

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. I strongly support implementation and funding for the LGBTQ+ Health Data Collection Amendment Act of 2018, as included in the LGBTQ+ coalition [budget requests for 2021](#). As an active member of the LGBTQ+ coalition, I believe that data collection is a critical step in identifying and addressing discrimination.

However, data collection must also be paired with funding for high-quality services, including mental health and substance use treatment, for our LGBTQ community.

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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

Yes. Support from the government for the LGBTQ community is felt through the proactive protection it offers and how seriously officials take the pattern of hate crimes in DC. Half of the [hate crimes in DC are against the LGBTQ community](#). We know that Black and Latinx members of our community are disproportionately harmed by hate crimes.

Banning the use of the panic defense in DC courts is a top priority for me. As a queer man myself, I know this being left unaddressed is dangerous and I can only imagine the experience of those in our community who are exposed to intersectional discrimination. As an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner in Dupont Circle, in 2019 I led the effort to pass a [resolution](#) to urge the Council to reintroduce the “Secure A Fair and Equitable Trial Act of 2017” to ban the use of the “gay panic” or “trans panic” defense in DC courts.

Since then, two separate bills were introduced on the Council including the Tony Hunter and Bella Evangelista Panic Defense Prohibition Act of 2019, which I strongly support.

Just this month, I partnered with another ANC 2B Commissioner to yet again [call on the Council](#) to pass legislation banning the panic defense. Now that the Tony Hunter and Bella Evangelista Panic Defense Prohibition Act of 2019 has been introduced, it is imperative that the legislation passes.

As Councilmember, I will introduce and support legislation banning the use of the “gay panic” and “trans panic” defense if members of the current Council do not act.

Additionally, in October 2019 I was one of the Commissioners in ANC 2B supporting a [resolution](#) opposing the United States Attorney’s Office’s efforts to interfere with local sentencing decisions and urged the office to spend its time prosecuting hate crimes.

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 can and must do better to protect individuals who exercise their First Amendment rights. This summer, we’ve seen how law enforcement agencies use dangerous force against residents, even when the Council takes action to prohibit this.

We need stronger and specific language in the DC Riot Statute to protect residents from unreasonable arrests. I support this action and as Councilmember, I will make sure that this is addressed in Council.

Along with revisiting legislation, immediate action is needed to ensure MPD follows [the law](#) prohibiting use of tear gas, pepper spray, riot gear, rubber bullets and stun grenades. MPD needs more transparency and accountability for its actions. Oversight to ensure compliance with existing law and stronger protections for exercising First Amendment rights will be a priority for me.

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. The District’s laws and code should reflect the gender diversity of our residents. I support a Gender Equity and Neutrality in the Official Code Amendment Act such as the [Gendered Terms Modernization Amendment Act of 2020](#) because the District should be a leader of inclusivity. I will lead on this issue when elected to DC Council. The language of the law should not only reflect our diversity but also our implementation must hold true to the law as well.

The DC Auditor recently released a report regarding the life of Alice Carter. It cited several instances in which she was misgendered in the justice system, leading her to be held in jail with men even though she identified as a woman. This is wholly unacceptable and trauma-inducing. As Councilmember I will lead on efforts to ensure our laws as written and in practice properly protect the rights of our transgender community.

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. In October 2019 I was proud to be involved in a [town hall about sex work](#) as an effort to open a dialogue and provide information on the impact of sex work decriminalization in DC.

As outlined in my [policy platform](#), I support legislation decriminalizing sex work, an issue that disproportionately affects LGBTQ individuals and their future ability to obtain jobs, housing, and other basic needs.

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. One of the reasons I became a member of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission Rainbow Caucus was to organize and speak out against the [Council's inaction on funding](#) for the Office of Human Rights, the Office of LGBTQ Affairs, and other LGBTQ priorities.

In September 2019, as a member of the Advisory Committee to D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser's Office of LGBTQ Affairs, I introduced a [resolution](#) and the Commission voted unanimously to approve a resolution calling on the Mayor or the D.C. Council to allocate \$3 million to fund an LGBT competitive grant program to be operated by the LGBTQ Affairs Office.

In addition, I was a part of many of the meetings and discussions to formulate the LGBTQ+ coalition's budget request for fiscal year 2021, along with the advocacy in the community and with Council. My role was particularly important since Ward 2 was without representation on DC Council. It is hopeful that in an economic situation like the one we are in that the [Council approved \\$2.7 million for LGBTQ+ programs](#), including funding for the Office of Human Rights to address the backlog in cases regarding discrimination of LGBTQ+ residents.

If [elected, I will be the only openly LGBTQ Councilmember](#) and the first-ever openly LGBTQ Councilmember to represent Ward 2. I believe that we don't just need an ally, but a member of this community to ensure that our budget priorities are never forgotten again.

7. Will you support a study of the 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.

It is great that the Office of Human Rights is already [conducting a survey](#) to better understand the experiences of transgender and nonbinary community members that live in, work in, or have applied for employment in DC.

However, beyond a study, I advocated for more funding for OHR to address the backlog of cases of discrimination to combat workplace discrimination as part of the LGBTQ+ coalition.

Both of these actions provide momentum to do more. Council approved \$2.7 million for LGBTQ+ programs; however, we in the [LGBTQ+ coalition requested \\$22.6 million](#). I pledge to be the leading advocate on DC Council for fully funding the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

YOUTH

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

Yes. It is scary to think that in this day and age there are still children that cannot be their authentic self because of fear of being driven out of their homes by their families.

We know that among homeless youth, LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented. There are incredible service providers in our Ward and District doing all they can to meet the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, such as SMYAL, the DC Center, and the Wanda Alston Foundation, but they cannot meet their needs alone and need more support from DC Council and DC agencies.

I will fight for comprehensive services and treatment for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, including extended transitional housing, mental health and substance use services, and other needs.

The District has made significant progress in reducing families experiencing homelessness, but those same efforts need to be expanded to protect our LGBTQ+ residents experiencing homelessness because this method is proven to work in addressing homelessness and we know that there is a disproportionate problem with LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness.

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. Senior affordable housing is needed in Ward 2. We have many residents, specifically LGBTQ residents, who have called this ward home for decades and we need to ensure that they can afford to continue to live in the communities that they call home. I want to make sure that the city with the most LGBTQ residents per capita remains a city we can call home. I will fight for investments in LGBTQ senior and affordable housing.

In April 2019, I was [proud to support](#) the proposal for the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs to receive 24 housing vouchers for LGBTQ older adults through the District of Columbia Housing Authority. Additionally, I led the effort on [ANC 2B to urge](#) all relevant agencies to acknowledge and address the unmet need for LGBTQ-friendly senior housing, such as has already been established in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City, San Francisco, and other major cities. The ANC urged the Department of Aging and Community Living, the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs, and the District of Columbia Housing Authority to work together to fulfill this critical need so that LGBTQ seniors may age in place in our community.

I support the Care for LGBTQ Seniors and Seniors with HIV Amendment Act of 2019. I urge member of the Council to pass this important legislation this year. As a member of the LGBTQ+ coalition, I am proud of our efforts to champion the needs of seniors. In our budget request for fiscal year 2021, there were multiple programs dedicated services for LGBTQ+ seniors. These included the LGBTQ+ intergenerational synergy home sharing pilot program and more LGBTQ+ senior dedicated housing vouchers. These are programs I will support as Ward 2 Councilmember.

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 District of Columbia has been in a longstanding fight for statehood and independence. More than 700,000 District residents have no voting representation in Congress and are federally taxed without Senators or a Representative to vote on our behalf. Washingtonians and many people from elsewhere are proud to call the District of Columbia home and are adamantly opposed to any interference by federal officials into how we govern ourselves.

I will speak up and fight against any attempt to nullify the gender identity of our residents and I will work to protect our transgender residents from any move that tries to diminish their rights and gender identity.

Speaking up and representing the LGBTQ community in the District will always be at the forefront of my service as Councilmember. That includes pushing back against Trump

administration efforts to nullify the legal identity of transgender individuals and all other Trump administration actions to discriminate against transgender individuals.

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 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.



Randy Downs

Relevant News Clips

- <https://dc.curbed.com/2017/6/8/15759098/lgbt-rainbow-crosswalk-17th-street>
- <https://thedccenter.org/author/davidmariner/page/6/>
- <https://victoryinstitute.org/news/152-lgbtq-elected-officials-call-on-116th-congress-to-act-on-four-key-initiatives-to-advance-lgbtq-equality/>
- <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2020/06/trans-poc-inclusive-rainbow-crosswalk-installed-d-c/>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2020/06/25/d-c-installs-progress-pride-rainbow-flag-crosswalk/>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2020/05/13/council-hopefuls-back-lgbtq-rights-at-stein-club-forum/>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2020/05/13/expenses-up-income-down-for-are-a-lgbtq-nonprofits/>
- <https://givebutter.com/TakeOutToHelpOut>
- <https://patch.com/district-columbia/washingtondc/driver-foundations-take-out-help-out-during-pandemic>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2019/10/16/logan-circle-residents-attend-town-hall-on-sex-work/>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2019/09/13/mayors-lgbtq-advisory-committee-calls-for-3-million-for-grants-program/>

- <https://dcist.com/story/19/08/02/lots-of-d-c-donors-are-giving-their-money-to-may-or-pete/>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2019/06/22/vigil-against-anti-lgbt-violence-draws-over-300-to-dupont-circle/>
- <http://news2share.com/start/2019/06/22/dc-community-holds-vigil-for-lgbt-victims-of-violence-murder/>
- <https://wtop.com/dc/2019/06/dc-vigil-highlights-violence-experienced-by-lgbtq-community/>
- <https://www.popville.com/2019/03/cobalt-dupont-development/>
- <https://www.queerty.com/drink-water-eat-vote-gay-twitter-ready-tomorrows-midterm-elections-20181105>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2017/12/08/takano-asks-lgbt-community-help-dems-retake-house/>
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PnPujZx1jdvTeW0dgdfr41wjMnTsQW2x/view?usp=sharing>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2017/12/01/mark-takano-honored-stein-club/>
- <https://wtop.com/lifestyle/2017/10/dc-street-becomes-drag-queen-runway-night/>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2017/04/06/petition-seeks-rainbow-crosswalks-17th-street/>
- https://vimeo.com/304373313?fbclid=IwAR1zqUNoUiz-kCk6kPG8XdASfs_Rh5E0xHb1mt6obvB7IR7nQo6e090Vk
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2019/06/05/permanent-pride-banners-to-be-displayed-on-17th-street/>
- <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2017/10/19/best-gay-d-c-2017-people/>

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