

Yaida Ford

## 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. Health disparities in DC are tragic when it comes to marginalized communities, which include the Black community and the LGBTQIA+ community. The lack of access to services and the stigma around mental health issues still plague our communities to this very day. While the stigma is lifting, we as a community still have more work to do to embrace the need for mental health treatment and the District must provide the meet the need. COVID19 has highlighted the dire need for mental health and substance abuse treatment for our marginalized communities.

### JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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

I support Bill 23-435. Having a defense to a crime that is premised on the knowledge of one's sexual orientation is problematic from a human rights and civil rights standpoint.

As a councilmember, I would support the Bill and urge a conversation on the effectiveness of such a defense and its purpose so that we understand what impact/ result this policy has on the lives of our residents and what the policy says about what we value as policy makers in the District.

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?

Yes, I do support revising the Riot Statute. To successfully amend the statute we need to do three things: First, we need to evaluate whether the enforcement of this law is consistent with its purpose. Second, we need to evaluate how we enforce the law

without impeding on the First Amendment rights of residents. Third, we should evaluate whether the enforcement of this law has a disparate effect on minorities. Once those three components are addressed, we will have a solid beginning as to how this law should be amended.

## **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, I believe the Council should prioritize this as other states have taken the lead on this. We have the largest percentage of transgender individuals in the nation, so we should be the model of inclusion in the U.S. Finally, there is no viable argument against making these changes.

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 do support this Act as I have known men and women who have had to engage in this type of work to survive. I think it will lead to better reporting of human trafficking, which is an issue plaguing Ward 8 and there is no end in sight without better policies in place that will engage the community who witnesses this every day.

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, as a civil rights lawyer who has represented DC residents in more than 345 cases to date (not including my federal docket or dockets in WA and MD), I have worked with OHR extensively on cases and I definitely believe the office would benefit from more funding so that it could support more paid mediators and investigators. I also wholeheartedly support a community development grant in the Office of LGBTQ affairs to further the mission of that office.

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?

Absolutely. In order for the District to craft effective policies that protect the rights of LGBTQ individuals in the workplace, it's policy makers have to understand the climate of the workplace from the perspective and experience of LGBTQ employees.

## **YOUTH**

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

YES. YES. YES. Our youth are completely destabilized without a home, access to food, clean water and clean clothes. Far too many of our LGBTQ Black youth are in this lot. I fully support every initiative to provide extended transitional housing but also workforce development housing for our youth to end the cycle of poverty and homelessness in their lives.

## 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. Supporting seniors is a HUGE priority for me and I agree that social isolation is a systemic problem facing seniors in low-income communities and in LGBTQ communities. My idea is to create an “artist colony” where artists who provide community activities for our seniors receive subsidized housing in exchange for the commitment to serve seniors for a year or until they are up for housing recertification. To be re-certified, they must continue serving our seniors by creating social activities that keep our LGBTQ seniors engaged. (This is a certified YAIDAFORD4WARD82020 idea so if you hear it repeated anywhere you know who created it.)

## 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?

I think an individual should have a right to change their gender identity if that is what they choose to do and I do not believe in the legalized gender branding of individuals.

***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.***

I was legislative counsel for the Committee on Human Services under Jim Graham. I was Jim's liaison for Gertrude Stein. I mentored LGBTQ youth as a part of a community based ministry I ran in Ward 8 to assist those living with trauma establish themselves emotionally, spiritually and psychologically so that they could achieve their goals and dreams. It was difficult work but the most rewarding of my life. I am also an artist and songwriter with a few songs out now and a music video with a civil rights bent so I get to engage with the community as an artist. I also represent LGBTQ community members in my law practice. I am being endorsed by SEVERAL prominent artists who are also LGBTQ. The list goes on. Please see my Table Talk on the Arts in Ward 8 where I am interviewing Raymond Caldwell of the Anacostia Playhouse.

<https://youtu.be/xJquebYrZD0>