

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC 2020 Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates

GLAA Ethics Disclaimer:

GLAA believes that elected officials are stewards of the public trust and therefore must hold themselves accountable to the highest ethical standards. GLAA, therefore, will not issue any rating for candidates who, in their capacity as elected officials, were expelled from any elected post, or resigned, for ethics violations that include, but are not limited to, conflicts of interest, self-dealing, and malfeasance.

HEALTH

1. Will you support budgets that target funds to address **LGBTQ health disparities**, including in **mental health and substance abuse treatment**, and mandate data collection and timely reporting on these populations?

Yes.

First - I promise to meet regularly with DC's LGBTQ community stakeholders and to hold regular calls with them as well.

I am a public health professional. I have over 15 years experience working in public health. I have worked extensively on health disparities and care deeply about addressing them for all communities. One of my DC health jobs focused entirely on this health disparities - for IAMMM in DC www.iammm.org. These issues are particularly evident in times of crisis like today for vulnerable populations like the LGBTQ community, immigrants, and people of color, etc.

As a public health professional, I know how important data collection and timely data reporting are for effective health services and targeting. I aim to serve on the Council's health committee and will prioritize this.

I read with interest your policy brief, and your support not only for cultural competency trainings - but also for measuring the effectiveness of such efforts. I have successfully pushed for cultural

competency trainings in the Metropolitan Police Department and fully agree we should be measuring, reporting, and re-evaluating more often in order to ensure effectiveness.

I have an extensive proven track record on public health issues. I am very proud to be [endorsed by](#) Dr. Vivek Murthy, President Obama's US Surgeon General and a national public health leader. Dr. Murthy lives in Ward 2. I have over 15 years of public health experience and six years working for DC making President Obama's health care law a success. I have helped DC Health Link implement Obamacare from the start and helped cut the uninsured rate in DC to the 2nd lowest in the nation (3.8%).

To achieve this great accomplishment, I worked extensively with the LGBTQ community on outreach and enrollment. For 6 years, I worked hard to help the LGBTQ community get covered in affordable health insurance so everyone can access the health care services and medications they need - including mental health and substance abuse treatment.

I even oversaw a grant to The DC Center for outreach to the LGBTQ community. I worked closely with them in this capacity as well as clinics like Whitman Walker Health who also worked hard to serve the LGBTQ community. I also attended [Trans Pride](#) every year as a representative of DC Healthlink:

<https://twitter.com/KishanForDC/status/734454831528574976>

Here are just some of my other health care accomplishments:

- Studied health policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government
- Reported on public health as a journalist with Inside Washington;
- Worked on public health for DC government, for the private sector, and for the non-profit sector.
- Worked with DC hospitals, DC clinics, and DC community groups to reach and cover thousands of residents and small businesses.
- As Small Business Liaison for DC Health Link, I worked closely with small employers and employees to help them get covered. I know and understand the small business community and will work hard to support them as councilmember.
- DC's small business coverage system is so successful at helping small employers and workers, other states have hired DC to help them run theirs!

Full quotes from Dr. Vivek Murthy, the 19th Surgeon General of the United States:

"As a long-time Ward 2 resident, I am proud to endorse Kishan Putta to be our next councilmember. Kishan is a progressive leader who fights for the rights of the vulnerable in our city and gets things done. He doesn't just talk about change - he makes it happen... Kishan and I share a passion for improving public health. As a community and small business liaison for DC Health Link, he helped thousands of residents and small businesses. Kishan cares so much

about keeping DC healthy. He has the experience to help DC get through this health and economic crisis.”

NOTE: a new COVID-19 testing site just opened in my ANC district and I am working to ensure all data gets reported accurately. My campaign has also convened a [Coronavirus Advisory Team](#) of top medical and public health leaders in DC and Ward 2.

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

2. Will you support Bill 23-435, the Tony Hunter and Bella Evangelista Panic Defense Prohibition Act of 2019?

Yes. In October I was the only candidate [to testify](#) in front of the DC Council Judiciary Committee in support of this bill -- along with LGBTQ leaders Ruby Corado, Bobbi Strang, Sasha Buchert, Mike Silverstein, Q Garcia-Geary, Mark Rodeffer, and others.

I testified as an ally as Chair of the DC Democratic Party's AAPI Caucus. I also support Grosso's push to expand the panic defense prohibition to racial, ethnic, religious, and other marginalized groups as well.

I have long been outspoken about ensuring hate crimes are a priority of law enforcement. In 2015, I accepted an appointment to be a member of the MPD Community Engagement Academy. As a member of the Academy, I regularly worked with DC's most senior public safety officials, including the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and the Chief of Police. I worked to encourage police officers to improve how they identify and handle hate crimes.

In my neighborhood [I reported a hate crime](#), despite some calls to let it go, because I knew it would cause some residents to be fearful unless we spoke out and stood together against hate.

I agree with GLAA and others that it is time to have local control of all criminal prosecutions - which would help improve confidence in the criminal justice system.

3. Will you support revision of the DC Riot Statute, Section 22-1322 of the District's penal code, to correct its overly broad language that allows abuse of prosecutorial discretion against individuals who exercise their First Amendment rights?

According to the US attorney's office, protesters at Trump's inauguration were expected to be charged by our office with felony rioting, (D.C. Official Code 22-1322), an offense punishable by

a statutory maximum of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$25,000. This is an overly broad application of the law and should be fixed.

In addition, this law was even used against journalists. As a former journalist myself - having reported for the Los Angeles Times, Providence Journal, Times of India, and Inside Washington - I take the 1st Amendment very seriously and I will always fight for it.

HUMAN RIGHTS

4. Will you support a Gender Equity and Neutrality in the Official Code Amendment Act to update the D.C. Official Code as necessary to ensure that outdated terms are removed or replaced as well as to utilize language inclusive of the gender diversity of our population?

Yes. If we are truly a progressive city and if we are to espouse progressive values, we must lead by example. The harmful stigma regarding gender identity in our society will never be fully resolved unless we show that we are serious about equality and neutrality, in both our words and our actions. I have supported the trans community in DC for years. I represented [DC Health Link at TransPride](#) annually for many years. Also, in 2014, I [cosponsored a resolution](#) calling for police reforms to better protect the trans community. I even took time off from work to testify before the DC Council because I believed so strongly in supporting the community and understand they need as much support from allies as possible.

5. Will you support Bill 23-0318, Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2019, to decriminalize consensual sex work for people 18 or older and create a task force to monitor the implementation and effects of the act?

I support decriminalizing sex work and Councilmembers Bonds, Grosso, and White's efforts to pass the Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2019. By removing criminal penalties for sex work, DC can afford these workers basic human rights that protect them from exploitation, including the ability to report violence on the job to the police without fear of arrest.

Importantly, the criminalization of this work disproportionately targets some of DC's most marginalized populations, including trans women of color. **I am one of the only candidates running that has experience in doing work to protect these workers from unjust police practices.** In 2014, I was a commissioner on the Dupont Circle ANC, representing the historic LGBTQ hub of DC: 17th Street NW. I [cosponsored a resolution](#) to repeal a police anti-prostitution tactic that disproportionately targeted the LGBTQ community, especially our trans neighbors.

We must do our best to protect the vulnerable--and that is why I support this bill. All people, regardless of their line of work, deserve equal protection of the laws, and from law enforcement. I understand the concerns that this bill may promote or increase human trafficking. But that is not what the Community Safety and Health Amendment Act promotes. Under the Act, coercing someone to engage in sex work is still illegal, as is human and child trafficking. Rather, the bill aims to protect the workers, and ensure that they are able to report violence as it happens without fear of arrest.

Yes. I also support forming a task force to monitor the implementation and effects. This task force should be made up with representatives from the sex worker community, the LGBTQ community, as well as local community leaders and residents. As Ward 2 Councilmember, my staff and I would be involved as well and would be happy to meet with representatives of the task force and suggest nominees to serve on the task force.

6. Will you support increased funding for LGBTQ budget priorities, including fully funding the Office of Human Rights and establishing a new competitive community development grant program in the Office of LGBTQ Affairs?

Yes. I worked with both these offices often through DC Healthlink and with former Director Palacios and Director Alexander-Reid, on Community Outreach, and therefore I fully appreciate how much they do with limited resources. I know that they need more resources and have more staff and will work to better support them.

I will also push for grants to community-based organizations that support these vulnerable groups. I collaborated with various community organizations city-wide and helped oversee grant funding so that they can help their community members. These organizations included various groups that did work with the LGBTQ community, such as The DC Center, Whitman Walker House, Mary's Center, Community of Hope, La Clinica del Pueblo, and many others. We helped many vulnerable neighbors through our efforts and helped thousands to get health coverage citywide. I learned so much from my experience working with these organizations and in vulnerable communities.

7. Will you support a study of employment of transgender individuals in the government of the District of Columbia as a first step to creating a truly inclusive workplace and the implementation of transgender employment initiatives?

Yes. I worked for the DC government for 6 years and I was very proud of how diverse my agency was, with many LGBTQ and transgender coworkers in senior positions. But, I do understand that not all agencies achieved that level of diversity, particularly with transgender public servants. DC has the largest percentage of transgender individuals in the nation but this is not always reflected in our government. I am committed to not only reducing discrimination,

but to also address the impacts of discrimination. A study of the employment of transgender individuals should be conducted to determine what parts of our government have more work to do in recruit and retain transgender staff to create a more inclusive government workforce.

YOUTH

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

Yes, absolutely. I am a strong believer in the Housing First model championed by Pathways To Housing here in DC. Our homeless neighbors need housing first AND supportive services so they have the support to slowly, steadily move forward - with steady support along the way. Getting people housed is only half the battle; staying in stable, long-term housing and gaining confidence to take control of one's life is the other half. This also means working across public and private sector partners to ensure that individuals are getting mental health and medical support, and providing mentorship or training programs for economic opportunities, with the ultimate goal of giving our homeless LGBTQ youth and others the opportunity to work and live feeling supported and cared about.

SENIORS

9. Will you support improved services and treatment for LGBTQ seniors, including affirming senior housing and tenant based rental assistance and the Care for LGBTQ Seniors and Seniors with HIV Amendment Act of 2019?

Yes, we must help support our seniors, including our LGBTQ seniors, to age in place and stay in their homes and communities - that is better for everyone. That's why I chose to work in the Village movement, working to support the East Rock Creek Village and their mission to support neighborhood seniors. I've also worked closely with the DC Office on Aging to help reach out and support seniors trying to stay in their homes and in DC.

Yes I support housing assistance for seniors. I do not believe that the DC government should be balancing its budget on ever-increasing property taxes charged to seniors. I will also support the Care for LGBTQ Seniors and Seniors with HIV Amendment Act of 2019. LGBTQ and HIV positive seniors deserve to receive the same care as all others and their rights must be protected. I support this amendment because it protects the use of desired pronouns and bathrooms along with the ability to choose who to room with, in addition to equal access to healthcare.

HOME RULE

10. Will you oppose Trump administration efforts to nullify the legal identities of transgender individuals, such as by assigning a person's gender based on their "original" birth certificate?

Yes.

I will use my first amendment rights to speak out on this important issue and these oppressive federal actions. This is humiliating, harmful, and unacceptable. I also support efforts to make DC codes more inclusive of the diversity of gender identities. DC has the opportunity to be a leader and a role model for other cities and states.

Please give more than a simple "yes" or "no" response to our questions — though you should begin with a "yes" or "no." The depth and completeness of your answers play a major role in determining your final rating.

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. Feel free to attach relevant documents such as letters to the editor, legislative testimony, campaign literature, etc.

Please return your questionnaire responses by Friday, April 17 via email, preferably as an attachment in PDF format (for loading on GLAA's website), to equal@glaa.org. Thank you.

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