

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?

Absolutely. LGBTQ residents, particularly LGBTQ youth, are some of our most vulnerable residents, and they should not face discrimination due to sexual orientation or gender identity while seeking shelter or using shelter. Though I am not on the Human Services Committee, I have been actively involved with oversight of our homeless services. I have attended council hearings and spoken with residents who have accessed our singles shelters. Residents have expressed concerns about this issue, as well as basic safety and health issues at our singles shelters. I have questioned DHS Director Zeilinger about this. We need to improve the training of our front line workers on human rights law, as well as other rights our residents have in seeking access to shelter. And in the bigger picture, we need to improve our singles shelters to make them more humane. Our city has focused on family shelter, and certainly D.C. General needs to close as soon as possible, but our singles shelters need to improve too. Many residents would rather live on the street than go into our singles shelters. That is dangerous for everyone, but especially for our LGBTQ residents.

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. In order to provide programs and services to keep our residents healthy, we need to have a full understanding of all the health needs. It is essential that the needs of the trans community is included in this assessment. I know from my work as Labor Committee Chair that the trans community unfortunately faces employment discrimination, which means they may turn to underground means of providing income, such as sex work. That puts them at a greater health risk we need to understand through study and data. Ever since the decision to end the contract of Veritas at United Medical Center, I have been increasingly involved in the Committee on Health even though I am not a member. I hope to be a member in the next term, and I will push the Director of the Department of Health on this.

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. Overall, we need to put more funding into mental health and substance abuse treatment, and those services need to meet the needs of the LGBTQ community. We know from data that the LGBTQ community, starting in youth when they may be struggling with issues of identity, may face particular mental health challenges and might turn to alcohol and other substances as a coping mechanism. We need to be honest about the needs, which is why accurate data collection is so important, and bring the financial resources necessary to address these issues.

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. Education and information is the key to preventing the spread of HIV, as well as access to PrEP and PEP. This needs to be a community-wide effort. The District has been a leader in preventing the spread of HIV, but we can't rest on our laurels. We need to remain a leader.

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?

Financial penalties aren't going to reduce sex work. Giving people the option of a career in which they can make a living wage is what's going to reduce sex work. As I mentioned above, in the trans community discrimination is a major reason why people turn to underground ways to make a living. I met a trans woman who got hired by our Office of Unified Command. She's great at her job, and she loves helping people in their time of need. We need to look at more programs to help LGBTQ residents find living wage careers. I am happy to work with you on that as Labor Chair.

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

I'm largely repeating my previous answer, but I think we need to look at why sex work became their best option to earn a living. If it is because they lack basic reading and math skills, we need to

assist them with adult learning opportunities. My committee has funded the Career Pathways Innovation Grant, which has gotten national attention for teaching these basic literacy skills in an occupational context. If it is because of discrimination, then we need to look at establishing relationships with employers so that discrimination is not a factor in hiring, as well as we need to encourage residents to report discrimination to our Office of Human Rights. I don't think this is as much legislation as creating opportunities for much better options to earn a living.

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

I think again I'm largely repeating my answer, but we need to make sure these workers have access to housing, health-care, and gainful, living-wage employment. We need to make sure our human rights laws are followed, and gender identity or sexual orientation is not a reason for discrimination. We need to make sure these residents have access to good sexual health and other health care. I don't think this is about legislation. This is about political will, priorities, and putting our money where our mouth is. Laws are meaningless if they are not enforced and funded.

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. This is an important part of accountability and 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?

Yes.

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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?

Yes. Again, I think I'm largely repeating my previous answer. First, we need to send a clear message to employers in this city that they cannot discriminate on the basis of sexual identity. Good workers are good workers no matter how they identify. Then we need to address whether that person needs basic adult literacy or job skills. They might need some essential life skills training, like knowing how to show up on time, deal with conflict, and manage life's basic needs. This is the work I am doing as Chair of the Labor Committee.

YOUTH

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

Yes. As I mentioned above, our LGBTQ youth are among our most vulnerable. We need to make sure they have housing and access to living wage employment. We need to fund transitional housing for LGBTQ youth, period. Stop saying it and do it. I am prepared to do it.

SENIORS

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

Yes. I have a focus on seniors. As part of my work in the housing committee, I introduced a bill to create a rental housing subsidy for seniors and I got it funded in the budget. We need to put much more emphasis and money on senior housing. Food insecurity is also a big issue for seniors. I am committed to funding this work.

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

Yes. Food insecurity is also a big issue for seniors. I am committed to funding this work.

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. Pay-to-play is a corrosive problem in District politics. I mentioned the Veritas contract at UMC. I pay very close attention to contracts, which is why I signed a disapproval for Veritas and ultimately got a majority of colleagues to vote against it. Veritas had political connections to the mayor, was a major donor to her, and had a bad track record in other cities and states. Its management of UMC was further running that hospital into the ground.

You're going to hear a lot of people either in public office or running for public office say they are against pay-to-play and then they load their campaign coffers with corporate, LLC, and contractor contributions. I don't just talk the talk, I walk the walk. I do not take corporate, LLC or PAC contributions. Just contributions from individuals.

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

First of all, we need to follow the law. We need to make sure that contracts are not bid publically in name only. That means giving notice the contract is open for bidding and giving bidders time to put a good proposal together. We need to make the selection on merit and not tinker with the scoring system. And we need that system to be as transparent as possible.

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, September 21, to GLAA, P.O. Box 75265, Washington, D.C. 20013; or email it as an attachment in PDF format (for loading on GLAA's website) to equal@glaa.org. Thank you.