

# Ed Lazere

★ ★ ★ *for* COUNCIL CHAIR

D E M O C R A T

Ed Lazere, Democratic Candidate for DC Council Chair

2018 GLAA Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates

Submitted May 4, 2018

**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 have been an advocacy leader working to end homelessness in the District and to improve the quality of the city's homeless shelters. That includes advocating for adequate funding to provide permanent supportive housing for all residents experiencing chronic homelessness and to improve the very poor quality of shelters for singles, including improvements in facilities and services like food, linens, and pest control.

As Council Chair, I will continue to work to make sure all residents experiencing homelessness receive help with dignity. That includes ensuring that DHS staff receive culturally appropriate training on gender identity and that residents are able to access shelter that matches their gender identity.

**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?**

DC's LGBT Health Report needs to reflect that trans residents face especially high rates of discrimination and marginalization that affects health and well-being. DOH should formally and actively engage trans residents (such as through the new LGBT Data Working Group) as the report is developed to ensure that it accurately and fully reflects these challenges and includes policy prescriptions to meet these challenges.



**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 have been an advocate to improve access to behavioral health services, including to increase funding for the Department of Behavioral Health to support mental health providers serving low-income residents. Low reimbursement rates and low funding levels have threatened the survival of many community-based providers in the MHRS system, and contributed to the closure of some providers. I also have advocated to set high standards for Essential Health Benefits for private insurers offering health plans through DC HealthLink (our healthcare exchange).

As Council Chair, I will work to adequately fund mental health and substance abuse treatment, and to ensure that our budgets target funds to address LGBTQ health disparities.

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

While DC has made progress in addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis, more remains to be done. There are still too many residents who do not know their status or who are HIV-positive and not receiving care. I will work to support more outreach to target populations, including trans residents, on access to pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis. I also will work to ensure that residents who are diagnosed with HIV are getting care; nearly one-fourth are not, and that rate is likely to be higher among trans residents.

**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?**

Criminalizing sex work and over-policing makes our communities less safe and increases health risks. Because of this, I support Bill 22-0515, 'Reducing Criminalization to Improve Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2017.' We should not jail people who have turned to sex work, especially because discrimination and exclusion have prevented many from supporting themselves in the formal economy.

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

The first thing I would do is support the decriminalization of sex work. I have long been an advocate of services that address the impacts of economic inequity -- including policies to

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provide income support, homeless services, and housing assistance -- and that create economic opportunities for marginalized communities.

I will fully fund DC's plan to end homelessness, including youth homelessness. I will work to double the city's investments in affordable housing, and make sure that affordable housing programs target residents with the lowest incomes.

I will work to expand adult literacy education, which currently reaches only a fraction of residents in need and often fails to reach those with the most serious literacy challenges. And I will work to create a comprehensive workforce development system, as opposed to the current jumble of programs that are not well coordinated and not adequately evaluated.

I also will support efforts to improve the employment prospects of LGBTQ residents. That includes vigorous enforcement of employment anti-discrimination policies, through enhanced enforcement staff and more proactive and strategic enforcement efforts -- as opposed to the current complaint-based enforcement system. I also will support creating guidance for all private-sector employers in the District to help them create trans-friendly workplace policies.

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

As Council Chair, I will support decriminalizing sex work and support work for a range of investments that will support residents, especially those who resort to sex for survival, making their lives more stable and helping find alternatives to sex work.

**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?**

I will work to make sure our communities have faith in our ability to hold officers accountable when they violate Metropolitan Police Department policy and procedures. It is distressing to know, based on new data available under the NEAR Act, that police use of force has been on the rise. We currently have independent investigations, but the ultimate disciplinary authority lies with the Metropolitan Police Department. I will work to strengthen the Office of Police Complaints by giving it full access to information on police encounters with residents and the authority to discipline officers when a complaint is sustained, to increase the confidence of citizens that bad actors will be held accountable.

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

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Sealing gender and name changes is critical to protecting the confidentiality and safety of transgender residents. As Council Chair, I will work to ensure that name and gender changes can be sealed at the request of the person seeking the change.

**HUMAN RIGHTS. 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?**

The unemployment rate for transgender people in DC is unacceptable. I will work with allies in the transgender community and members of the Council to expand and strengthen our laws against discrimination to ensure that no is prevent from attaining a good job because of their gender identity.

Outside of the labor market, we know that members of the transgender community face incredible discrimination and are often the targets of over policing. This can result in a disruption of or loss of employment, housing instability and or homelessness, loss of access of healthcare, toxic stress, disruption of their education are more.

I will support efforts to improve the employment prospects of LGBTQ residents. That includes vigorous enforcement of employment anti- discrimination policies, through enhanced enforcement staff and more proactive and strategic enforcement efforts -- as opposed to the current complaint-based enforcement system. I also will support creating guidance for all private-sector employers in the District to help them create trans-friendly workplace policies.

Finally, I support decriminalizing sex work, knowing that many trans people turn to this because of discrimination that affects their ability to succeed in the traditional economy. Criminal penalties for sex work only worsen the economic marginalization of trans people.

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

We know that too many LGBTQ youth end up homeless and represent a large share of the homeless youth population. This means that we need culturally appropriate services targeted on homeless youth who are LGBTQ, like the housing now provided by SMYAL and other organizations. These groups could serve more youth if they had additional funding.

I have been an advocate to fully fund and implement DC's Homeward DC plan to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. As Council Chair, I will work to fully fund DC's plan to end homelessness, including ending youth homelessness.

I also will work to double the city's investments in affordable housing, and make sure that affordable housing programs target residents with the lowest incomes. This can help ensure that youth who become homeless can transition to permanent housing.

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

As noted, my campaign recognizes that the loss of affordable housing is the most important issue facing DC residents and DC's future, and I'm committed to doubling funding for all of DC's major housing programs, including the Housing Production Trust Fund and the Local Rent Supplement Program. As part of that, I will work to ensure that a portion of the Housing Production Trust Fund is used to meet needs of selected populations with special needs, including older LGBTQ residents.

I will work to promote options for shared housing for older LGBTQ residents. The District should explore ways to connect older adults with extra rooms in their homes with other older adults needing affordable housing. This would address both the issue of affordable housing and social isolation.

I also will work to support training of employees of direct-service DC government agencies -- and their contractors -- to address trans bias and support culturally competent treatment of LGBTQ clients. This will include agencies and programs serving older residents.

**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?**

Many older DC residents live in isolation. I will work for better outreach to older adults, and for well-coordinated and accessible transportation options. Both are critical to ending that isolation.

I also will work to support creative community dining options for older residents, at senior wellness centers but also other locations.

As noted above, I also will work to support training of employees of direct-service DC government agencies -- and their contractors -- to address trans bias and support culturally competent and welcoming treatment of LGBTQ residents. This will include senior wellness centers and other programs serving older residents.

**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?**

I am concerned about corporate influence on campaigns and supported Initiative 70 to ban all corporate contributions. I believe that elections should be funded by individuals and not powerful institutions. I am not taking any corporate or PAC funding for this election.

I was also a strong supporter of Fair Elections and have pledged to participate in the program once enacted.

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I support legislation to prohibit businesses that make campaign contributions from seeking government contracts or grants for at least two years after the contribution. This helps avoid any appearance or actual occurrence of pay-to-play politics. I also support other reforms to put restrictions on bundling and to prohibit candidates/elected officials from encouraging donations to PACs and independent expenditure committees.

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

DC residents need to have faith that contracts are fairly advertised and that they are fairly reviewed, to avoid any appearance of contract favoritism. In addition to barring companies making campaign contributions from seeking contracts for at least two years, I will work to limit sole-source contracting. I also will work to make sure that the contract bidding process for all major contracts is transparent, gives applicants adequate time for preparation, provides technical support and assistance for applicants needing it, and limits provisions/restrictions that would make it hard for small organizations (smaller non-profits and small businesses) to qualify. Too many community-based providers and small organizations that can serve DC residents well are barred from participating by restrictive provisions.

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