

**Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC
2020 Questionnaire for D.C.
Chander Jayaraman, Candidate for DC Council At-Large**

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. People in the LGBTQ community, like Black and brown and other marginalized or underserved communities, need mental health support, trauma support, substance abuse treatment and other support. Data is essential to measuring the problem and the effectiveness of initiatives. We must be prepared to go where the data leads us, be innovative, and be prepared to adjust our programming and funding to meet the needs.

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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

Yes. It is an extension of the human rights we all should have to the specific needs of the community.

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. We are in the nation's capital. Residents (and visitors) should have the greatest flexibility in terms of expressing our first amendment rights, excluding destruction of property.

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Equity and Neutrality in the Official Code Amendment Act to update the D.C. Official Code as necessary to ensure that outdated terms are removed or replaced as well as to utilize language inclusive of the gender diversity of our population?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. It is a matter of self-identity and dignity.

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?

No. People who find themselves with no alternative but to engage in paid sexual activity just to survive and meet their basic human needs are not criminals and our laws should not treat them as such. However, protecting young women and men from the trauma of sex trafficking must be of paramount concern to our city leaders.

I am deeply concerned about the rise in the sex trafficking of children and adults in this country and in the DMV area. We cannot tolerate allowing criminals to force people into dangerous work and hold them captive. I am committed to exploring legislative solutions that ensure that people who choose prostitution as a last resort for survival do not face criminal penalties. Instead, a compassionate city is one that meets people where they are and provides an alternate pathway to make ends meet. We have the financial resources to provide safe housing, access to health care and other supportive services, and career pathways so that our residents do not feel compelled or forced to re-enter prostitution as a way to survive.

That is why economic independence is one of my top policy priorities in this election. We must create opportunities for individuals who are searching for a second chance to enroll in paid job training and apprenticeship programs coupled with a person-centered support network so that they can attain stable employment with a livable wage. I know it can be done because I was able to do the same for at-risk and vulnerable young people when I led the former YouthBuild program at the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC).

The District should take a harder stance in rooting out, arresting, and penalizing pimps and sex traffickers, who continue to coerce, exploit, and manipulate the lives of individuals forced into the sex trade. They are the real victims and the District should make it easier for people to report violence and other crimes to law enforcement confidentially and without fear of arrest.

I have grave concerns that if the District adopts legislation that legalizes pimping and brothel-keeping, sex trafficking will increase and become even harder to combat. Our city government has not demonstrated that it has the proper infrastructure in place to protect exploited children, women, and men involved in the sex trade.

Any legislation on this topic must address three questions: Would the law make it easier for those who would exploit and control individuals involved in the sex trade? Would it lessen protections for and the ability of victims to pursue criminal charges? Would it undermine prosecution of traffickers?

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 the nations' capital, we must lead by example. We have done so by being one of the first to enact some of the strongest protections in the country, but we must deliver results by making execution of these laws a priority. If we lack the infrastructure or resources to implement D.C.'s Human Rights Act with integrity and vigor, then these protections are no more than words on paper with no real or tangible effect.

One of my top priorities as a Council member is to transform city government and make it responsive and accountable to our communities. All residents should be able to count on our government to have their backs, particularly when it comes to its core responsibilities—keeping its residents safe by upholding fundamental human rights and committing to promote equality, equity and empowerment for all its citizens in both words and action.

Specifically:

- The city must conduct an evaluation of the current challenges and inefficiencies in the Office of Human Rights, from the perspective of the people it serves, to efficiently and effectively act on discrimination cases and recommend improvements. This should include innovative strategies that have been successfully implemented by other cities confronting similar challenges.
- Push for an improvement plan for effectively handling discrimination cases and identifying and requiring all city agencies—not just the Human Rights Office—to share in responsibility for addressing hate crimes.
- Responding to crimes is critical, but getting at the root causes and identifying ways to address them is also essential. We must look more closely at socioeconomic and environmental conditions that may put LGBTQ+ residents and communities at greater risk of becoming victims of a bias-related crime.

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 have experience ensuring the full inclusion of people with disabilities, including equal access to housing and employment. District government should reflect our citizenry, should be welcoming to all people, and should actively work to build that diverse workforce.

YOUTH

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

Yes. Current conditions in our city's shelters are dirty, unsafe, and a haven of risk for contracting a number of communicable illnesses, including COVID-19. In the short-term, I would advocate for the development and conversion of existing congregate emergency housing into micro-units that offer privacy, dignity and are coupled with support services within the same building. This would also be available to individuals who are homeless. We must think outside the box on this and many other issues facing the city.

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 LGBT Seniors and Senior with HIV Amendment Act of 2019?

Yes. The District should find a way to cap income taxes on seniors and property taxes for seniors who are long-term homeowners.

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? Y

Yes. The Trump administration's efforts to squash the uniqueness of our diverse community only divides us, when they should be looking for ways to unite us. Our individuality is the bedrock of America and of our dignity.

Additional information about Chander relevant to advocacy on behalf of LGBTQ people.

I have devoted my career to advocating for human rights and championing the full inclusion of all at-risk populations in all aspects of DC society. I firmly believe that this is a land of opportunity and the city must provide a foundation on which people from all walks of life, backgrounds, and beliefs can realize their dreams, not just professionally but also personally. This can only happen when we embrace the differences between us and see it as a strength to be nurtured rather than a divide that should not be crossed.

I managed and led the YouthBuild program at DC's Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), a program for at-risk youth who wanted the opportunity to get their GED and learn skills applicable in the construction industry. Because many of our students had been or were involved in the legal system, they were often excluded by potential employers and others. I worked as an advocate for them and convinced employers to give them a chance to prove themselves. I also worked to ensure that people with disabilities had the same opportunities as non-disabled residents in employment, housing, emergency response planning, and community recreation. As an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for the past eight years, four of them as Chair and Vice Chair, I have been an ardent supporter for the equitable treatment of all residents including my friends in the LGBTQ+ community.

The focus of my work and civic engagement for the past 25 years as a D.C. resident has been to advocate for economic, educational, and other opportunities on behalf of various populations that face the greatest risk of discrimination and who experience multiple barriers to gaining economic independence.

My campaign priorities are based on my experience working on behalf of, and side-by-side with vulnerable DC residents for over two decades. As an ANC Commissioner, I have successfully pushed the Council and the Mayor to advance initiatives that get results on the issues that matter to residents. I know how to get things done.



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DC Council At-Large

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