

2018 GLAA Questionnaire for DC Mayoral Candidates:

James Butler

Housing

1. Will you direct 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, I will direct the Department of Human Services to monitor singles shelters to ensure that LGBTQ applicants are admitted to a shelter that corresponds to their gender identity and do not face discrimination while living there. The DC Human Rights Act is very clear in its protection against discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, and 17 other areas. Despite how clear the law is, there are shelters that violate the rights of LGBTQ applicants far too often by asking applicants such unnecessary and intrusive questions about their genitalia, their surgical history or who they find attractive.

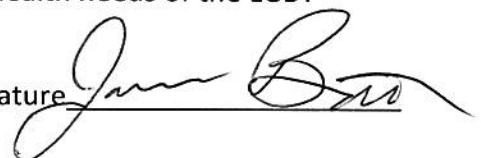
This behavior by some shelter administrators is inexcusable since both the DC Office of Human Rights and the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs have educated shelter management and personnel about the law in the past. Ignorance of the law is not the problem. It is enforcement. That is why I support having the Dept of Human Services to monitor the shelters. The Department of Human Services is in the best position to monitor the shelters, given that the shelters already work closely with the Department and an admonishment from DHS carries a lot of weight with them. The homelessness crisis in the city is too dire for shelter personnel and management to bar applicants from the shelter corresponding to their gender identity. Moreover, the shelters need to protect residents from discrimination based on their gender identity and expression and other areas, not perpetuate that discrimination themselves. DHS should conduct monitoring to make certain this does not happen. And be given the authority to punish shelters that continuously violate the law.

Health

2. Will you direct 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, I certainly will direct the Department of Health to work with a community advisory group and allocate the necessary resources to ensure completion and issuance of a trans-inclusive LGBT Health Report. In order to meet the health needs of the LGBT

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community, it is essential to have real data on the health needs. I feel that for years, the Dept. of Health has operated from the assumption that it knows what the health needs of this diverse community are without data to substantiate it. Indeed, many community health clinics have operated under those same assumptions.

That is why I was disturbed when Dr. Nesbitt, Director of the DC Department of Health, suggested a couple of years ago that she does not believe in community-specific health reports. That is an unscientific approach. For example, if 40% of Ward 1 residents suddenly fell ill with acute flu-like symptoms, I would hope that a community-specific health report or investigation would be a given. That would certainly be the case in my administration.

The LGBT Health Report that is produced must be inclusive of the transgender community, too. We cannot have a repeat of the embarrassing LGB Health Report that was produced in mid-2010, which completely left out the transgender community and was seemingly rushed to score political points. What we need is an inclusive and scientific method to produce an annual LGBT Health Report. This is not an easy task, as it requires commitment from the District government, buy-in from the community, and financial resources; however, the difficulty in executing an annual report is no excuse for failing to do so.

This is why I am pleased that the DC DOH and the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs established the LGBT Data Working Group. This is important step in the right direction and will prevent another lackluster report, like the 2016 "Report on the Health of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community in the District of Columbia." The Working Group's recommendations must be taken seriously and will be in my administration.

In addition to focusing on highlights from existing health studies, I would push the working group, DC DOH, and my Office of LGBTQ Affairs to collect data directly from community members in order to capture the most accurate and up-to-date information possible. This approach would require collecting data across government agencies and community-based organizations to help establish information that is comprehensive. Obviously, there will be a lag time between data collection and a report being published. However, the data would be more reflective of the LGBTQ community than recent attempts.

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

My budget submissions will target funds to address LGBTQ health disparities and mandate data collection on populations across all programs. The data collection across government programs is an essential element in issuing an inclusive and comprehensive

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LGBT Health Report, which is a priority of mine; therefore, the budget will have funds that specifically address this.

The District has one of the largest LGBTQ populations in the country and it is diverse. Collecting data on the LGBTQ community across government programs will inform the allocation of funds in my budget submissions and redress LGBTQ disparities. It will also provide information on which subpopulations within the LGBTQ community have the greatest need and thus require more funding to erase disparities.

4. Will you support and sign 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, I certainly will. It is essential that the District do a better job with outreach to the public about PrEP and PEP as HIV prevention methods. For years, I have volunteered with Whitman-Walker Health to educate the public about HIV prevention methods. Through my volunteering, I first learned about PrEP. However, I'm not certain that I'd know about PrEP and PEP had I not been a volunteer for Whitman-Walker.

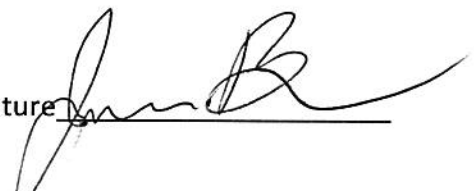
The city is improving in this area and I want to acknowledge that. Recently, there have been bus ads and a commercial to notify the public about PrEP. Also, the District's U=U campaign that promotes treatment as a prevention method for HIV. While this has been known for years, it is an excellent step when the city's Department of Health gets behind it.

There is still work to done. I believe that medical providers need to receive more information on PrEP, so they can suggest it to their sexually-active patients, especially those at highest risk of infection. In addition, I'd like to see medical providers inform all their patients about PEP to increase the awareness of this tool in the critical hours after someone may have been exposed to HIV. In fact, PEP should be readily available to all health facilities in the District, so that someone who fears having been exposed to HIV does not have the burden of trying to find a facility that carries it during a time-sensitive period.

Awareness about PrEP and PEP often elude those most at risk. My administration would take steps to increase awareness among transgender women (especially transgender women of color); Black women; Black men who have sex with men (MSM); and communities of color in general (especially African Americans and Latinos, who bear a disproportionately high infection rate).

Judiciary

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5. Will you support and sign 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?

While I appreciate the spirit of the bill to improve community health and safety, I do not support the legislation. My feeling is that there are enough protections in place that reduce legal penalties for sex workers.

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

I would support legislation that builds upon the Project Empowerment job training and placement program started under Mayor Gray's administration. The program had specific transgender cohorts initially that sought to lower unemployment rates and increase job opportunities for the participants. The challenges came with the job trial period was over and businesses did not hire the participants to full-time positions, due to a lack of incentives. My thought is that the District could tailor the Project Empowerment model for former sex workers in order to improve their job skills and give them valuable work experience. This time around though, there would be more incentives for businesses to hire the participants after the job training and experience portion has ended.

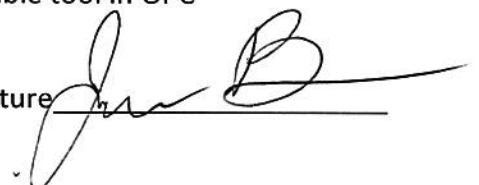
7. What opportunities would you support through legislation to improve the lives of marginalized citizens who resort to sex work for survival?

I support DC Act 22-301, which amends the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act of 1977 to include victims of sex trafficking in the neglected and abused child definitions, albeit temporarily. Too often, individuals resort to survival sex due in part to their exposure to and/or participation in sex as minors through sex trafficking. This exploitation of children can also lead to drug addiction as a coping mechanism and/or mental health issues.

8. Will you support and sign a reintroduced Bill 20-63, the Police Monitoring Enhancement Amendment Act, to give the Office of Police Complaints unfettered access to information and supporting documentation of the covered law enforcement agencies?

Yes, I believe in that in order for law enforcement to improve in this city, the public must have a vehicle by which it can report on mishaps and wrongdoing by officers of the law. The Office of Police Complaints (OPC) has been that vehicle since March 1999. I believe this independent office should have unfettered access to information and supporting documentation of the law enforcement agencies under its purview – the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the DC Housing Authority Police Department (DCHAPD). This unfettered access to information and documentation must include the body-worn cameras (BWC) of the MPD. BWCs have become an invaluable tool in OPC

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investigations. It and other information and supporting documentation help the city to improve the effectiveness and fairness of law enforcement, which is invaluable.

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

If it is desire of the community to seal court-ordered name and/or gender/sex change process records, I will support and sign the legislation. The process has to have provisions built into it for law enforcement to be able to unseal records where it is necessary for a criminal investigation. These instances where unsealing the records is necessary will be few and far between, but the provision must exist. Unsealing records is not an easy task either, so any legislation would need to address how to unseal those records in the quickest, least disruptive manner.

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 would you take to address this persisting economic disparity in a timely and sustainable manner?

I find the high unemployment figures for transgender residents in the District unacceptable for a city of our caliber. We can do better than this. I believe in leadership by example and my administration will reflect the diversity of the city in which we live. While I will not earmark positions for transgender residents, I will direct city agencies under my purview to outreach to transgender-serving organizations to encourage applicants to apply for vacancies throughout city government. And I will work tirelessly to eradicate transgender job bias within my administration by seeking the expertise of equal employment advocate organizations (like Out & Equal) and resources (like the ones produced by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National LGBTQ Task Force).

Also, I would support and push for legislation that bars non-violent crimes and survival sex infractions from being included on job applications in the District. These questions actually keep employers from considering qualified applicants who may have been charged with minor offenses during challenging periods in their lives.

My administration will also encourage vendors that work with the city to use available resources to create a more inclusive and nurturing work environment for transgender and gender non-conforming people.

Youth

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

Yes, I will ensure improved services and treatment for homeless LGBTQ youth. Knowing that 43% of the District's homeless youth identify as LGBTQ (according to the youth homelessness census) is a wakeup call that more needs to be done to improve support services for LGBTQ youth. This includes increased funding for transitional housing through the 2013 LGBTQ Homeless Youth Reform Amendment Act. Moreover, the District must ensure that all its youth homeless housing options are being staffed by individuals who are culturally competent to treat LGBTQ youth with respect. This can be achieved through training conducted by the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs, which has done similar training for long-term care facility staff in the city.

The city's leadership can and should do more to address the racial disparities among the LGBTQ youth population, which has a disproportionate number of youth of color. My feeling is that more programs need to be available throughout the city for LGBTQ youth to ensure they have access to resources and treatment without the burden of having to travel half-way across the city to find competent services.

Some options include launching an app that connects LGBTQ youth to services, as Cincinnati has done. This app would require a rigorous ad campaign initially, especially in areas with high youth homelessness populations.

Another thought is launching an ad campaign directed at parents of LGBTQ youth. This would focus on the need to accept their children and link them to resources that are available to them as parents. This campaign would be modeled on the successful Transgender and Gender Identity Respect Campaign that the Office of Human Rights launched back in 2012. I envision a campaign that depicts proud parents of LGBTQ youth pictured with their children along with affirming messages. There could be information linking parents to organizations that provide information and resources related to the coming out process for both the youth and their parents. After all, many parents of LGBTQ youth do not know how to "come out" as supportive parents of their youth. Organizations like SMYAL, PFLAG-DC, and the DC Center for the LGBT Community have all offered safe spaces for parents in the past and this is an opportunity for the city to use some of these resources that are already in place while it builds upon them.

Seniors

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

Yes, I will. In speaking with LGBTQ seniors, I have learned that one of their greatest fears is having to move into a senior housing or long-term care facility some day and feeling

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like they need to go back into the closet in order to receive care that is equal to their heterosexual peers. This is disturbing and a horrible way to spend one's remaining years.

My administration will work to ensure that all the managers and staff in senior housing and healthcare facilities are trained to meet the needs of LGBTQ seniors and people living with HIV. The Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs has conducted some of this training in the past, but more resources are necessary in order to make every facility culturally competent. This will require that many facilities change their intake paperwork to ensure that they aren't pushing LGBTQ seniors into the closet from the moment they walk in the door.

There are some things that are going well in this area. The District's Age-Friendly City Initiative continues to be very inclusive of LGBTQ seniors. Likewise, Mary's House for Older Adults offers supportive housing for LGBTQ seniors. I wish there could be 20+ Mary's Houses across the city to meet the dire need that exists. Another positive development was Iona Senior Services' adoption of more LGBTQ culturally competent policies.

The city can do more though to ensure that its senior receive high-quality care that respects who they are. The DC Office on Aging should build on the good work of its Age-Friendly DC Initiative and continue to engage LGBTQ senior around their specific set of needs. The agency's employees should complete cultural competency training that specifically addresses the unique needs of aging LGBTQ people and work closely to ensure all of its senior service programs embrace this inclusive vision.

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

Yes, I will. The District of Columbia is a wonderfully progressive city, which has led to it having the highest proportion of LGBTQ residents of any major American city. Yet, the city lacks programs geared towards LGBTQ seniors. This is a population that faces unique challenges as its members age that are left unaddressed by the District. Most LGBTQ seniors do not have children who can help care for them or with whom they can move to combat social isolation. Many of the peers of today's seniors succumbed to AIDS-related complications in the 1980s and 1990s, contributing to an elevated sense of isolation. Many LGBTQ seniors faced discrimination in their most productive years, resulting in salary disparities that worsened over time and have now led to financial hardships. This is particularly true of transgender and racial minority seniors in the LGBTQ community, who bore the social burdens of being a double or triple minority.

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Given these challenges, it is unfathomable that the District has no support to curb the social isolation of this segment of the senior community. Therefore, I support funding the services that engage LGBTQ seniors in meaningful ways to the larger community. This would include more resources for Congregate Meal Programs and other programming that keeps seniors feeling valued and engaged. As I've said previously, it is imperative that those administering these programs be culturally competent. I am aware of cases where seniors were encouraged to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity in order to avoid mistreatment in senior housing and long-term care facilities, which is unconscionable. We are a better city than that.

Consumers and Businesses

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

I believe that the District's 'pay-to-play' image not only damages democracy in the nation's capital, but it also creates roadblocks to the city's efforts to gain support for greater self-determination and statehood. It is deflating at best and more corrosive than people acknowledge.

That is why I am pleased that there are three bills before the Council to redress this: the Campaign Finance Transparency and Accountability Amendment Act; the Government Contractor Pay-to-Play Prevention Amendment Act of 2017; and the Comprehensive Campaign Finance Reform Amendment Act of 2017.

The city should not be offered for sale to the highest campaign contributors. I support having one combined bill that is far-reaching – it is an important step in getting big money out of our politics.

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

I believe in opening the bidding process to the public, so we can shine a light on nepotism that has permeated the bidding process. I would also change the threshold amount over which goods or services must be won through competitive bidding from \$ 1 million to \$500,000. This creates much more transparency and increases the chances that city contracts are fairly won.

Here are some of the actions that I've taken which help illustrate my record on behalf of LGBTQ people:

As a lawyer I've done dozens of Human Rights cases and still do cases for LGBTQ counts before DC Human Rights Commission etc

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