

2018 GLAA Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates



Kent C. Boese

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?**

RESPONSE: Yes. Before the U.S. Department of Housing and Development issued its rule ensuring equal access to housing and services regardless of gender identity in 2016, almost a third of transgender people who tried to stay at a homeless shelter were turned away, while slightly fewer than half were placed in facilities for a gender they did not identify with. Thankfully the law now requires that LGBTQ applicants must be admitted to a shelter that corresponds to their gender identity. But having good laws is not enough – oversight, education, and trained staff are also essential to ensuring that every person needing shelter is respected and does not face discrimination.

I was greatly disappointed by the Council's passage of the Homeless Reform Act of 2017, raising proof of residency requirements for access to the City's homeless shelters. This is a problem because of complex circumstances that led to homelessness, many homeless LGBTQ youth are unable to meet residency requirements and therefore denied access to homeless shelters. I found it more troubling that our Ward 1 Councilmember stated "We have to draw the line somewhere". This statement reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the many reasons LGBTQ teens experience homelessness and to me was hurtful.

The Department of Human Services must have a holistic way of assessing shelter services and monitoring singles shelters to ensure that shelter policies and procedures result in safe environments supportive of people of all genders and gender identities. The needs of LGBTQ applicants need to be met from first contact through residency, programming, support groups, case management, transitional housing, and all the way to leaving the shelter. Furthermore, shelter facilities need to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that everything from intake forms, housing arrangements, and toilet and shower facilities serve the needs of LGBTQ applicants and their gender identity.

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?**

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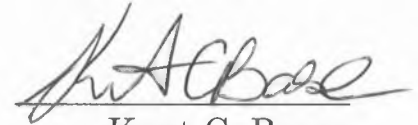
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RESPONSE: Yes, we need more resources to ensure that the annual trans-inclusive LGBT Health Report is completed on time and available to the community. I definitely would support working with a community advisory group and work to allocate the necessary resources to get this accomplished. While the most recent *Report on the Health of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community in the District of Columbia* that is currently available is good, I see several areas where it must improve. My observations about this report are that it only contains data through 2016, it is undated leaving people reading the report to question its accuracy and currency, is difficult to nearly impossible to find on the Department of Health Website, and clearly states that information collected in 2017 will be released in late 2018. These issues must be addressed for any health report to be useful and inform us of necessary actions to keep the community healthy and safe. We also need to continually review if we are asking all the right questions and collecting the right data, and this would be one of the many valuable contributions that a community advisory group would add to the process.

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?

RESPONSE: Definitely. We need to target funds and mandate data collection so that we can serve the specific needs of the LGBTQ community and ensure that every District resident has access to quality health care services. Far too many LGBT people face bias and discrimination when seeking health care. People who identify as bisexual, transgender people, and people of color are especially impacted by bias and discrimination when seeking health care services. I know firsthand that by not addressing the special needs of LGBT health, recovery, and therapy programs, tragedy is too often the result. My first long-term relationship in the 1980s and 1990s was with a man that was never truly comfortable with his sexuality identity and suffered from bipolar disorder. The lack of mental health programs and services for LGBTQ people, and his introvertive nature, resulted in his never getting the mental health care he needed. Ultimately this lead to the end of our relationship, though we were able to remain friends. In 2014 he took his life rather than deal with the pain of ending another relationship. His mental health needs, particularly the special needs for LGBTQ people, were never recognized or treated. I know my experience is far from unique and that is unacceptable. The loss of one life due to a failure to fund necessary programs that serve the needs of every resident is one life too many.

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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?**

RESPONSE: I will support legislation and any other efforts that boost public awareness of PrEP and PEP as options to prevent HIV infections. A lack of awareness is especially acute among black women, black MSM, and transgender women despite higher levels of HIV in these communities. Not only must we find effective ways to increase public awareness in these communities, but we must also effectively target often overlooked communities such as seniors, the deaf, immigrants, and transgender people. The District's efforts to bring greater awareness to PrEP and PEP in 2017 are appreciated, but the Department of Health, in particular, needs to be tasked with providing sustained public awareness campaigns if we are to fully achieve the benefits these options contribute to reducing new HIV cases in the District of Columbia.

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?**

RESPONSE: Yes, I would be proud to support Councilmembers Grosso and White in their common-sense approach and much needed effort to reducing criminalization of commercial sex work. I have long believed that laws and approaches that do not have positive impacts on the activities they seek to control, and especially those that have severe negative impacts on people engaged in targeted activities, must be rethought and redirected. The criminalization of sex work places vulnerable District resident at greater risk of violence, police harassment, and exploitation. It has created additional barriers to traditional employment for those engaging in survival sex and created a cycle of violence, poverty, and incarceration. Notably, the criminalization of sex work has a greater negative impact on groups already facing discrimination, including communities of color, gay and trans people, people with disabilities, immigrants, and people with criminal convictions. For these reasons, it is imperative that we break the cycle of discrimination and embrace policies and laws that align with District values.

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

RESPONSE: While passing the 'Reducing Criminalization to Improve Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2017' is critical, equally important is the research component of the bill which would provide comprehensive data to gauge what sex

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workers need to stabilize their lives – including their needs regarding social services and fairer working conditions. I would support efforts to review the laws, policies, and practices related to policing and regulation of consensual adult sex, and amend or introduce new legislation to guarantee protection of the right to associate, health, and freedom from violence for all residents. One early step would be the review of the Prostitution Free Zone Act, and consideration of amending or repealing the law.

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

RESPONSE: As has been recommended for over a decade now, an important step we can take is to end the practice of profiling people as prostitutes based on personal appearance, gender identity, categorization as a “known prostitute” or similar factors. Such practices are discriminatory and intrude upon personal civil liberties. Moreover, I would recommend that records of arrests and incarceration related to sex work be expunged or sealed, and that we make it illegal to deny employment based upon past sex work convictions. I would lastly encourage the DC government generally, and the Mayor’s office in particular, to hire marginalized citizens who have resorted to sex work for survival.

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?

RESPONSE: Absolutely. Credibility, accountability, and integrity start with transparency. The time is long passed for this bill to become law. Unfettered access to information and documents allowing the Office of Police Complaints (OPC) to provide much needed oversight of our law enforcement agencies is important and necessary. It is disappointing that this bill has already been introduced three times, first in 2009, and again in 2011 and 2013. Since this bill was last introduced, there has been increased concerns and demands for improved police oversight both in DC and nationwide. Many residents do not know that there is an OPC, and residents who personally visit a police station or call MPD to ask about registering a complaint have been met with hostility far too often. We must have an independent review process that has access to all relevant data in order to conduct unbiased investigations.

The recently passed NEAR Act may lead to an increase in police complaints, making the OPC’s role all the more necessary. The act includes training for MPD officers on community policing, bias-free policing, and cultural competency, as well as new surveys

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and data collection to assess the current relationship between MPD and District residents and to better track trends in crime, police stops, and use of force.

With all the additional data being collected, and residents demanding better accountability and oversight, we must have an empowered and informed OPC that all can trust to conduct unbiased reviews and needed oversight of our law enforcement agencies.

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

RESPONSE: Yes. I am eager to introduce and/or support legislation to accomplish this. We must develop an avenue for sealing court-ordered name and/or gender/sex change process if we truly value individual rights and are committed to fighting discrimination. I take individuals right to privacy very seriously, as time and again all too often personal information has been used to discriminate and hurt. Accurate and consistent IDs are necessary to open bank accounts, start jobs, go to school, and travel. Yet the name and gender change process is complicated. Today, many states and the federal government have intrusive and burdensome requirements making it impossible for members of the trans community to update their IDs. Once again, the District has an opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of its residents and lead by example.

The 2016 U.S. Transgender Survey reported that one-fifth of transgender people have updated all of their IDs and records and one-third had updated none of their IDs. Gender incongruent identification exposes people to denial of employment, housing, harassment and physical violence. We must improve access to gender appropriate IDs for the health and welfare of our community and having a process for sealing court-ordered name and/or gender/sex change is a beneficial and necessary part of that effort.

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?

RESPONSE: The lack of employment opportunities for transgender people in DC is well known, and something that must be addressed. Employment discrimination has forced many trans people into the grey economy, including survival sex. This is unacceptable, and not just because the District has the largest percentage of transgender individuals in the nation. Steps that we must take include:

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- Providing sufficient support, both through funding and staff, through the appropriate District agencies to investigate complaints of hiring discrimination;
- Increase fines and penalties for those found to discriminate against transgender people in the employment process;
- Provide more funding for organizations serving our transgender neighbors, so that they have the specialized social and emotional support services they need as it relates to transgender discrimination in the workplace;
- Require the Department of Employment Services to have dedicated services specifically addressing workplace and transgender hiring discrimination; and,
- Encourage the DC government generally, and the Mayor's office in particular, to hire transgender people.

YOUTH

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

RESPONSE: This is a critical need in our city. A 2015 census of 330 homeless youths found that nearly half of the District's homeless teens identified as LGBTQ. Providing access to shelters is great, but we need to do more and this must include transitional housing. I would like to see the District's Homeward DC strategic plan have a stronger emphasis on addressing LGBTQ youth to produce additional housing for homeless LGBTQ teens like SMYAL transitional housing center in Northeast, which opened in January 2017. Transitional housing is not just important because it provides a safe space for teens who have been turned away from their families, but also because they can provide services to help LGBTQ teens find and maintain a job, enroll in school, and manage their savings so they can succeed once they are living on their own.

SENIORS

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

RESPONSE: Yes. I'm proud of my work to put 166 new housing options to seniors on fixed incomes into the development pipeline for the Georgia Avenue and Columbia Heights/Petworth communities. This includes 90 senior units at the former Hebrew Home building at 1125 Spring Road, and 76 senior units in the New Communities Park Morton effort. While these are both great, they aren't necessarily focused on the needs, services, and treatment of LGBTQ seniors. We must have a diversity of housing options and specialized services for LGBTQ seniors. Seniors who've lost a partner and are not longer

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able to live independently may need to look for supportive housing in Maryland or Virginia due to a lack of facilities in the District. Furthermore, when moving to these facilities they may go back into the closet. Seniors must never have to choose between who they are and getting the care and services they need. I will support both housing that specifically serves LGBTQ seniors as well as LGBTQ-affirming housing that is part of a diverse senior community. Lastly, I would like to see the District take a more active role in establishing these types of housing, similar to the District's efforts to provide affirming housing for teens and homeless people.

- 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?**

RESPONSE: Yes, I will support funding for congregate meals and services specifically aimed to keep LGBT seniors engaged in the community. We need to make the needs of LGBTQ seniors a high priority. I would specifically like to see more LGBTQ-focused programs and activities at the District's senior wellness centers, overseen by the Office on Aging. I am very familiar with the Bernice Fonteneau Senior Wellness Center on Georgia Avenue which I have supported since opening, and know that the seniors that regularly participate in the center's programs are living happier, healthier lives. I want this for our LGBTQ seniors too. To do this, we should require that all employees of the Office on Aging participate in LGBTQ cultural competency training and collaborate with LGBTQ groups that have expertise in the special needs of our 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 22-9, 22-47, and 22-51?**

RESPONSE: I heartily support enacting legislation that achieves the goals of B22-0009, B22-0047, and B22-0051. As an unpaid elected Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for nearly eight years, I have personally considered every issue from the position of what is in the best interest of the District of Columbia, as a whole. Councilmembers need to embrace the same high standards. There must be a separation from big money from special interests and Councilmembers as some legislators in the past have succumbed to temptation and not always behaved in a manner that safeguards the public interest, the

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public trust, or behaved in a manner that was beyond reproach. The three bills here referenced would accomplish the following important goals:

- Ban collaboration between PACs and political candidates and/or their agents;
- Prohibit District government contracts valued at \$100,000 or more with businesses and individuals that have made political contributions for one year;
- Establish restrictions on bundled contributions; and,
- Establish new disclosure requirements.

Collectively, these goals introduce safeguards and reasonable checks and balances that get to the heart of the District's "pay-to-play" reputation.

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

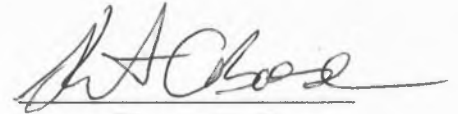
RESPONSE: I'm interested in the work of the Open Contracting Partnership, which launched in 2013 to promote increased disclosure and participation in public contracting. It has a set of Open Contracting Global Principles and aims to deliver better deals for governments, provide a level playing field for the private sector, and high-quality goods and services for citizens. Governments in countries such as in Canada, Ukraine or Paraguay or cities such as Mexico City and Montreal are already implementing the Open Contracting data standard. I'd like to see what we can learn from their experiences and if there are best practices we can adopt for our own city contracts.

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.

I have served as an openly gay elected commissioner serving on Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A since 2011, making me one of the longer continually serving gay representatives in Ward 1, especially following the loss of Jim Graham. I've consistently considered every matter before me fairly and am a consensus builder. I've also been an active member of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club since 2014 including marching/participating in annual pride parades and participating in the 2017 Equality March for Unity and Pride with the Stein Club. In April, I also receive the Gertrude Stein Endorsement in the Ward 1 race, with 70% of the Club's support.

I have been actively engaged in preserving and expanding housing, including housing for low- and moderate incomes in Ward 1, throughout my 8 years as an elected Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner, and especially during the past 5 years at the Commission's Chair. I've built strong partnerships throughout the District agencies such as the New Communities Initiative and the District Housing and Community Development agency. I've also learned and developed a

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level of expertise allowing me to leverage the District's Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning regulations, and the District's historic preservation laws to work with developers to shape community compatible development resulting in more than **1,000 new housing units** both delivered and in the development pipeline. Most importantly, the developments I've personally helped shape and fought for have accomplished the following:

- No displacement!
- 172 units of new housing at or below 60% AMI
- 64 units of new housing at or below 50% AMI
- 58 new units of housing at or below 30% AMI
- 147 replacement public housing units at or below 30% AMI, and
- 166 units of new senior housing at or below 60% AMI

My work, particularly in getting the Park Morton New Communities back on track, has especially helped low-income families, African-American families, and low-income LGBTQ families living at Park Morton. My ability to identify the core issue preventing Park Morton from moving forward, and then successfully advocate with the solution, will help the District deliver on its promise of new, dignified housing for residents who have been waiting a long time.

While the above results are promising, there is still a lot of work to do especially to deliver much needed housing and service to the LGTBQ community. We need to craft stronger language for policy priorities into the District's Comprehensive Plan in support of equitable city-wide development, addressing housing affordability, resident displacement and strengthening tenants' rights. We also need to make sure that the language in the Comprehensive Plan is implemented through agency action.