



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

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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. As a medical anthropologist, I am attuned to both public health and social science perspectives on health disparities, including access to care, data collection, and inequities in treatment. It is crucial that we support budgets that aim to address the underlying social determinants that are resulting in disparate and negative health outcomes for LGBTQ people.

LGBTQ communities have largely been excluded from studies in this arena, but there is strong evidence to suggest that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are more than twice as likely than heterosexual people to experience a mental health condition, and transgender people are almost four times as likely. For LGBTQ youth, rates of bullying, substance abuse and mental health conditions are also troublingly high. Trauma, substance abuse, homelessness and risk of suicide are all consequences of deep, intersectional factors that are worsened when race is factored in.

In order to counteract this, we must ensure culturally competent treatment and data collection for LGBTQ individuals. I support proposals to update and evaluate DC's

current cultural competency education standards, as well as implementation of the 2019 LGBTQ+ Health Data Collection Amendment Act. Lastly, suicide prevention and trauma-focused treatment programs must be expanded, with attention paid to the racial disparities in healthcare access and cost.

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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

Yes. We must abolish bigoted, homophobic and transphobic panic defenses, which have been used as a legal shield in hate crimes. I join my colleagues in Ward 2's ANCs in calling for the Council to ban panic defenses immediately and am relieved to hear there are plans in place to make this happen before year's end.

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. Whether in the protests after Donald Trump's inauguration, or during the uprising in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder at the hands of the police, the broad language of the District's penal code has led directly towards abuse of prosecutorial discretion towards those participating in First Amendment assemblies. As we are seeing with the Council's recently passed emergency criminal justice reform legislation—which has failed to stop the deployment of riot gear and chemical weapons against protestors—vague and discretionary language enables abuse of power by law enforcement.

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. As stated in my response to the first item, cultural competency is extremely important. As an anthropologist, I fully appreciate the linguistic and social value of using gender inclusive language in our official documents.

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?

Yes. Decriminalizing sex work would create a safer environment for all involved and serve to end the criminalization and harassment of many marginalized individuals at the hands of MPD. From a public health perspective, decriminalization facilitates access to

health and allows sex workers to seek help from law enforcement when they are victims of a crime, without fear of consequences. Moreover, it is an important step towards ending the stigma and exclusion sex workers face. Additionally, it is essential that we provide cash assistance for excluded workers—which includes sex workers—during the course of the pandemic.

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. Beyond fully funding the Office of Human Rights, I support efforts to expand community grant development programs in the Office of LGBTQ Affairs. Additionally, I would like to see dedicated grant programs with funds earmarked for LGBTQ establishments. Currently, many grant programs are managed by MOCA and focus on essential community-based organizations, which require more investment themselves.

As a creative and a fixture in the DC nightlife scene myself, I know that bars and entertainment venues are often an overlooked cultural and social need. Moreover, the pandemic has changed the financial reality of many of our homegrown establishments, and we must do anything possible to keep them afloat. There needs to be furthered investment in spaces--whether businesses or community and housing services--for transgender residents in general as well.

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. DC has the highest percentage of transgender individuals in the country and our municipal government should lead by example in its employment practices. The first step would be to conduct a substantive survey and evaluation of current transgender employees to assess inclusivity. Next, initiatives informed by the study must be launched to address any failings.

YOUTH

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

Yes. As described in the first question about health disparities, LGBTQ youth are susceptible to bullying, substance abuse, homelessness and negative mental health outcomes. These problems are also intertwined with racial inequities.

I support free and accessible mental and behavioral health services for LGBTQ youth, including expanding access to mental and behavioral health at schools and de-policing our schools. Additionally, transitional housing—especially during the pandemic—is a key and necessary investment that can serve to provide housing and treatment

simultaneously, and we must embolden support to community centers like Casa Ruby who are doing the work on the ground.

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. In order to preserve and expand housing for LGBTQ seniors, mechanisms like the Housing Production Trust Fund should be leveraged to generate mindful, social and affordable living situations. Moreover, rent control must be emboldened to protect middle and low income residents and their communities, and I am pleased to have testified on the Housing Committee in favor of the new omnibus bill to expand rent control coverage to newer buildings and close loopholes. Lastly, the pandemic has pushed our housing crisis even further, and measures like the Emergency Rental Assistance Program and, if necessary, rent cancellation must be considered to keep vulnerable residents housed and limit debt accumulation.

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. The Trump administration's efforts are bigoted and despicable. Unfortunately, LGBTQ rights is yet another front in the battle for Statehood. We must do everything possible to make DC the 51st state and ensure protections for LGBTQ residents, reproductive health, and much much more.

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.

As a tenured participant in the dance music scene and DC's nightlife and service community, I have been closely engaged with LGBTQ artists and communities here in the District and I am proud to call many of them my close friends and colleagues, and proud to say I have worked with them to make dancefloors more inclusive and safe. My older stepbrother is also a Black gay man who grew up in Washington, DC, so I am personally sensitive to the needs and experiences of the District's LGBTQ community.

Moreover, I am a medical anthropologist who considers the intersectional nature of inequities and am directly experienced with research on marginalized communities. Lastly, I believe that listening to community voices and thought leaders is the first step to developing any policy position, so I am ready to listen and engage with LGBTQ leaders and be a true ally and advocate for this proud and inspiring community.

Please return your signed questionnaire responses by Friday, September 18 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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