

**Leave No One Behind**

**2022 GLAA Questionnaire**

*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 link relevant documents such as letters to the editor, legislative testimony, campaign literature, etc.*

**Housing**

* Do you support providing sufficient affordable housing units for all households earning less than 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI), such as, allocating vacant apartments to very low-income households, ensuring sufficient funds for the Housing Production Trust Fund are dedicated to these renters, and strengthening inclusionary zoning laws?

**Yes, absolutely. Making this a city where everyone can thrive by making housing and childcare more affordable are at the heart of my campaign. We need to do much more to increase the supply of housing generally, but especially deeply affordable units for individuals making less than 30% of the Area Median Income. I have called for prioritizing Housing Production Trust Fund dollars on increasing the supply of deeply affordable units close to opportunity (like Ward 3). In order to make that happen, we will need much better oversight from the Council, a place where the Council has been consistently lacking across many issue areas.**

**I am a proud Democrat, but one problem with a one-party town is that there are few incentives for local politicians to rock the boat with aggressive oversight or legislation that draws on unconventional ideas. This is the kind of dynamic that allows a councilmember to chair the Housing Committee for years** [**without learning key facts**](https://washingtoncitypaper.com/article/553561/anita-bonds-says-shes-never-heard-of-d-c-s-massive-housing-voucher-waitlist/) **about our housing system and the pressures on working Washingtonians trying to survive. We all lose out when Councilmembers are afraid to ask hard questions because it might embarrass someone or undermine a political narrative that someone is trying to build. I will make sure that the Trust Fund is meeting its obligations to Washingtonians, particularly low-income Washingtonians that would benefit from more deeply affordable units.**

**As part of my housing plan, I support strengthening inclusionary zoning laws, including additional set-asides in exchange for streamlining aspects of the approval process, which should speed up the timeline for delivering new units. I also believe we must recognize the opportunity presented by public property (libraries, fire stations, etc.) to help us dramatically increase the supply of housing units. I will propose legislation that would require a master plan to redevelop all public buildings with a housing component, either in the near term or at the end of the building’s useful life. Since we control these buildings, we are positioned to ensure that the buildings well-exceed the bare minimum IZ units.**

**We can also expand affordable units by incentivizing faith-based and other community groups to re-develop their properties to include housing. This aligns with their mission and can result in groups facing fiscal pressures gaining sufficient resources to remain in their current community.**

**Other parts of my housing platform:**

* **Greater Densification on the relatively dense, transit-oriented corridors that already exist.**
* **Expanding rent control to include buildings 15 years old and older.**
* **Investing in maintaining and improving existing affordable housing stock. Many older buildings have extensive maintenance needs/costs. We cannot allow these buildings to fall out of the housing system, as they will likely be replaced with more costly housing.**
* **Fully funding public housing repairs and demand that DCHA follow a “build first” model when redeveloping older properties.**
* **Legalize smaller single-family homes in wealthy neighborhoods.**
* **Encouraging increased densification in low-density neighborhoods that is consistent with the spirit of current land use patterns.**
* **Streamlining the housing production process, particularly in areas near transit.**
* **Developing incentives for universities to build more on-campus housing.**
* **Expanding the number of rental properties covered by the District Opportunity to Purchase Act (DOPA) to give the District additional opportunities to intervene and preserve existing affordable housing.**
* **Continuing investment in solutions to reduce homelessness and provide unhoused Washingtonians the services they need and deserve.**
* Do you support improving access to housing voucher programs by increasing the number available, as advocated for by The Way Home Campaign and LGBTQ+ Budget Coalition, and reforming program eligibility rules?

**Yes. Ensuring that everyone has access to safe, quality housing is essential to building a strong, vibrant, and prosperous city. It is deeply unfair when individuals are denied government assistance, not because they do not qualify or do not need the help, but because demand exceeds supply or because of onerous and unnecessary paperwork requirements.**

**As an attorney, I have worked with tenants that have been targeted for eviction due to paperwork issues during the Section 8 income recertification process. It’s unfair and a colossal waste of everyone’s time and energy, which is especially problematic when it disproportionately impacts low-income workers already stretched thin. In general, we must endeavor to simplify the application and paperwork process for government programs in order to reduce unnecessary burdens and obstacles.**

**Workers’ Rights**

* Do you support enacting legislation decriminalizing sex work for adults, including the selling and purchasing of sex and third party involvement not involving fraud, violence or coercion?

**Sex workers are among the most marginalized in our society. Frequently forced to operate in unsafe conditions, sex workers lack essential protections from exploitations because they are unable to turn to police or government offices for assistance. As an initial matter, I would support a shift towards the Nordic model, which decriminalizes selling while maintaining other restrictions, including on buyers. Imposing heavy fines or the cost of bail on sex workers operating at the margins of our economy is cruel and unnecessary, serving only to further entrench many individuals in poverty. I have concerns about going further, however, and believe that the issue should be approached with considerable caution and much debate. Ultimately, I would favor the matter of broader decriminalization being posed to the voters through a referendum. This is not a dodge, but a recognition of two facts: (1) Referendums generate considerable more debate and broader engagement by voters than an ordinary bill. And (2) this would be a big change, which means that the Council will want to move cautiously absent a clear indication of public opinion. Putting Initiative 77 to the side, the Council is much less likely to override a decriminalization push if it has been endorsed by the electorate at a referendum.**

* Do you support repealing the subminimum wage for tipped workers?

**Yes, absolutely. As I** [**told a business group earlier**](https://twitter.com/bzbergmann/status/1514349317628309509) **in this campaign, I will not I will not apologize or caveat my support for the pro-worker, pro-family policies advanced in DC in recent years (e.g. paid leave, $15 minimum wage). In fact, we must do much more, which is why I will vote yes to eliminate the subminimum wage and push for other policies that will expand protections for workers.**

* Do you support funding the Office of Human Rights (OHR) at a level that ensures the agency ends its case backlog, completes discrimination cases in a timely manner, and effectively engages in community education and outreach?

**Yes. As an attorney, I firmly believe that justice delayed is justice denied. Budgets are a reflection of our priorities. Choices must be made, but we must ensure that key priorities, like defending *human rights*, are funded sufficiently.**

**Health**

* Do you support establishing overdose prevention facilities in the District to reduce deaths from drug overdoses?

**Yes.**

* Do you support removing the criminal penalties for drug possession for personal use and increasing investments in health services?

**Yes.**

**Policing and incarceration**

* Do you support reducing D.C.’s total pre-COVID-19 incarcerated population by one-third to one-half by FY30?

**As I have said with respect to the debate over the size of the police force, I do not think it is good public policy in the public safety and criminal justice context to set policy around meeting a round number goal. That said, I strongly support the need to continue to push ahead on both police and criminal justice reform. It is especially important that we elect a Councilmember that will resist the temptation in this moment of increased anxiety to back away from reform and double down on discredited tough on crime techniques that fuel mass incarceration without making anyone safer.**

**I completely reject the notion that shortening sentences or diverting offenders to other programs reduces deterrence. It’s nonsense. It is also symptomatic of a broader problem of not recognizing the humanity of black and brown boys. This is a problem that begins in our schools and it is why I will not only oppose school police but focus on eliminating developmentally-inappropriate discipline practices common in many schools. We cannot tolerate, let alone celebrate, school leaders that preside over campuses with excessive suspension rates or disciplinary cultures that emphasize compliance over socio-emotional health.**

**When I graduated law school, I had the good fortune due to my last name to be seated next to** [**Reginald Dwayne Betts**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reginald_Dwayne_Betts)**. Dwayne is an accomplished author and poet, a doting father and husband, an insightful legal mind, a public servant in multiple ways, and a convicted felon. His accomplishment that day, graduating from Yale Law School, was the main subject of discussion by the speakers that day for a reason—the way we have constructed our criminal justice system (lengthy prison sentences, limited support for reentry, and institutionalized stigmas that limit education and career prospects) make it extremely rare, almost impossible, for someone who spent 8 years in prison, including 14 months in solitary confinement, to realize even a fraction of their full potential. How many MacArthur geniuses have we missed it out on because we have intentionally designed and constructed mass incarceration to be as cruel as possible?**

**A few months after graduation, I saw post on my Facebook from a law school classmate about Dwayne. Despite being brilliant, despite being appointed to a White House commission by President Obama, despite graduating from one of the world’s top law schools, Dwayne had been denied admission to the Connecticut Bar because of concerns about his character and fitness. This decision was ultimately reversed after much lobbying by classmates, professors, and others. But one shouldn’t have to be extraordinary to get a second chance. One shouldn’t have to continually prove oneself worthy after serving *eight years* in prison for a mistake made at 16.**

**If elected, I will not give an inch on the need to follow through on criminal justice reform in a real and meaningful way.**

* Do you support better oversight, transparency, and accountability in the process of investigating and improving D.C. jails, including establishing an independent oversight body, addressing issues impacting transgender individuals, repairing jails, and changing staff culture?

**Yes. I am horrified by the conditions at our correctional facilities. As an initial matter, let me be clear: we cannot allow our jails to become hostile centers of discrimination for transgender Washingtonians. We must commit to improving conditions and hold officials accountable for making too many prisoners live in inhumane circumstances. We are better than this and we cannot accept empty promises and double speak any longer. The Council has an obligation to use its various levers of influence (oversight, funding, confirmation, etc.) to make sure that abysmal conditions are corrected. Moreover, the Council bears much responsibility for the conditions at issue. Where has the oversight been for all these years?**

* Do you support divesting from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to further invest in vital programs, including anti-poverty, violence prevention, crisis intervention, and reentry?

**I believe we must make real investments in alternatives to traditional policing, especially truly building up and out a program to divert calls to trained social workers. We must have a comprehensive approach to public safety that emphasizes the need to invest in community organizations, expand violence prevention services, and address the root causes of crime, including barriers to successful reentry and an education system that routinely fails to meet the socio-emotional needs of low-income kids of color before churning them out into the world.**

**At the same time, I do not believe that pursuing those goals should be framed as an “either/or.” This is a “yes, and” situation. We need an effective police department that has the resources and capacity to address public safety needs. At present, the debate about staffing is being driven by talking points in search of policies. On both sides of the policing debate, voters should be wary of politicians who promise simple solutions to complex problems. I am focused on quality, not quantity, when it comes to MPD. I will propose raising education qualification so that every MPD recruit has a college degree. There is extensive evidence supporting increasing this requirement. Police officers that have college degrees are less likely to use force, less likely to fire their service weapon, and much less likely to be the subject of citizen complaints or be terminated for misconduct. Some studies have found that college-educated police officers are better equipped to succeed in a community policing model. I will also propose funding for developing a “law school for cops” continuing education program at UDC’s David A. Clarke School of Law. We know that effective training can reduce incidents of unlawful conduct by police officers. This is one reason why police officers must be trained in de-escalation and implicit bias alongside other more traditional policing topics. Police officers would also be well-served by gaining a deeper understanding of the laws that govern their conduct and the criminal justice system more generally. Beyond abridged and superficial training, police officers receive limited training regarding Constitutional law, criminal law and procedure, and other legal topics. An innovative program at UDC (or maybe established in collaboration with multiple law schools in the District) could fill this gap.**

*Please return your questionnaire responses in PDF format* ***by 11:59pm ET on Friday, April 22*** [*here*](https://forms.gle/BY2LdSwFxyURMwRN8)*. If you have trouble submitting your response through the form, you can email it to equal@glaa.org. GLAA will rate each response at our meeting on April 26 at 7pm ET.*