



**Leave No One Behind
2022 GLAA Questionnaire**

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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.

I have spent my entire career as a public servant, doing the hard work in the shadows on behalf of families, children, and some of our most vulnerable neighbors. As the daughter of a young, single mother, I am keenly aware that families are diverse in their compositions, and while our needs might vary, we have more in commonalities than differences. I have spent my career as an educator, advocate, and coalition building lifting up the needs of our community. Fight for educational equity, access to quality health care, and championing public partnership in decision-making in this city; this is work I have done with community and for our community for over a decade.

Almost 20 years ago, I started my career as a middle school language arts teacher at a Title I middle school. After a few years of teaching, I left the classroom due to a deep frustration with the policies being forced on my classroom by policymakers who did not understand the everyday needs of my students, their families, nor our public education system. After leaving the classroom, I worked in a variety of roles in the non-governmental space and served in various civic/grassroots capacities, such as serving as the President of the Ward Five Council on Education and other education related organizations. In this role I worked to advocate and realize the opening of two new middle schools in Ward 5, increased access to early child care seats in our DC Public Schools for Ward 5 families, and advocated for the renovation of our Ward 5 libraries as a member of the DC Public Library Board of Trustees. Additionally, I pursued my doctorate with a focus on how there is a critical need for collective decision making and partnership in the District. My dissertation developed a framework for community partnership

in decision-making specific to the District of Columbia to support the fostering of trust and to create policy solutions driven by community voice, input, and ownership.

In 2015, I was appointed by the District of Columbia State Board of Education to be the first Chief Student Advocate for the District of Columbia. In this capacity I established the DC Office of the Student Advocate to support District families and residents in navigating public education in the District of Columbia. I led the office for four years (May 2015 until April 2019). In this work, I fought hard to ensure that students and families were at the forefront of our city's actions on education, fighting for legislation to overhaul our city's student discipline policy, creating a host of resource tools and guides to support the awareness and advocacy of families, working on special education issues, working to support the needs of students with incarcerated parents, student safe passage and violence interruption, and more.

In 2018, while serving as the Chief Student Advocate for the District of Columbia, I was appointed by the District of Columbia State Board of Education to serve as the Interim Ombudsman for Public Education, leading the DC Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education to support District families, and all education stakeholders and schools, in mitigating their complaints and concerns. I served in this role, along with my duties as Chief Student Advocate, for almost 9 months while the State Board searched for a new Ombudsman.

In 2019, I was appointed by Mayor Muriel Bowser to be the first Executive Director of Thrive by Five DC, where I established the office and the Thrive by Five Coordinating Council. Thrive by Five's mission is to create the best possible start for DC children by connecting families and caregivers with a community of resources, education, and support that all children need to thrive by five by working together across the District, we can connect families with the services and programs, resources and support designed to nurture the whole child and prepare them for lifelong success. In addition to the Thrive by Five Coordinating Council, for three years I led the planning and execution of the Mayor's National Maternal & Infant Health Summit. Maternal and infant health is an area that impacts us all. In this work I was determined to focus on the whole family and whole community approach and partnered with Sheila Alexander-Reid and the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs to ensure the voice of the LGBTQ community was reflected and heard in this summit and the work of Thrive by Five. We worked together to host sessions about how maternal and infant health impacts in the LGBTQ community and discussed policy solutions to support our LGBTQ neighbors on the journey to parenthood and beyond. The Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs was an important partner in the annual planning of the National Maternal & Infant Health Summit and the year-round work of Thrive by Five DC and the Thrive by Five Coordinating Council.

In 2021, I was appointed to be the Director of the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs. I served in that role, and in the role of Executive Director for Thrive by Five DC, until my departure from DC Government in September 2021 in order to run for the Ward 5 seat on the Council of the District of Columbia (DC Council). In my role as the Director of the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs I was responsible for overseeing thirteen offices, one of those offices was the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs. In my role as Director, I worked closely with the LGBTQ office to realize

new grant funding to be administered by the office. I was proud to be a part of that work. My tenure was also at the high of the COVID-19 pandemic, so much of my time was making sure to connect neighbors to critical resources and information – such as STAY DC rental assistance, leading our city’s vaccine outreach program and increasing vaccinations access points for neighbors, unemployment insurance and supports, outreach to the hospitality industry and small business to offer critical supports, and more.

Housing

Question: 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, I support providing and increasing funding to create, sustain, and preserve affordable housing units in the District at all levels of need – but particularly households earning less than 30% of AMI. If we are truly going to reach the goal, I believe that we must be willing to take things a step further to realize the goal of affordable housing for more neighbors. I believe that rent stabilization, balanced with the aggressive use of incentives, will increase our ability to focus more acutely on expanding affordability in multifamily rental properties. Expansion of tax abatements and cash incentives in exchange for affordability covenants are good first steps toward partnering with building owners to move toward this goal. The Housing Production Trust Fund is just one tool of many we must scale and grow but in addition to the need for the measured and strategic expansion of tools like rent control to meet the needs of our neighbors we must also consider the following:

- Using the Housing Production Trust Fund as a model, create dedicated funding focused on the development of workforce housing. This fund would explore ways to subsidize affordable housing options for low to moderate income workers with the goal of creating an opportunity for workers to live and work in the District.
- Increase the percentage of inclusionary zoning requirements for housing development projects. As an interim measure, focus on inclusionary zoning plus incentives (such as increased density) to encourage development projects to increase the amount of inclusionary zoning units for rent on projects currently in the queue.

Question: 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, I support increasing the number of local housing vouchers to expand access. By focusing on increasing the number of housing vouchers we fund locally we can create new opportunities for housing access for neighbors in need of support. Scaling our efforts is the only way we can continue to prioritize our affordable housing goals, as very few existing vouchers become available or turn over year over year yet the need for access continues to increase.

Furthermore, I will also be a champion for advocating for an increase in the number of vouchers that are federally funded.

Workers' Rights

Question: 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?

As a councilmember I would like to further explore how we can work toward decriminalizing sex work, as we know the harmful effects criminal justice involvement has on neighbors in this industry and it leads to more trauma and less access to getting the help they might need. I am interested in learning more about how we can work to set up pathways to support for sex workers to and ensure they have greater access to the support and resources needed. Our current system is designed to just arrest sex workers, which only leads to more problems – deepening the cycle of abuse and trauma. I would be interested in revisiting the bill introduced by former Councilmember David Grosso, which called for extensive funding for social services targeting people who must rely on commercial sex work. We must be thoughtful in our actions – an exploration to decriminalize and offer support does not mean we should support commercial sex work. Our goal should be to provide those neighbors most impacted with the support they need, not further system involvement that will lead to adverse outcomes and contribute to a cycle of trauma.

Question: Do you support repealing the subminimum wage for tipped workers?

Voters in the District decided this issue when they voted for Initiative 77 in 2018. I did not agree with the Council voting to overturn this initiative, as we live in city where voters do not have the opportunity to vote on many initiatives or referendums. One critical element of being a Councilmember is being well versed on the issues and understanding all sides of the issue. I also see a critical role of a Councilmember as having responsibility in bring issue awareness to their constituents to support their constituents' ability to fully participate in the decision-making process.

Question: 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, I agree with a need to fully fund the Office of Human Rights. All government agencies should be appropriately resourced and staffed to efficiently execute their mission; this especially true for the OHR who is charged with ensuring that neighbors that fall into all protective classes receive the full protections afforded to them under our laws.

Health

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

Yes, I support establishing overdose prevention facilities. There are countless examples of why this need is so critical and why we must immediately act. Just a few weeks ago, ten people lost their lives due to drug overdoses in Ward 5. Increasing access to overdose prevention facilities and giving the facilities the support, they need to reside within our communities will bring their services directly to our neighbors who are in need. Substance abuse and addiction are at an all time high. Our emergency systems and hospitals are feeling the impact, while communities feel the trauma caused by a lack of easily accessible substance abuse and overdose prevention support. In partnership with the increase of facilities, we must also educate our community as to how they can be a part of the solution through knowing how to help prevent overdoses, using Narcan and other aids to reverse an overdose, and how to refer neighbors to the supports and resources within the city that can help provide substance abuse and addiction counseling and support. We must act now. Currently the facilities we do have are overwhelmed and do not have the capacity to take on the increased need.

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

Yes. We have enough evidence of how criminalizing drug possession in our city's history harmed our communities. Access to high quality health care services, mental health supports, housing and workforce opportunities can heal our communities and foster a fresh start for many of our neighbors in need. The impact of trauma, poverty, and the root causes of violence must be addressed and increased access to health services and other supports gives our entire community the ability to thrive.

Policing and incarceration

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

Yes. Mass incarceration has deeply harmed our community. We see the vestiges of the harm within our community, coupled with cycles of violence and trauma. Steps toward reducing our population of neighbors who are incarcerated can start with following recommendations from two reports – The Council for Court Excellence's District Task Force on Jails & Justice report *Jails & Justice: Our Transformation Starts Today*, which offered 80 recommendations to support the District in promoting safe communities and steps to reduce the incarcerated rates by half; secondly, the Police Reform Commission, convened by the DC Council, as published a report, which included a wide array of recommendations, focused on de-centering police and steps to improve public safety. Both reports are resources I would use to focus my efforts as a councilmember to increase public safety and promote healthy, safe communities while also reducing our rate of neighbors who have been incarcerated at rates that should make us feel

uncomfortable and ready to push for change. These recommendations, coupled with the current programmatic efforts in our city's budget, can put us on the right path by.

In this city, we have models in the city of community violence and gun violence prevention programs, through our violence interruption structures and Building Blocks, but we need to connect that work more closely to upstream efforts to support the needs of young child and families. I would be a champion for ensuring families who we know need extra support get the resources they need. I will also work to champion diversion programs to keep our young people out of the justice system and push harder for increased opportunities and access points for recreational offerings and workforce exposure and experiences. We must start earlier in supporting the needs of neighbors. The same opportunities I envision for young people are similar resources and support our adult neighbors can benefit from as well. We want to make sure our neighbors are ready for the changing economy in our city and the job opportunities in might bring by focusing on the following:

Initiate a full youth apprenticeship program as a career readiness track for District high school students in all represented job sectors in the city.

Partner with DC employers to expand apprenticeship beyond the construction trades to include careers in fields such as information technology/information security, medical records keeping/informatics, financial services, automobile servicing/repair and hotel/hospitality jobs. This partnership would fit well into the ideas of the DC Infrastructure Academy by expanding its scope more broadly.

- Allocate \$5 million annually to fund pre-apprenticeship programs so DC residents are able to prepare for and take advantage of expanded apprenticeship opportunities.
- Fund the expansion of additional no cost opportunities for adult learners including expanded community college programs and locations and adding new adult charter schools focused on high demand jobs in the District.
- Appropriate funding for on-the-job training slots dedicated to District small businesses to support growing their workforce while also training District residents directly in the jobs readily available within our communities.
- Work with DC small, local businesses to create job training programs to support the career readiness of residents and to create a workforce pipeline. This effort must be connected to supports for small businesses for technical assistance, peer to peer mentoring, incubator space, and increased funding.

- I will advance legislation to reform the expungement and criminal records sealing process in the District – to include automatic action on the sealing of records related to crimes that have since been legalized or decriminalized such as marijuana possession, so returning citizens and those with nonconviction records have a level playing field when seeking employment. Identify funding for technical assistance, peer mentorship, incubator space, and other supports to foster entrepreneurship.

We must give our neighbors an opportunity to thrive and feel a sense of belonging and support in our city.

Question: 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 absolutely support a need for better oversight and would be a champion for such efforts as a Councilmember. Now is the time to address this need and we have evidence of what is possible if we lean into the expertise of the community, advocates, impacted residents, and government to find solutions. We see evidence of how this can work with the Police Reform Commission the Council convened and similar conversations that have happened regarding incarceration in the District. As a Councilmember I would want to revisit previous recommendations and look to reconvene an advisory group or task force to further explore legislative actions and policy actions for a way forward.

Question: 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?

In a city with a \$19 billion-dollar budget I believe it is possible to have all things, policing and investments in vital programs, at once. While I agree that we must decenter policing as the primary solution to crime and violence prevention, I do believe that policing an important part of a multipronged approach to tackling the manifestations of trauma, poverty, and divestment in our communities. As a councilmember I will work to:

1. address the root causes of violence and crime;
2. move away from policing and mass incarceration as the only response;
3. invest in prevention, intervention, and appropriate responses;
4. refocus our systems on a more people-centered approach to violence and public safety;
5. all feel a sense of belonging, safety, and care.

I believe in a balanced approach that includes prevention and intervention, as well as accountability, consequences, and responsiveness to stop the terror that is playing out in our communities. We need a public health approach that also includes coordination and communication between law enforcement, community-based organizations and our court

system. Many of these crimes are being committed by minors who have no sense of any consequences, but are also acting out of pain, trauma, and hopelessness. We must find a balanced approach that does not allow violent and illegal behavior to go unpunished and undeterred, but also addresses the root causes of children committing very adult crimes. We can get better at both - at the same time.

We have resources in our communities and in our city that can intervene and surround our most troubled residents with mental health and other direct support services, while preventing them from continuing to harm our neighborhoods and terrorize our neighbors.

As councilmember, I want to support our city agencies to work together, rather than in silos, so that individual incidents are addressed swiftly, with coordination and an eye towards the bigger picture. Young people who commit crimes should not be thrown away, left to remain in cycles of crime, incarceration, and recidivism. They should have opportunities to experience transformation and be able to use their experiences to make positive contributions to our society.