

# **Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC 2016 Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates**

**Leon T. Andrews, Jr.**

**Candidate**

**Ward 4 - Council of the District of Columbia**

## **HOME RULE**

1. Will you oppose congressionally imposed school vouchers, which have been shown not to improve students' academic achievement, and which often go to schools that operate outside the non-discrimination provisions of the D.C. Human Rights Act?

A. I cannot support programs that violate the DC Human Rights Act or any other rule making that offers protections against discrimination based on race, religion, sex or gender orientation and identification, or the many other definitions we currently see in the 21st century.

As the Director of Race, Equity and Leadership at the National League of Cities, I routinely counsel elected officials across the nation about inequities in government actions and how they can correct the mistakes made by those that came before them. While vouchers work in other cities, they do not have a place in DC and we must fight those seeking to impose their will on our city from afar.

## **HEALTH**

2. Will you press the Department of Health to complete and issue the long-delayed LGBT Health Report, which is supposed to be issued annually?

A. The responsibility of a Councilmember is to legislate and provide oversight of District agencies, why has it been six years since the last LGBT Health Report? Which body of government should be held responsible for this act of laziness - the Executive for not producing the

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report for six years or the DC Council for not pressing the Department of Health to produce the collected data?

Throughout my life I have sat on boards, such as ChangeLab Solutions or the National Network 4 Youth, that produce annual reports that are then used to justify investments in youth programming, which in turn, provides much needed assistance to underserved communities.

With the help of my colleagues, both nationally and if elected, on the DC Council and organizations like the DC Center, I believe we can generate the necessary support to guarantee the DC Department of Health completes and issues the Health Report during Fiscal Year 2017.

3. Will you support budgets that target funds to address LGBT health disparities, including in mental health and substance abuse treatment, and mandate data collection on this population across all programs?

A. As the Chair of the Board of Directors for ChangeLab Solutions, an organization whose mission is to provide community-based solutions for America's most common and preventable diseases like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and asthma, I understand the need for population data collection and the subsequent processing.

The District's annual budget has grown to almost \$14B - we must have dedicated programming for LGBT residents that ensures a decrease in health disparities.

As a member of the DC Council, I would make it a priority to create an environment where the DC Government partners with community organizations to collect as much data as possible to ensure tax-payer funds are used efficiently and effectively.

4. Will you support separating Emergency Medical Services from the Fire Department?

A. We must make it a priority to fix our DC Fire Department, sooner rather than later. If the fix is separating emergency medical services from the fire department, which should provide a new level of accountability, then this is what we must do to keep DC residents as safe as possible.

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## JUDICIARY

5. Will you support and press for passage of Bill 21-38, the Death with Dignity Act?

A. As a former board member for Comfort Homesake, which is dedicated to unique discipline and approaches to understanding and improving end-of-life care, I take seriously how important ending one's life due to a terminal illness is for families and for our communities. It is one of the most difficult decisions a person will ever have to make. If we, as a government, are going to weigh in on this delicate issue, we must take into account as many variables as possible to ensure this process is air tight.

The Death with Dignity Act must take into account the mental capacity of a patient, as well as the diagnosis and prognosis. Many people are told they have six months to live and then survive for 10 years. The legislation must take into account alternative remedies and experimental programs, but most importantly the mental health of patients.

As a Councilmember, I would work with community organizations, such as Whitman Walker Health to ensure we have written the best piece of legislation to address this long-standing issue within a fragile community

6. Will you press for the District to provide "Jobs Not Jails" by developing alternatives to incarceration for marginalized citizens who resort to sex work for survival?

A. Police officers have multiple opportunities to divert these marginalized citizens away from arrest. Cities across the nation have used data and objective assessment criteria to reduce arrests of its marginalized citizens in a developmentally appropriate way. As your next councilmember, I would advocate that DC reforms its efforts to ensure the first point of contact between our marginalized citizens and police does not lead to unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system.

Diversion programs, which are often developed by the police departments, are systems that allow low-level offenders to avoid criminal charges and convictions. These programs hold our marginalized citizens accountable for offenses while keeping them in school and in their communities and

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providing access to services that address unmet needs such as mental health services and family support.

7. Will you support and press for passage of a reintroduced Bill 20-63, the Police Monitoring Enhancement Amendment Act, to give the Office of Police Complaints unfettered access to information and supporting documentation of the covered law enforcement agencies?

A. When we look to our past we see images of Rodney King, Oscar Grant III and Eric Garner as heroes of transparency, because without their video footage police departments would not have dash cams or body cameras. We live in an era where transparency is vital to our communities that have such long history of inequities.

Not only should B20-63 be re-introduced, but it must provide safeguards for DC residents that ensure its compliance is not optional.

Our law enforcement officials need to understand that by placing sunshine on the shield they are guaranteeing their own safety and ensuring residents can place trust in them again.

## **YOUTH AND SENIORS**

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

A. Committing to ending homelessness includes more than building temporary housing facilities, but including wrap-around services and ensuring the locations have the necessary amenities to support a diverse population. We must commit to helping those that do not want help, or know that help is available to them without being tracked by the government – a true fear for some.

And let us not forget the importance of emphasizing and not overlooking youth homelessness, which places them on a higher trajectory of becoming chronically homeless - couch surfing is a form of homelessness – and statistically represent a disproportionate number of LGBTQ.

In order to combat homelessness, I support working with community organizations, such as Sasha Bruce, the Covenant House, So Others Might Eat, N Street Village and the National Network for Youth, where I serve as a Board Member, to ensure our homeless population has unrestricted access to their basic health needs, as well as critical support when they make the decision to accept additional services.

In regards to the transitional housing facility to be located in Ward 4, specifically 5th and Kennedy Streets, NW, I believe the plan must include the revitalization of Kennedy Street to ensure its success. Without this vital development, the transitional housing plan is guaranteed to fail as residents and neighbors alike will be unable to improve upon their quality of life.

Before engaging the community to ask feedback on the building design or the type or color of plants, we need input from business owners, residents and community associations, such as the Kennedy Street Development Association.

As an advocate for Kennedy Street, I pledge to continue working with my neighbors, the DC Government and community associations to ensure we meet our goals and create a vibrant street of restaurants, retail, affordable housing and services to meet the ever-growing neighborhood we call Brightwood Park.

## **CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES**

9. 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?

A. As a father of three girls, I instill in them the value of making a choice and how important this right is within their lives. As adults, they will have to make decisions, and as a Councilmember I would not want to take that right away from them or any other DC resident.

As Americans we enjoy the right to create a business enterprise and make a profit to support our families. I fully support DC residents that wish to open, operate or visit an adult-oriented business to include those selling cannabis related products as well.

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We must never be fearful of our constitutional rights and privileges, and when governments overstep their bounds, the people must stand up for themselves and speak out against those with closed minds.

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

- Appointed to the Board of Directors for the National Network 4 Youth, which addresses youth homelessness and how it disproportionately impacts lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.
- Appointed the inaugural director for REAL, which stands for Race, Equity And Leadership at the National League of Cities (NLC), which seeks to equip mayors and city councilmembers with the capacity to address racial equity and to expand its tent to help local leaders address broader equity concerns including income, gender, LGBTQ issues, etc.
- Led NLC's youth civic engagement portfolio, which worked with over 200 cities across the country authentically engage young people. Hosted two annual youth summits for cities and encouraged diverse participation of young people including LGBT youth.
- Partnered with the Open Society Foundations' Campaign for Black Male Achievement that worked with city leaders to development comprehensive strategies to improve life outcomes for black men and boys that including educational attainment, job opportunities violence prevention, families, and sexual identity.

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