

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

### **Brandon Todd, Democrat, Ward 4 Council Candidate**

#### **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 nondiscrimination provisions of the D.C. Human Rights Act?

No. Ensuring that District students have access to quality education is a top priority for me. In addition to the tremendous strides that the District's public schools have made, the city has also laid the foundation for high-quality public charter schools. And, because of this effort both sectors have seen remarkable growth. This is why I supported the recent reauthorization of the SOAR Act, which included funding for vouchers. Although I have publicly expressed my support for school choice, I believe it is important to note that under the SOAR Act, the federal funding received by the District covers more than just vouchers. It provides much-needed aid to both DCPS and public charter schools. In fact, a reauthorization of the SOAR Act would safeguard \$150 million in federal funds for these institutions. While I do not support practices that operate outside of protections guaranteed by the D.C. Human Rights Act, I do support funding that will ensure that our students have access to a high-quality education. I will always champion policies that protect Home Rule; however, I do not want to push policies that will ultimately hurt the District's students, especially if it means denying valuable funding for schools.

#### **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?

The District of Columbia has a proud history of supporting LGBT equality. There are several national and one locally produced report that demonstrates that despite numerous advances in equality, there are still significant health disparities facing the LGBT community. While the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs has done admirable work in trying to fulfill its legal obligation to provide support in producing an LGBT Health report, the Department of Health has failed to act and I will continue to prod them through oversight and even by introducing legislation to ensure that this important report is produced to improve our understanding of the health disparities of LGBT residents.

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?

Yes I support having the District's health budgets include targeted funds to address health disparities in the LGBT population, including in mental health and substance abuse treatment.

One of the first ways to identify these disparities is through the production of an annual LGBT health report which I strongly support the production of.

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

No. There is little dispute that the District's Fire and EMS Department has struggled over the years. Nevertheless, within the past 18 months the Department has taken significant steps towards implementing meaningful reforms. For example, in an effort to reduce response time and improve quality of care, FEMS contracted with a third-party provider to provide non-emergency care to residents. This effort was implemented so that FEMS could focus on responding to emergencies in a quick and efficient manner. While more reform is needed, I applaud recent efforts and do not believe that the agencies should be separated at this time. This is because I believe that the Department should be given sufficient time to continue its reform, particularly because the current Fire Chief was confirmed less than a year ago. Additionally, restructuring two large departments—especially departments that provide essential, lifesaving services—could have serious implications. Because of these reasons, I do not support separating Emergency Medical Services from the Fire Department. I will, however, continue to advocate for sufficient resources for FEMS so that it can continue its reforms and provide District residents with high-quality, emergency care services.

## JUDICIARY

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

Like many other policies that are currently being considered by the Council, the Death with Dignity Act is a measure that has been inspired by other states. And, like those other policies, I believe that we have to look at how this measure can work for the District, especially since this city is such a unique jurisdiction. While advocates have argued that this bill is about personal, life choices, I want to make sure that any law that deals with the end of life care is balanced and takes into account the personal views of District residents. The Council has not rushed this proposal through the legislative process and I believe that is because there are many important views, on both sides, that still need to be evaluated and considered. Nevertheless, I have supported other end of life care measures that have come before the Council, including the "Health-Care Decisions Amendment Act of 2015." This law encourages District patients to have important, detailed conversations with their doctors and families about their medical wishes, including important end of life decisions.

I look forward to reviewing the final death with dignity proposal from the Health Committee and hope that it outlines important procedures and safeguards. Once the Committee puts forth a final bill, I will be able to determine whether or not the proposal is right for the District, and for Ward 4 residents.

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?

Yes. There is a growing national movement and body of research that shows that incarceration for drug use and non-violent crimes like prostitution aren't the most effective in reducing crime or restoring the

dignity of marginalized citizens who work to survive. While I think there would be an enormous political backlash from Congress if there was legalization of prostitution, I think we can invest local dollars in providing alternatives to incarceration and leverage as many federal dollars as possible.

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?

Yes. I strongly support legislation that will increase transparency and help the Office of Police Complaints make fair and accurate decisions about any potential misconduct of law enforcement officials who are sworn to uphold the law and help citizens.

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

Yes. As a councilmember in Ward 4 I have a special passion for helping seniors, including members of the LGBT community who might not have traditional family support, find adequate and affirming shelter. I am also a strong supporter of the great work of Casa Ruby and the Wanda Alston Foundation as they provide transitional and emergency shelter for the LGBT community and also support the expansion of these programs to provide housing for members of the LGBT community who are in the foster care system.

#### 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?

Yes, the District of Columbia is a world class city and the hospitality industry generates a good deal of the District's revenue. Adult entertainment must be a part of the mix. I am committed to working with the residents in my District and the ANC's as we look at any new business that wants to open. I am committed to looking at each establishment on an individual basis.