

## 2018 GLAA Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates

### 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?

**[Yes. One of the true moral failures of our DC Council is the neglect we have shown our neighbors living in shelters. DC General is the face of this problem, and is located in Ward 6. My opponent, Charles Allen, has voted to [make it harder to access shelters](#) by imposing requirements to “prove homelessness” and provide other paperwork. He has also [voted against funding for private bathrooms](#). For many vulnerable neighbors, this creates a dangerous situation that could have been addressed by the Council.**

**Our LGBTQ community deserves to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.** This is particularly important for our homeless neighbors; we have an obligation to stand with them against discrimination in all forms, including in shelters. One of the more disappointing positions that my opponent has taken has been to [single-handedly stall an anti-discrimination bill in his committee](#) that would provide protections to homeless neighbors. Street Sense recently detailed a story about how his inaction is directly harming our community, and he does not seem to care. His lack of basic empathy and respect for the most vulnerable among us is one reason I decided to enter this race. I’m not a politician, I’m a mom with enough public service experience to know what good representation looks like, and enough empathy to know how important it is.

**Our homeless neighbors who need shelter should be admitted in accordance with their gender identity. It is not the job of this city to make those decisions, it is our job to protect the rights of the LGBTQ community to self-identify as they choose.** We must adequately fund shelters so the staff and facilities can offer protections to all vulnerable shelter residents, including LGBTQ applicants and victims of domestic violence, and we have fallen short in this regard. I would move legislation along with dedicated funding that would allow the Office of Human Rights to increase oversight to address violations that occur in our shelter system, and aggressively enforce our laws to protect our neighbors. I would also call on the DC Council Judiciary and Public Safety Committee to increase its oversight activity. I believe the first step to achieving that goal is to replace my opponent, who currently chairs the committee and has shown no interest in conducting such oversight.]

### 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?

**[Yes. It is long past time that our leadership talk about the importance of protecting our vulnerable neighbors, what we need to see now is dedicated, mandatory funding**

**to back up their words.** This is true when it comes to adequately funding the Department of Health to ensure that they are able to track and collect data, and report out in a timely and comprehensive manner. The trans community faces some of the largest opportunity gaps and health disparities of any community in our city. They are often discriminated against in health care settings, which limits access to care, and in the workplace, which limits access to affordable health benefits provided by an employer.

[I recently wrote about some of the health and economic struggles faced by sex workers in DC](#), many of whom are members of the trans community. **I'm proud to be the only candidate in my race willing to talk about supporting this community, not criminalizing them. My opponent believes the biggest problem we face is condoms being found in Capitol Hill shrubbery, because he simply does not get it.**

A trans-inclusive LGBT Health Report would be a good first step to showing our leaders that there are opportunity gaps and health disparities that we must solve, by prioritizing reforms and dedicating funding. In addition to reporting requirements, I would fight proactively to dedicate funding to address some of the problems we already know exist, such as housing, health and employment discrimination, social determinants that all have a major impact on health status. **If elected to the DC Council, proactively securing mandatory funding that will support our vulnerable communities will be one of my top priorities, and most important responsibilities.]**

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?

**[Yes. I am the only candidate in this race who has substantive experience working in healthcare policy, so I bring a unique understanding to these issues.** During my time in the Obama administration serving at the Department of Health and Human Services, much of our work centered around closing health disparities, improving access to healthcare for the LGBTQ community, and expanding access to mental health and substance use disorder prevention and treatment programs. I am incredibly proud to have been part of the Obama administration at a time when we worked to carry out the vision of the late Frank Kameny, one of our strongest federal activists, by requiring federal health plans to provide coverage for domestic partners. This change was long overdue, and finally brought healthcare access, and fundamental equality, to millions of families across the country. I was also proud to be part of an administration that began to require mental health parity in health plans sold across the country, a change that impacts the cost of treatment and prescription drugs, and also helps us begin to end much of the stigma that has become so wrongly associated with mental health issues. Finally, I was honored to join the team responsible for updating the Cultural and Linguistic Standards (CLAS) used by providers across the country to ensure they deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate services to patients. Combined, these accomplishments point to my dedicated record of service to addressing health care disparities that exist across minority communities.

It is unfortunate that the progress we made at the federal level has largely come to an end, and is in fact under attack. **Given that reality, it is time we begin to prioritize electing experienced, qualified, credentialed leaders at the local level, to continue to drive our city forward in furtherance of the progressive, inclusive values I believe we share.]**

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?

**[Yes. This is an issue that is very close to my heart.** I began my career serving in the Peace Corps in Guyana, where I not only taught literacy, but worked with my community on HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. Through a PEPFAR grant, I worked alongside other Peace Corps volunteers to erect a hydroponic greenhouse in partnership with a local NGO supporting people living with HIV/AIDS so they could maintain a nutritious diet and earn income selling produce at their local market.

As a member of the Obama administration at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), I am proud of the work we did to expand access to life-saving drugs through the Ryan White program, eliminate discrimination based on pre-existing conditions, a practice that acutely harmed the HIV/AIDS community by denying any opportunity to purchase affordable insurance, and drastically reduce the uninsured population. We made a substantial difference in the daily lives of millions of Americans, particularly those living with chronic and life-threatening conditions. I played a leadership role in the AIDS 2012 conference in Washington, DC, where I worked closely with colleagues across HHS to create a “[common application](#)” for access to HIV/AIDS drug therapies via patient assistance programs. I was very proud to work on expanding access to preventive care during my time in the Obama administration, and I bring a deep understanding of how important it is for our government to proactively educate our communities in order to provide them with a path to better health.

**DC has come a long way, but if we are truly serious about proactively improving the public health of all our citizens, particularly those with HIV/AIDS, the next step is to start electing people who have substantive public health experience working on these very issues.** There is no member of the DC Council with any credentials or background in this area, so it should not be a surprise that we are unable to move forward at the same pace as other progressive cities throughout the country. There is no reason we should be lagging so far behind cities such as New York and San Francisco when it comes to understanding, respecting, educating, supporting, and treating those in our community affected by HIV/AIDS.

## **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?

[Yes. [I have written about this very bill](#), and am proud to be the only person running in Ward 6 who supports it. You can count on me to fight alongside advocates until it is passed. Unlike my opponent, I fully support the Reducing Criminalization to Improve Community Health & Safety Amendment Act of 2017 and I believe strongly that it should be passed as soon as possible. It is long past time that we remove criminal penalties for engaging in commercial sex, and let sex workers control their own financial regulations and choices. It's the model that sex worker advocacy groups like HIPS have recommended, and it will improve the safety, security and well-being of our neighbors who work as sex workers. Importantly, under this proposal all laws regarding human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and sex with minors would remain unchanged. These crimes are, of course, horrific, but we also have sufficient evidence showing us that the solution to these problems isn't to criminalize all sex work. Decriminalization would increase reporting and prevention of these abuses by facilitating a partnership with legal authorities and the sex work industry to maximize the community's safety. Anyone who takes the time to understand these issues knows that this is a common-sense bill; it's unfortunate that my opponent is choosing to oppose a policy he has not taken the time to understand.

This city has failed sex workers before they even take a client, from allowing employment discrimination to sitting idly by as rents rise across DC, and wages fail to keep up. Too often, when sex workers try to work through those challenges, they're criminalized. This only serves to exacerbate matters, by continuing a cycle of unemployment and an inability to secure stable housing.

Criminalization also endangers the health and safety of sex workers. Fearing arrest, workers are unable to report exploitation to authorities, even though [80 percent](#) say they've been mistreated on the job. This creates an especially high risk of coercion at the hands of police, who can threaten legal punishment if workers refuse them. And sex workers are unable to negotiate for standards, like using protection or getting tested for STIs, while punitive measures loom over their heads.

The way sex workers are perceived by many in DC fails to take into account the struggle of sex workers in our community. Almost no one chooses sex work as their first attempt at employment. The issues facing this community is more systemic—and far more concerning—than a few scattered condoms on our streets.

Many sex workers in DC have previously faced employment discrimination that caused them to lose, or leave, their job. This is one reason sex workers in DC are overwhelmingly trans. Finding a job can be fraught with transphobic burdens—a recent [study](#) found that almost half of DC employers would hire a less-qualified cisgender candidate over a more qualified trans applicant. This bigotry is unacceptable, and truly harmful.

**One reason I decided to write about this issue on my website is because my opponent has decided that the only victims of sex work in DC are the residents of Capitol Hill who complain about finding condom wrappers in their shrubs. I am**

angry and horrified that he has decided to show such disregard for a fundamental issue dealing with the safety and economic security of sex workers. Whether he approves of their work or not, sex workers are our neighbors, and they deserve respect, acknowledgement and support from their representatives on the DC Council. Unfortunately, Charles Allen's disregard for this community is another example of him lacking the understanding, compassion, and empathy to realize that there is real harm being inflicted on DC residents, and they aren't the people he's paying attention to.]

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

**[As stated above, I fully support the Reducing Criminalization to Improve Community Health and Safety Amendment Act of 2017, which should be passed as soon as possible.** This would mean removing criminal penalties for engaging in commercial sex, while letting workers control their own financial regulations and choices. Decriminalization would increase reporting and prevention of these abuses by facilitating a partnership with legal authorities and the sex work industry to maximize the community's safety.

**I would also seek to increase funding to directly support anti-discrimination efforts so sex workers could receive access to health care, and employment opportunities.**

As outlined above, many sex workers in DC have previously faced employment discrimination based on their identity that caused them to lose, or leave, their job. Finding a job can be fraught with transphobic burdens—a recent [study](#) found that almost half of DC employers would hire a less-qualified cisgender candidate over a more qualified trans applicant. This bigotry is unacceptable, truly harmful, and is one reason sex workers in DC are overwhelmingly trans. It's time we crack down on any entity in this city that has been engaging in discriminatory treatment toward sex workers, whether it be employers, apartment complexes, landlords, or health care providers. We should also seek to move legislation that proactively bans discrimination based on work status, giving sex workers resources through the DC Office of Human Rights. This is a policy that my opponent opposes, and because he chairs the relevant committee he will be in a position to block it for so long as he remains on the DC Council. I believe we can do better than that.]

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

**[We need comprehensive solutions to tackle our homelessness and affordable housing crises, which includes making sure everyone in our city has access to healthcare and training and opportunity to achieve economic stability.** DC residents who turn to sex work in order to sustain themselves often have no other option. People with criminal convictions, unable to find work elsewhere, young people forced from abusive homes, immigrants faced with a labyrinth of language, legal, and financial challenges, people with disabilities of all kinds. On top of being disproportionately femme, female, of color, and homeless, these circumstances can often make sex work the only viable option for someone seeking to afford the ever-rising cost of living in DC.

That is where the DC Council should be stepping in, to provide viable, stable alternatives paths to stable housing and a job that pays a living wage.

In addition to providing opportunity, we need to commit to stopping discrimination before it starts, so our vulnerable communities have the opportunity to achieve economic security and upward mobility in our community without resorting to sex work simply because it is the only way they can survive. We start by increasing funding to the Office of Human Rights, so discriminatory practices can be investigated and prosecuted quickly and effectively. **My opponent recently said we should not be moving to increase protections against discrimination, because the Office of Human Rights is already over-burdened. I nearly fell out of my chair when I read his comment, because anyone with the most basic understanding of human rights knows that the solution to an over-burdened Office of Human Rights is more funding, not less human rights.** Politics aside, his position is truly one that I cannot begin to relate to or understand, because it runs contrary to every moral value I hold as a human being. The LGBTQ community can count on me to always fight to ensure that our government provides more protection against discrimination, not less.]

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?

**[Yes. My opponent chairs the committee of jurisdiction, so it has been particularly disappointing to watch him fail to give this important issue the attention it deserves.** We seem to have difficulty in DC gaining full transparency when it comes to police activity, most recently with the failure of MPD to release stop and frisk data in accordance with the requirements of the NEAR Act. **We cannot settle for anything less than full transparency, because full transparency promotes fair treatment and accountability.** If citizens are complaining about treatment from MPD officers, this information needs to be available and accessible so we can begin to identify patterns, remove bad actors, and bring real solutions to the problems that are initiating complaints. It is unfortunate that MPD has opposed the legislation, because it would build public trust. It is also unfortunate that the DC Council has largely deferred to the position of MPD rather than that of the constituents who are receiving unfair treatment. Our vulnerable communities deserve better.]

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

**[Yes.** Given what we know about ongoing issues in DC with discrimination against the LGBTQ community, from employment to housing to health care, it is only logical that allowing this information to be a matter of public record will increase instances of discrimination. **There is no compelling reason for a person's gender identity to be a matter of government-imposed public record, so this information should be sealed and subject to release only if that person would like it released. I would be happy to**

**work with GLAA and other advocates to draft legislation that accomplishes this goal.]**

## **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?

[As noted above, I believe solving this problem starts with passage and enforcement of strong anti-discrimination laws specifically written to protect the transgender community and the unique challenges they face. I will repeat something I have already noted above, because I believe it is critically important: **we start to solve disparities that are clearly the result of discriminatory practices and insufficient government oversight by increasing funding to the Office of Human Rights, so discriminatory practices can be investigated and prosecuted quickly and effectively.** My opponent believes we should not be moving to increase protections against discrimination, because the Office of Human Rights is already over-burdened, and I could not disagree with him more strongly. **The solution to an over-burdened Office of Human Rights is more funding, not less human rights.**

If a job applicant or employee has a clear, immediate governmental avenue for recourse, it will make employers think twice before discriminating against transgender applicants or workers. If the punishments imposed by law are substantial enough, employers will understand the importance of treating all workers and applicants equally, without regard to gender identity or sexual orientation. **I believe the members of the DC Council are too close to the DC business community, many of whom donate to their campaigns, to ever pass a law that would require strong economic and licensure penalties for employers who were found in violation. This is certainly true for my opponent, who receives tens of thousands of dollars from business owners and executives.** I have no such ties, so would be proud to push legislation that puts into place strong protections for transgender workers and applicants, and strong monetary penalties for employers who violate them, along with a clear, efficient, fully-funded Office of Human Rights to assist complainants when a violation has occurred.

## **YOUTH**

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

**[Yes. I would like to see a substantial increase in funding for our shelters, specifically dedicated funding for support services that meet the needs of all of our homeless neighbors.** We understand that homelessness is a problem, but we must also understand that many problems lead to homelessness. There is no one size fits all approach to social services, health care, substance use treatment, mental health services, economic training, or transitional support, so we need to make sure funding streams exist for specialized programs that meet the needs of all vulnerable populations. This certainly includes LGBTQ youth, who need our support in order to achieve economic security and



a chance at upward mobility into adulthood. Transitional housing is a critical element of comprehensive support services, because the first step toward security is a safe home free of discrimination, harassment or abuse. **I am committed to working with GLAA and other advocates to identify specific areas of need, and will fight for dedicated mandatory funding and increased oversight to make sure we are delivering on behalf of our vulnerable neighbors.]**

## **SENIORS**

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

[**Yes.** Seniors face increasing difficulties in keeping up with the rising cost of living in DC, particularly those living on fixed incomes. I believe we are strongest when our communities value the contributions of our elderly neighbors, and implement policies to ensure they are able to age in place, receive ongoing social support and access to services and neighborhood amenities, and above all ensure that seniors are not forced to leave their longtime homes and neighborhoods unless they wish to do so. The economic pressures on LGBTQ seniors can be particularly difficult, because they are more likely to be living on a single income source, and are more likely to face issues with depression, and have difficulty accessing support services and essential services.

**We can begin to alleviate these pressures by committing to truly affordable senior housing, and capping rent increases. [I have proposed reforms to the way we calculate affordability, and the formula used to calculate rent increases, both of which would begin to relieve some of the pressures faced by seniors seeking to age in place.](#) My proposal for ensuring housing security for every DC resident starts with adjusting the flawed formula that we currently use to define affordability and determine eligibility for housing programs.** The Area Median Income (AMI), set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, incorporates the suburbs of DC in its calculation. Federal and DC-based housing programs peg eligibility to AMI, yet nothing precludes DC from employing a formula that focuses squarely on District income rather than incorporating suburban incomes in places such as Alexandria, Bethesda, Chevy Chase, McLean and others that skew what is truly affordable to low- and ultra-low-income DC residents. I would work with the Council, advocates, and groups such as the DC Fiscal Policy Institute to develop a DC-based AMI.

**For housing to be truly affordable, it needs to be affordable to those who need it most.** I also believe we need to provide more support to our extremely-low-income residents. This includes allocating \$313 million in programs run by DC Housing Authority to create new housing and provide Local Rent Supplement Program vouchers. To help residents remain in their homes (or move, if needed), we need to dedicate additional funding to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which helps provide back rent for neighbors facing evictions. I would also like to see rent increases tied directly to CPI, and would cap rent increases on rent-control units at 2.5 percent annually, based on the actual rent paid rather than any calculations that determine a ‘market’ rate before discounts.



We are in a particularly critical time when it comes to securing housing for our longtime residents, as the revisions to the Comprehensive Plan are moving through the DC Council. The Comp Plan is centered on the idea of an “inclusive city,” but in reviewing the proposed revisions, and the Council approval process, it does the opposite. I [testified before the DC Council](#) at the hearing on the Comp Plan, which went until 4 in the morning. **There is nothing inclusive about a process that takes place in the darkness of night. It is clear that the amendments stand to drastically change DC and bend to the whims of the developer class.** Far from providing for an “inclusive city,” the proposed changes inject ambiguity, loosen definitions to key terms (e.g., residential and commercial definitions of low-, moderate-, medium-, and high-density), and weaken the Comp Plan’s existing prescriptive power at the cost of further displacing vulnerable low-income residents. This is wrong. Moreover, I am deeply troubled by the lack of transparency throughout the amendment process. I have spoken with countless voters throughout Ward 6 who have been counting on this Comprehensive Plan process to provide them with a pathway to stability and security in their longtime homes and neighborhoods. These are individuals who have lived in our city for 50-plus years, and thought this process would provide them with a voice, due process, and a recognition by their city that their continued presence in and contributions to their community was valued, respected, and worthy of protection. In light of this revision process, that’s the opposite of what the DC government is telling our neighbors.]

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.** In addition to funding programs to ensure access to stable and affordable housing, health care and other essential services, we need to be more proactive when it comes to supporting aging communities with unique needs. This is particularly true in the LGBTQ community, where isolation is more prevalent and leads to higher rates of depression, and increased difficulty in completing essential tasks such as grocery shopping and securing transportation to medical appointments. **We can, and should, do more to support LGBTQ seniors and facilitate opportunities community engagement, including establishing dedicated funding for the DC government to play a role in creating programs, conducting outreach, and providing access to events and services.** I look forward to working with you to determine where and how we can best serve the LGBTQ senior community, and commit to fighting for the funding needed to get the job done.]

## **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?

[**Yes. A major reason I am running is because our pay-to-play politics have left too many of our neighbors behind.** My opponent has taken tens of thousands of dollars from developers and business owners across the city, and has taken some truly damaging votes as a result. I am beholden to no special interests, and am only seeking to make a

better community for every one of my neighbors. [I have also proposed my own plan to bring much-needed transparency to our government, and bring DC in line with other progressive cities around the country when it comes to disclosure of relationships between our politicians and their wealthy donors.](#) **If elected, I will immediately introduce legislation requiring mandatory public disclosure of all individual donors who serve as owners, executives, principals, directors, partners, board members or trustees of companies that have lobbied the DC Council or received public benefits. Public benefits would be defined as contracts, tax subsidies, or goods and services of substantial value provided by the city.**

For too long, DC politics have been flooded with shadowy business money. It influences our laws and shapes our skyline, and it also creates a city that works for our affluent residents but not so well for everyone else. It's time to shine some light on the root of this problem so we can begin to fix it. The current DC campaign finance laws cap business and individual contributions at \$500, which has led to unintended consequences that undermine our democracy and need to be addressed. Members of the DC Council take more money from owners and executives of businesses, as individuals, than they could have taken from the business itself, without having to disclose any of it to voters. **This has made it extremely difficult to track which businesses are donating money through their owners and executive leadership, and has created a dynamic where people like Charles Allen, the Ward 6 incumbent, are able to take tens of thousands of dollars in donations from developer and business executives throughout the city, and tell voters they don't take money from businesses.** Absent a deterrent that would keep DC councilmembers from taking tens of thousands of dollars from business owners and executives without paying a political price for doing so, our system will continue to encourage pay-for-play politics. **Mandatory disclosure would give voters a fighting chance to understand who is trying to influence our elections, and decide whether they're ok with it.]**

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

[I would start by [implementing the campaign finance reforms outlined above](#), which would allow us to begin each contract bidding process with a common understanding of any existing relationships or conflicts that exist between city contract recipients and members of our DC government who are involved in deciding how contracts are awarded and to whom. **City connections should not determine who receives city contracts.**

From there, I would work to bring transparency, clarity and efficiency to agencies that deal with approval and financing, because the ability to bid on a city contract should not be contingent on having enough money to hire an expert, or enough clout to have made a friend in DC government. **Opportunities must be available to everyone, not just those with political connections.** We start by making our government contracting, permitting, licensure and loan programs work for everyone, not just those with friends in government or money to pay for expedited review. Too often, our archaic and opaque agency processes close out business owners with limited resources, because they are unable to navigate the bureaucracy on their own and end up suffering as a result. **Of course, these**

**same processes are perfectly navigable for large developers, and the local business and restaurant groups with the time and resources to pay for favors on the DC Council, and often hire former city employees to help them navigate our confusing system. If we commit to making these processes work for everyone, we will have started the process of leveling the playing field, so small, minority, women and veteran-owned business can continue to compete, and thrive, in our city.]**

**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.**

**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](mailto:equal@glaa.org). Thank you.**