people be more open in telling their partners their HIV status. While HAHSTA can and is leading an effort to make sure that HIV testing is standard in all DC run health facilities my administration will work with the DC Medical Society and DC Hospital Association to encourage all private facilities and practices to do the same.

In my administration HAHSTA will help in this area by educating the public and practitioners to recognize the symptoms of acute HIV infection symptoms and teaching the medical community how to get all their patients to get tested and then inform them about what they can do if a patient tests positive to protect their partners. My administration will ensure that HAHSTA will maintain anonymous testing sites and do additional work in the area of educating residents on the difference between confidential and anonymous testing. One of the goals of my administration will be to ensure that everyone testing positive gets the appropriate follow-up and treatment.

I am aware that there are many issues surrounding HIV/AIDS that could be incorporated into student education. My administration will make sure that DCPS gives age-appropriate students as much information as possible. This would include information on PEP and PrEP – both pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV. My administration will be committed to seeing that we ensure that Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV is provided as appropriate to at-risk clients at all D.C. emergency rooms, urgent care centers and health clinics.

There are a number of other issues that my administration will be working on. One is to have the DOH ask for a waiver of the Ryan White 75% - 25% rule to make more funds available for HIV/AIDS patient support services. Another is to review the D.C. criminal code section on involuntary testing of people convicted of a sex crime and having those results shared with the victims. My administration will work with health experts and organizations to determine if that section may be outdated as the victim may be best served by testing for viral load and then being treated with Post-Exposure Prophylaxis to prevent HIV from taking hold. My administration will also work to continually improve the data collection done by the DOH on the LGBT community. We need accurate data if we are to ensure appropriate funding of programs. My administration will continually monitor the District's medical marijuana laws to ensure they are keeping up with best practice. One area we will be looking at is whether medical need for medical marijuana can be best decided by a patient's physician.

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

4. Will you require the Metropolitan Police Department's gathering and analysis of crime statistics to ensure greater comprehensiveness and objectivity, including on LGBT-related hate crimes and intimate partner violence?

Yes: First let me state my full support for the MPD's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit. I will work with Chief Lanier, who I am committed to reappoint, to once again make this unit into the award winning unit it once was. In both my Ward and in my travels across the District I understand that this is something the LGBT community feels is very important and I agree with that. While it is important that the Unit function across all eight Wards that is not incompatible with a strong central structure for the unit.

We have consistently seen the level of all hate crimes in the District being much too high and the percentage of those crimes committed against the LGBT community staying at unacceptable levels. One crime is unacceptable but the numbers we are seeing in the District point to the immediate need for additional education and action.

I will have my Office of GLBT Affairs convene a meeting with the community to discuss what type of additional education is recommended both for our first responders who must deal with these crimes and then for the community at large to prevent them. My administration will continue diversity and sensitivity for the MPD both for new recruits and current members of the force. My administration will also find the funds to pay for this training which has now been done on a mostly volunteer basis by groups like GLOV, SMYAL and the Rainbow Response Coalition.

My administration will also work to ensure the continued work of the Office of Police Complaints (OPC). This is a group that has the ability to look at systemic issues facing the MPD and that needs to be one of their charges.

With regard to accurate reporting my administration is committed to a totally transparent reporting system to ensure that there is accurate reporting of hate crimes. We will work toward a comprehensive multi-agency service provider strategy to reduce hate crimes. We will collect accurate data not only on hate crimes but on intimate partner violence as I recognize that this is unfortunately a growing problem and my administration will be working to ameliorate it as much as possible.

My administration will look at the issue of intimate partner violence and coordinate between government, the community (groups like the Rainbow Response Coalition) and service providers to break down the barriers that same-sex partners have in accessing services. My administration will work to continue and enhance the training of the MPD, Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) so that they are culturally competent to handle cases of LGBT partner violence.

5. 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?

This is an issue that my administration will focus on because it impacts some of the most vulnerable persons in our society. Incarceration of homeless youth, and transgender persons often simply

leaves them more vulnerable to abuse and does nothing to help them live long, healthy, productive lives.

My administration will bring together the DOH, Department of Employment Services (DOES) and community groups such as the Transgender Law Center to look at best practices in this area. As my administration will be doing in every area we will talk with those who have potential solutions or ideas to help with alternatives to incarceration.

I understand that most people don't choose to become sex workers because they want to but rather because they feel they have run out of other options. My administration will work to give them other options. Job training, education, housing and hope for a better future. My administration will build on the work that was begun by Mayor Gray in 2011 when he launched the Project Empowerment pilot project at DOES. This effort will be scaled up in my administration.

My administration will develop a comprehensive set of services for homeless youth and others such as members of the transgender community who need the help that currently isn't available in the private sector. These services can include drop-in centers, transitional housing, job training and other educational programs, counseling, addiction recovery programs, mental health services, and STD testing and treatment for at-risk populations. In doing this we will work with the Wanda Alston House and organizations like CASA Ruby who are now working to help these populations but don't have the capacity that is needed.

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

Yes: My administration will insist that the MPD must continue its community diversity and sensitivity training for new recruits and lateral transfers, and expand it to all officers. What I have seen is that less than one-tenth of officers have received the training provided by GLOV and that is unacceptable.

I will ensure that the MPD budget includes money to support the community trainers that have currently been providing this training for free. Those are groups like GLOV, Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders (SMYAL), Rainbow Response Coalition, Break the Cycle, and DCTC. While SMYAL and Break the Cycle have been able to provide some small stipends for trainers the city should not continue to rely solely upon limited volunteer resources. This is too important an issue to do that.

My administration will also make sure that the Office of GLBT Affairs will be involved in this program and coordinate with the MPD. One of the issues I have seen is that the MPD doesn't always comply with its own orders. My administration will work with the MPD and the Police Union to begin talks on what adverse consequences should be outlined for officers who fail to enforce rules on hate crimes and interactions with LGBT people. This will be a way that my administration intends to send a message that bias on the force will not be tolerated.

We will look at how we can work with the leadership at the MPD and the union to see that the MPD can avoid having to rehire dismissed officers due to its failure to meet procedural deadlines.

My administration will work with Chief Lanier to relook at the general order she first issued in 2007 "Handling Interactions with Transgender Individuals," to insure professional and respectful interaction between MPD personnel and transgender people. Since that time there have been incidents that show that the order has not always been complied with. My administration will work with Chief Lanier to monitor compliance.

We will also look at how the Department of Corrections (DOC) deals with ensuring appropriate housing and healthcare, and making sure that there are no incidents of sexual assault, abusive strip-searches, and protective custody that in the past amounted to punishing the victim. My administration will look at the revised policy that DOC issued on classifying and housing transgender inmates in 2009. We will work through the Office of GLBT Affairs and an enhanced DOC Transgender Advisory Committee to ensure that these policies and others are both appropriate and being followed.

My administration will ensure that we have Transgender persons on the Mayor's staff to help us with these policy efforts and to ensure the cultural competence of the entire Mayor's office.

HUMAN RIGHTS

7. Will you require that anyone you appoint as Director of the Office of Human Rights have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement?

Yes: I am proud that our Human Rights Act of 1977 (DCHRA) is one of the strongest human rights laws in the country. My administration will remain vigilant to ensure its enforcement.

I consider the appointment of a director for the Office of Human Rights one of the more important appointments I will make. I will be looking for someone with a professional background in human rights law to ensure he or she has the expertise to evaluate staff work and is able to provide guidance to the other officials in my administration.

8. Will you renew, enforce and update as necessary the Mayoral Order mandating explicit inclusion of every class protected under the D.C. Human Rights Act in all D.C. government agency nondiscrimination statements?

Yes: I will review, update and reissue a Mayor's Order to all District agencies requiring compliance with all protected categories under DCHRA.

I will require that all agency directors and commissioners review their agencies non-discrimination statements and ensure that they meet current requirements and have them submitted to my Chief of Staff for his/her review.

9. Given the limited results from trans-inclusive Project Empowerment training, will you establish a project at the Department of Employment Services to increase government

hiring from under-represented populations, and will you hire trans persons in your own office?

Yes: I will be reviewing the entire operation of the Department of Employment Services (DOES) to ensure that it is meeting the goals of the agency and using the most current successful practices to do so. We have a changing population base in DC and while that is happening we need to ensure that the most vulnerable and the most hardcore unemployed in the District are receiving the type of services that can lead to employment and a more successful life for them and their families.

My administration will ensure that DOES has a more focused and enhanced program to prepare members of the Transgender for employment. We will build on the program begun by Mayor Gray with help from the Transgender community themselves, their organizations, and transgender members of my staff to see that the program serves more people successfully.

One area that my administration will work on is to grow the numbers of transgender employees in government, as it is unacceptable that currently only about ten transgender people work for the District. As we look at new initiatives in DOES and across city agencies we will look at groups like Transgender Economic Empowerment Initiative, a collaboration between the Transgender Law Center, the San Francisco LGBT Center and Jewish Vocational Service. There are issues that my administration will look at which have been reported by the community such as discrimination in homeless shelters from shelter staff, and victimization from other shelter clients. When we find problems we will work to correct them.

My administration along with the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness, will work with shelter providers to ensure enforcement of LGBT nondiscrimination policies in District homeless shelters and transitional housing, provide LGBT sensitivity training to guards as well as staff, and ensure that all shelter clients are protected.

This is all part of working to make sure that people can begin work and start to rebuild or just build their lives in a safe and productive setting. My administration will look to all city employers for placements and to discuss training requirements for potential employees.

One of the potential impediments to employment for some is the Armstrong Amendment, which is still on the books that singled out sexual orientation for permissible discrimination by religiously affiliated schools. Congress directly enacted the changes to § 2-1402.41 of the District of Columbia Code in response to a successful lawsuit against Georgetown University in 1987.

At that time every member of the D.C. Council supported a lawsuit to block the Armstrong Amendment from being imposed on the District. I understand that no religiously affiliated educational institution in the District has invoked the Human Rights Act exemptions and as such I will ask the D.C. Council to repeal these Congressional imposed provisions and believe that the Congress today would not stop such an act.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

10. Will you act to ensure improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth and seniors, including expanding transitional housing and emergency shelter space?

Yes: I am proud to have introduced, along with Councilmember Cheh Bill 20-51, the LGBTQ Homeless Youth Reform Amendment Act of 2013.

My administration will work to set a minimum number of beds for LGBT homeless youth, require culturally competent care at shelters, and give grant-making authority to the Office of GLBT Affairs.

I support the restructured board of directors of the Wanda Alston House but that home alone is totally insufficient to meet the needs we have in the District. I also included 200K in the budget to study LGBT senior housing issues.

My administration will continue the focus I have had as a member of the Council to increase the supply of affordable housing in the district. We will work to ensure that low-income LGBT people, particularly those with HIV/AIDS, should not have to suffer homelessness, as many currently are. My administration will put the focus on affordable housing that hasn't always been there.

As Mayor I will continue and enhance the push that Mayor Gray has begun to fund the Housing Production Trust Fund, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Local Rent Supplement Program at levels that are adequate to meet the needs of population. One of the crucial issues we will focus on is emergency shelter availability.

So much of what we do is based on data and we don't always have accurate data. In 2010 The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) reported that self-identified gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in D.C. public middle and high schools were three times likelier to attempt suicide. This information came from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted by OSSE working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey found dramatically higher rates of cocaine and methamphetamine use among LGB youth. But the city's low response rate in 2009 made the data unusable by CDC, showing a need for greater commitment from OSSE.

My administration will work to see that future surveys include transgender students, who are often at higher risk than their LGB peers. We will adopt an optional gender expression question from CDC.

As a councilmember I voted for the 2012 Youth Bullying Prevention Act, and we know that D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) has pursued its own anti-bullying initiatives. DCPS has a bullying policy for the entire system.

My administration will continue to look at these policies as well as all the ones initiated by youth-serving entities in the city. I will make sure that the Youth Bullying Prevention Task Force is functioning through the Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs to review them and what the follow-through and enforcement are. These policies aren't effective if they don't have some teeth. I will ask the Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs to report back to me on the DCPS pilot program to designate and train GLBT liaisons in 25 schools and we will ensure that the program is properly evaluated and if effective expanded city-wide. I will also ask the Charter School Board which is responsible for the 44% of the students who attend Charter schools to promote comparable policies in each school and to set up systems to monitor their effectiveness.

I have already stated that I will reappoint Chancellor Kaya Henderson and she agreed to serve in a Bowser administration. I will work with the Chancellor to ensure that teachers and principals comply with and teach the DCPS Health Standards that include sexual orientation and gender identity as part of "the knowledge and skills that students need to maintain and improve their health and wellness, prevent disease, and reduce health-jeopardizing behaviors." DCPS must continue to teach what students need to know.

My administration will continue the District's condom availability program for public school students established in 1992 to reduce the spread of HIV, other STDs and unwanted pregnancies. I will work with the Chancellor to ensure their availability as a key part of our HIV/STD prevention program.

My administration will also have a focus on seniors. We have a growing population of LGBT seniors with their own set of issues that need to be dealt with. My administration will ensure that the Office on Aging has a focus in this area and that there is staff there that can coordinate the services we provide. I will have the Office on Aging coordinate and work with the Washington, D.C. LGBT Aging Coalition of Elders.

My administration will look at the potential of targeting funding for LGBT senior services if that is needed. That targeting could assist in better coordination and partnerships with service providers who focus on the needs of the aging. We know that the senior LGBT population, especially those in the Transgender, ethnic and racial minority communities often live below the poverty level and have heightened and cumulative risks of health disparities. This is why I added 200K in the budget for the LGBTQ Senior Housing study, so that we can learn more.

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 will commit to a continuous review of this issue when I am Mayor and do support the ability of elected ANCs to be primarily responsible to speak on these issues to the ABC. I was a second-generation member of an ANC.

I will support Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) reforms that stop unnecessary impediments for businesses to open.

I do support the right of ANCs to have a say in the types of businesses that can open in their neighborhoods.

Appropriate economic development across the District is crucial to the continued growth and well-being of the District and my administration will work to revamp the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) to make it more responsive for everything from issuing business permits and licensing to allowing homeowners to make needed repairs to their property.

The issue of a balance of the businesses in the District and in each neighborhood will be ongoing and my administration will work to make sure that we are business friendly at the same time we respect the needs and rights of longtime residents. D.C. is attracting 1,000 residents a month to our city and much of the attraction for those new residents is the availability of a vibrant nightlife, restaurant and theater scene and the fact that you can now live in the District without owning a car due to our metro and new bike lanes. We have a vibrant ARTS community and that must be maintained and supported.

I commit that my administration will do nothing that would stop that influx of new residents who are providing a much needed and growing tax base for the District. We will continue to build on the economic development we have seen in recent years and simply ensure that it also meets the expectations and needs of those citizens living here now.

12. Do you pledge to find a suitably located space for The DC Center when the Reeves Center closes?

Yes: My administration will make a commitment to find a suitable space for the DC Center if the Reeves Center closes.

But as many are aware I have yet to agree to any plan that will see that happen. The plan to swap land will impact more people than the DC Center and I am committed to making sure that we are fair with the businesses that may be forced to relocate and help them find new appropriate space for their businesses.

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, bi and transgender people. Your answers should be typed on separate paper rather than on this form. *You must sign your name on each answer sheet to indicate your personal commitment to your answers.* Please return your signed questionnaire responses by Thursday, September 11 to GLAA, P.O. Box 75265, Washington, D.C. 20013.

In addition to sending your signed hard copy, please email a copy (in any major word processor or text format) for loading on GLAA's website to equal@glaa.org. Thank you.