



2018 GLAA Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates

Charles Allen, DC Council – Ward 6

HOUSING

1. Will you encourage the Department of Human Services to conduct monitoring of singles shelters to ensure that LGBTQ applicants are admitted to a shelter that corresponds to their gender identity and do not face discrimination while residing there, as required by law?

I will encourage DHS to conduct this monitoring. The Council has made strides putting additional protections into law, particularly for our LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, and we must ensure the government and providers are meeting the obligations of the law. I also support the creation of an internal task force at DHS to identify and mitigate any barriers to serving the transgender community and regular training for staff to identify bias and available remedies.

HEALTH

2. Will you press the Department of Health to work with a community advisory group and allocate necessary resources to ensure the annual completion and issuance of a trans-inclusive LGBT Health Report?

It is essential that the LGBT Health Report includes representation of transgender people, especially interventions and policies to improve the health and economic opportunities for this marginalized population. DOH's creation of an LGBT Data Working Group is a step in the right direction, and I support their continued engagement with the community and the allocation of resources needed for them to complete this important work.

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

I support ensuring that the District addresses health disparities in the LGBTQ community, including mental health and substance abuse treatment. Disparities are often a result of lack of health care due to employment discrimination, stigma, and a lack of cultural competence by medical professionals. In addition, it's important to talk about violence as a public health issue and LGBTQ individuals experience violence at higher rates. This is an issue the Department of Health's Office of Violence Prevention and Health Equity can help address. This office was included as part of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results Amendment Act of 2016

(“NEAR Act”) and as Chair of the Council’s Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, I have prioritized the full funding and implementation of all of the NEAR Act provisions.

4. Will you support legislation to boost public awareness of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) as options to prevent HIV infections through the distribution of information in health settings in accordance with Department of Health guidelines?

I would support such legislation. I was pleased to see Mayor Bowser launch new programs aimed at increasing PrEP use. PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by more than 90 percent and from injection drug use by more than 70 percent, making it essential that we increase awareness of PrEP among both medical care providers and patients. As with all our awareness efforts, it is important to reach out to communities that are often forgotten in outreach, including people of color, transgender people, the deaf and hard of hearing, seniors, and immigrants.

JUDICIARY

5. Will you support Bill 22-0515, 'Reducing Criminalization to Improve Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2017', to improve community safety and health by removing criminal penalties for engaging in commercial sex?

I support the decriminalization of commercial sex work and I believe that the District should begin community conversations about the impact of the criminalization of commercial sex work on District residents, and particularly LGBTQ residents and residents of color. I do have some concerns about the specific proposal currently before the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I had met, prior to the bill’s introduction, with the Sex Worker Advocacy Coalition -- which was leading the charge behind its introduction -- and asked for their support in educating District residents about the realities of sex work and its criminalization, any related quality of life concerns shared by our neighbors, and the bill’s provisions. Many bills before the Committee require broad coalitions and significant investments of time and effort in community engagement in order to gain support from Committee members and move forward successfully. This engagement did not take place prior the bill’s introduction. Instead, the bill was introduced by its sponsor without conversations in the community, the Coalition itself was not fully informed of its introduction, and there were also concerns within the sex work and anti-trafficking communities about some of its provisions having unintended and negative consequences. I think there should be further conversations around the bill’s proposals to decriminalize the solicitation of sex, pandering, and brothel operations, and the effect decriminalization might have on survivors of sex trafficking and on sex workers. I have shared my thoughts on these aspects of the bill with a number of service providers whose clients would be affected.

As a legislator, and particularly as the Judiciary Committee Chair, I am committed to health- and social services-based supports for individuals who consensually engage in sex work and those who are trafficked. I also recognize that legislation – particularly criminal justice legislation – must move forward with a broad base of coalition, community, and Council support. I am committed to a continued partnership with both sex work and anti-trafficking



advocates on the long-lasting and collateral consequences of the criminalization of women and LGBTQ individuals who engage in commercial sex.

6. What opportunities would you support through legislation to improve the lives of marginalized communities who engage in commercial sex work?

In addition to my response to Question #5 above, one program that has grown out of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results Amendment Act of 2016 (“NEAR Act”) -- the Metropolitan Police Department and the Department of Behavioral Health’s joint pre-arrest diversion program -- holds promise in this area. I supported an investment in the FY18 and FY19 budgets of \$1 million each year for this program, the goal of which is to reduce crime and increase access to social services by enhancing the coordination between law enforcement and health and human services agencies. The program represents an opportunity to better use diversion for health and social services issues that should be addressed through case work or other forms of support, rather than criminalization. I have worked with several organizations serving LGBTQ individuals to facilitate their engagement with this diversion program.

7. What opportunities would you support through legislation to improve the lives of marginalized citizens who resort to sex work for survival?

In addition to my responses to Questions #5 and #6 above, I am leading a review in the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety of the District’s criminal record sealing and expungement laws, and we will be moving legislation out of the Committee in the fall. Criminal records present enormous barriers to reentry into society, such as by limiting access to housing or employment, and a large percentage of District residents have criminal records. Often, individuals who resort to sex work for survival have prostitution and other arrests and convictions on their records, and our current sealing process is convoluted, limited, and ripe for reform.

Relatedly, I am also moving B22-0329, the “Trafficking Survivors Relief Amendment Act of 2017”, through Committee to vacate (a more comprehensive form of expungement) the convictions of individuals convicted of the offense of prostitution and certain related offenses that were the result of their experiences being trafficked. The District will be leading in this area, as only a small number of jurisdictions allow for vacating these types of convictions.

Further, I introduced B22-0523, the “Removing Barriers to Occupational Licenses Amendment Act of 2017”, which would create a commonsense standard for considering individuals’ criminal histories in occupational licensing. The current process is haphazard and unevenly applied. The goal is to make it easier for individuals with criminal histories unrelated to that occupation to become licensed.

As we continue to look for all opportunities to help marginalized and working individuals, I have helped lead the fight for \$15 by advancing a minimum wage increase for all District workers, including increasing the tipped minimum wage. I funded the first full-time wage theft attorney positions in the Office of the Attorney General to ensure enforcement of our strong wage theft laws, and introduced and passed the Wage Theft Prevention Clarification and



Overtime Fairness Amendment Act to give workers greater protections from losing wages and other benefits including sick leave or paid time off they had rightfully earned.

8. 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?

Almost all the provisions in this bill were included in the NEAR Act, which I supported when it came to the full Council for a vote (and the implementation of which I am also now responsible for overseeing, as I chair the Committee with oversight of the Office of Police Complaints (“OPC”). The NEAR Act actually went further than the introduced bill by also allowing the OPC to review information on the race, national origin, gender, and age of complainants and officers, as well as all use of force, serious use of force, and serious physical injury incidents. I support a strong OPC to strengthen public trust in law enforcement, and I think the way the NEAR Act moved all citizen complaints of police misconduct from MPD to OPC is more streamlined and transparent.

9. Will you support legislation to develop an avenue for sealing court-ordered name and/or gender/sex change process?

I would support such legislation. There would likely be issues that would arise related to title searches or notice to interested parties like creditors and financial institutions, but those could be explored in a Committee hearing. I also would consider whether survivors of certain crimes like stalking or domestic violence should also be included for name change purposes. The Council recently passed legislation I authored -- B22-0037, the “Address Confidentiality Amendment Act of 2018” -- which raised similar issues and implementation challenges around protecting survivors’ abilities to access social services without fearing for their safety due to public disclosure of their identities.

HUMAN RIGHTS

10. While the unemployment rate in the District is 6.6%, approximately half of transgender people in DC report being unemployed. What steps will you take to address this persisting economic disparity in a timely and sustainable manner?

According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, more than 90% of transgender people have experienced harassment in the workplace due to their gender identity, and at least 47% said they experienced an adverse job outcome. While DC has clear laws prohibiting this discrimination, education and enforcement are key to making the law meaningful. The Office of Human Rights has conducted several outreach campaigns related to transgender people, including its Valuing Transgender Applicants & Employees: A Best Practice Guide for Employers as a proactive step to reducing workplace discrimination and transphobic bias in hiring.

Legislation that would develop an avenue for sealing name and gender/sex changes would also assist in reducing stigma that may lead to employment challenges. I introduced B22-0523, the “Removing Barriers to Occupational Licenses Amendment Act of 2017”, to create a commonsense standard for considering individuals’ criminal histories in occupational



licensing. The current process is haphazard and unevenly applied. The goal is to make it easier for individuals with criminal histories unrelated to that occupation to become licensed. I am also leading a review in the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety of the District's criminal record sealing and expungement laws, and we will be moving legislation out of the Committee in the fall. Criminal records present enormous barriers to employment, and many individuals who resort to sex work for survival have prostitution and other arrests and convictions on their records, keeping them from accessing many job opportunities. I welcome the opportunity to discuss other suggestions from the community on how to tackle this persistent economic disparity.

YOUTH

11. Will you support improved services and treatment for homeless LGBTQ youth, including transitional housing?

Yes, I support improved services and treatment for homeless LGBTQ youth. We have seen the success of programs like Casa Ruby and Wanda Alston House and we need to build on those successes. We also need to provide our homeless LGBT youth with education and employment training, and other social services. We also need to ensure robust implementation of the anti-bullying law; and aggressive enforcement of the Human Rights Act. I would support the creation of a smartphone app and other social media outreach to connect LGBTQ youth with resources and supports.

SENIORS

12. Will you support improved services and treatment for LGBTQ seniors, including affirming senior housing?

Yes, I support the work of Age-Friendly DC to address the needs of LGBTQ seniors and would support additional resources to ensure the adoption of LGBTQ-affirming policies among all service providers as well as training on the needs of LGBTQ individuals and persons living with HIV. I am a strong proponent of ensuring our senior residents are able to age-in-place - I've led the way to ensure the city is constructing affordable housing specifically for seniors, including our LGBT seniors. My Safe At Home bill created a grant program that provides funds to help seniors and neighbors with disabilities to modify their homes. So far, more than 1,000 projects funded through this program have helped DC residents age-in-place so they can stay in their homes longer.

When I first started on the Council, I helped our Hill East neighbors stop a controversial planned construction project and go back to the drawing board. The community and I wanted to see more senior-specific housing in place. By bringing together the community, we are now in the planning phase of a project that will bring market-rate and affordable housing units for seniors. I have supported the Capitol Village model, which uses a mix of public funding and volunteers in the community to help all of our seniors age-in-place. In all of these projects, I support ensuring they are inclusive to our LGBT-seniors and offers them a place to call home with an affirming community to surround them.



13. LGBT seniors are more likely to age alone, and face higher levels of economic insecurity and discrimination than non-LGBT seniors. Will you support funding for congregate meals and other services that specifically aim to keep LGBT seniors engaged in the community?

Yes, I have been supportive of providing the resources and funding our Department of Aging needs to provide meals to seniors who are homebound or shut-in and lack the means to have regular, healthy meals. I know especially in colder months when we might have bad weather, these meals are often lifesaving both for their nourishment, but also for the human interaction that can come along with them. Congregate Meal Programs in particular are an effective approach to reducing social isolation and allowing seniors to live independently longer. I support DC Office on Aging creating LGBTQ-specific programming and services led by culturally competent staff to better serve District LGBTQ seniors.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

14. To fight the District's notorious 'pay-to-play' reputation, will you support enacting legislation that combines the best elements of Bills 22-8, 22-47, and 22-51?

Absolutely, and my Committee will be doing so before the summer recess when we move omnibus legislation forward for a Committee vote. The bill will combine the best of all four pending campaign finance measures (including my bill, B22-0107, the “Campaign Finance Reform Amendment Act of 2017”) into a comprehensive measure to address pay-to-play by government contractors, better regulate coordination between candidates and political committees, strengthen disclosure, and make necessary reforms to the Office of Campaign Finance. On the latter issue, I have convened a working group of good government organizations and campaign finance technology experts to consider how the Office can better use technology to make its campaign finance data more transparent and accessible to the public.

15. What steps will you take to ensure a transparent and equitable bidding process for city contracts?

I strongly support greater transparency and equity in the District’s procurement efforts. I co-introduced B22-0395, the Accessible and Transparent Procurement Amendment Act of 2017, to require that the Office of Contracting and Procurement maintain an internet site that provides machine-readable and searchable information on all solicitations and contracts of \$25,000 or more including related laws, rules, and policies. The bill received final approval by the Council in April and has been sent to the Mayor for her signature.

I also co-introduced B21-0334, the Procurement Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability Amendment Act of 2015, to reform the District's procurement processes, which became law in October 2016. It created an Office of the Ombudsman for Contracting and Procurement and provides for enhanced transparency in the District's contracting and procurement practices. These bills are major steps forward in reforming the District’s contracting and procurement policies, and will continue working toward greater transparency and equity to ensure the highest level of accountability in how tax dollars are spent.



Your record is part of your rating. Please list any actions that you have taken that may help illustrate your record on behalf of LGBTQ people.

- On January 6, 2015, at the first legislative meeting as a Councilmember, I introduced the **Collaborative Reproduction Amendment Act**, which removed criminal penalties for surrogacy agreements and instead authorized the use of surrogacy, set up requirements for the parties and the agreement itself, and established the effect of various post-agreement scenarios.
- Just last month, the Council unanimously passed my bill, the **Address Confidentiality Amendment Act of 2018**, which creates a program for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking to have their home address hidden in public record. The law extends these same protections to employees and volunteers working at organizations serving this population, including reproductive health clinics. Currently, there is no way for a survivor who fears their assailant finding them to hide their home address when they register to vote, sign-up a child to attend public school and much more. As a result, we see survivors withdraw from public engagement.
- Co-introduced the **Nonbinary Identification Cards Amendment Act of 2017**, which would allow residents applying for a drivers license or ID card at the DMV to choose a gender-neutral identifier. I expect the Council to act on this measure before the end of the year.
- Co-introduced and moved through my Committee, the **Sense of the Council Supporting Passage of the Equality Act Resolution of 2017**, which declares that Congress should pass the Equality Act of 2018 to ensure that federal civil rights laws are fully inclusive of protections from discrimination based on sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- Co-sponsored and supported the **LGBTQ Cultural Competency Continuing Education Amendment Act of 2015**, which requires licensed health professionals to take 2 credits of instruction pertinent to cultural competency or specialized clinical training that focuses on LGBTQ patients as part of the continuing education requirements for any license, registration, or certification.
- Co-introduced the **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Health Disparities Documentation Act of 2016**, which would have required the Department of Health to include questions pertaining to the respondents' sexual orientation and gender identity among other questions as part of the data collection for DOH's annual report on the health of the District's LGBTQ population.
- **Marriage Equality** in the District of Columbia:
 - As president of the Ward 6 Democrats, I was one of only a handful of Ward Democratic presidents to both lead their organization through a successful endorsement vote for the District's 2009 Marriage Equality effort, and testify



in-person before the Council of the District of Columbia to support the legislation.

- As Chief of Staff for Councilmember Tommy Wells, I was his staff lead for the District's Marriage Equality legislation.
- Following the successful Marriage Equality campaign in the District, I partnered with my friend, former-Delegate Heather Mizeur, to create DC-based events and fundraising efforts to stand in solidarity with the **2012 Maryland Marriage Equality ballot initiative**.
- As Council staff, I helped lead the successful effort to pass **B19-11, the Youth Bullying Prevention Act of 2012**. When the Council passed this bill, the most recent data from 2009 revealed that 25% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual identified middle school students reported bullying at school because someone thought they were gay. Bullying of the youth LGBT community impacts school attendance as well, with 9% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual high school students reported missing 4 or more days of school in the previous 30 days (as compared to 1% of heterosexual students).
- As Council staff, I helped lead the successful effort to pass **B20-118, the Marriage Officiant Amendment Act of 2013**. This bill acknowledged the rights of non-religious or secular couples to have a marriage celebrated by an officiant of their choosing, just as religious couples do. Previously, officiants could only be judges, court clerks, or religious celebrants.
- As Council staff, I helped lead the successful effort to pass **B20-142, the JaParker Deoni Jones Birth Certificate Equality Amendment Act of 2013**. When the Council passed this legislation, it was immediately one of the most progressive laws to protect transgender individuals and remove discriminatory barriers and hurdles to employment, housing, and education.
- As Council staff, I helped lead the successful effort to pass **B20-35, the Domestic Violence Hotline Establishment Act of 2014**. The legislation was introduced as a stand-alone bill, and then incorporated within the FY2014 budget, to establish a 24-hour toll-free hotline to assist victims and potential victims of domestic violence.
- As Council staff, I worked closely with **medical marijuana dispensaries** to navigate the city's regulatory hurdles and provide services to patients. The dispensary located in Ward 6 has earned widespread support and I have continued working with the operators to outline necessary changes to the District's laws and regulations to reform the list of qualifying conditions to ensure equitable access for patients in need.
- As Council staff, I worked closely with **local non-profits that serve and support the LGBT community** – ranging from organizations such as Food and Friends to the DC Strokes Rowing Club – to provide letters of support, grant application support, and technical assistance.
- As Policy Director for the DC Primary Care Association from 2002 to 2005, I worked closely with health care providers to **expand access to health care services for all DC**



residents, in particular LGBT individuals who relied on DC Healthcare Alliance and DC Medicaid.

- I organized and testified annually on the District’s fiscal year budget proposals and at performance oversight hearings, including successfully increasing funding and program capacity for the Department of Health and the HIV/AIDS Administration.
 - I worked with the Whitman-Walker Clinic to expand access to federal resources and laid the groundwork for the recognition of the center as a Federally Qualified Health Center “Look Alike” in 2007. This designation -- and the 2013 designation as a Fully Qualified Health Center -- resulted in substantial financial strengths to ensure the health center can provide care to all of its patients.
 - I played a key role in creating the DC Medical Homes program that provides capital support to non-profit health centers to expand access to primary care. Among other health centers, this program invested \$750,000 in upgrade funding to the Max Robinson Center.
- As president of the Ward 6 Democrats, **I organized lobby days to Congress** to advocate for the removal of damaging federal budget riders – such as the prohibition on needle exchange – as to push for full representation and budget autonomy for the District.

Your answers should be typed in a separate document 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 Friday, May 4, to GLAA, P.O. Box 75265, Washington, D.C. 20013; or email it as an attachment in PDF format (for loading on GLAA's website) to equal@glaa.org. Thank you.

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