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A Loving Community 2024 GLAA Questionnaire

The following questions are based on A Loving Community: GLAA Policy Brief 2024. If you have questions about the issues raised in the questionnaire, please seek the brief for guidance and clarification. 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—particularly actions that relate to the topics in recent GLAA policy briefs. Feel free to link relevant documents such as letters to the editor, legislative testimony, campaign literature, etc. Assume that GLAA is unfamiliar with your record.

1. Fund Our Futures. Do you support addressing concentrated wealth in the District by raising revenue through taxing the most wealthy residents as the Just Recovery DC Coalition recommends in its Fair Tax proposal?

Yes. While we are still in the early days of the FY25 budget process, it is clear that revenue raisers will be required for us to pay for the very basic services District residents need, immediately, and in the long run. And, for this to truly be a shared sacrifice budget, that means making it more equitable. My team is currently working on proposals supported by the Just Recovery DC Coalition such as a tax increase on high value properties, an income tax increase for high income earners, a capital gains tax increase, and creating a Business Activity Tax. Unfortunately, these changes may have to come in stages - if approved by the full Council. Specifically, the Business Activity Tax may require both a full legislative process and time to implement, but I believe it's an idea that we should definitely explore.

2. Invest in harm reduction and overdose prevention services to save lives. Do you support funding the evidence-based and patient-centered approach to reducing overdose deaths and supporting healing from substance use disorder in the form of allocating \$15 million from the \$80 million Opioid Settlement Fund to fund two 24/7 harm reduction centers, that would include a safe drug consumption component, mobile outreach vehicles, and drug checking services?

Yes, I would welcome the District establishing safe consumption centers that include wrap-around health, counseling, public benefit, respite, and drug checking services, similar to the OnPoint Center I visited in Harlem, NY in December 2022. The model of care, compassion, and dignity I saw that day embodies what a patient-centered approach to harm reduction could be in the District. OnPoint also operates mobile outreach units which I would support as a

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complementary and essential tool for reaching inherently transient and vulnerable populations. Leveraging the District's opioid settlement funding would be a smart way to catalyze the creation of these services. Given the stigma and risks surrounding drug use, I would also prioritize the District engaging in substantial community building ground work with the neighbors and businesses who live and operate near any forthcoming harm reduction and safe consumption site. We must ensure these neighbors are brought along as full partners in ending the scourge of overdoses in the District, not barriers to any site's long term success.

3. Increasing the pipeline of licensed mental health care workers. Do you support addressing the District's lack of mental health providers by reducing the barriers to becoming a licensed social worker through ending the exam requirement for people who complete a Bachelor's or Master's degree in social work and funding programs such as the recently passed law creating a free Master of Social Work program?

Yes. Changing the exam requirements, which have been proven to be discriminatory, are funding new the free Master of Social Work are great first steps in increasing our pipeline of licensed mental healthcare workers. But, we need to go farther. We also need to increase the pay rate for these workers. They are drastically underpaid, especially given their heavy workloads and the stress the work puts on their own mental health. These are healthcare professionals the same as other licensed providers and they need to be compensated better.

4. Fund crisis response and community-based behavioral/mental health services to prevent crises. Do you support investing in unarmed models of crisis response with responders that are culturally competent and resourced sufficiently to respond in minutes?

Yes. Criminalizing behavioral and mental health issues has led to much of the problems we're experiencing today. When we criminalize people who need healthcare, we put them in a system that can't or won't help them recover. Our current efforts have been somewhat successful, but they're drastically underfunded. If we're going to truly change the way we address these issues, we have to put money behind our words. Criminalizing people in distress only makes the problem worse.

5. Budget sufficiently to fulfill non-discrimination laws. Do you support continued funding for the Office of Human Rights (and oppose cuts to the agency's budget) to ensure the agency can staff up sufficiently to end its case backlog, complete discrimination cases in a timely manner, and effectively engage in community education and outreach?

Yes. OHR is another agency that is critical to addressing the problems we're currently experiencing and that is woefully underfunded. Truly solving these problems requires thinking

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about them in a new way and one of those ways is to ensure everyone's rights are protected, not just those who can afford them.

6. Decriminalize Sex Work. Do you support enacting legislation to decriminalize sex work for adults, including the selling and purchasing of sex and third party involvement not involving fraud, violence or coercion?

I would like to have an opportunity to do an in depth review of any potential new legislation on this matter but, tentatively, yes, I would support decriminalizing consensual sex work with the right protections against sex trafficking, involvement of minors, and other predatory actions that can occur in this line of work. I would like to learn more from GLAA and others about the specific proposal and how we can ensure a safe and thoughtful transition to decriminalization.

7. Decriminalize Drug Use. Do you support removing the criminal penalties for drug possession for personal use and increasing investments in health services?

I wholeheartedly support increasing investments in health services and would like to review the specific language regarding completely removing criminal penalties for personal use to ensure that it safeguards against unintended harm. Tentatively, I'd support this.

8. Fully implement police and jail oversight and record sealing legislation. Do you support the full \$2.6 million in funding necessary to implement the legislation passed to improve oversight of our jails and police and to overhaul our criminal record sealing process?

Yes. In fact, when we were debating the flawed SECURE DC legislation, I fought to ensure the implementation of the Second Chance Act was moved up. It was not slated for implementation for two more years, but because of my work with my colleagues, it will be implemented in FY25. I also fought to lessen requirements for police and jail oversight. We must be vigilant to ensure we don't settle for the status quo or for regression of these requirements and I will be working to ensure they are fully funded in FY25.

9. Socialize Our Housing. Do you support the D.C. Green New Deal for Housing that proposes to take a social housing approach to disrupt the failed system of the market-focused one?

As the author of this legislation, it has my full support. We have over-commercialized our real estate. We have to begin looking at it in a new way. Social housing is the answer to our housing shortage, especially for lower and middle income residents. Creating a new model that is self-sustaining and, most importantly, focused on the residents is the disruption our community needs. I will continue to work with my colleagues and the Chairman of the Committee on Housing and Human Services to ensure passage of the legislation by the end of this Council period.

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Please return your questionnaire responses in PDF format by 11:59pm ET on Friday, April 19 on GLAA's homepage. If you have trouble submitting your response through the page, you can email it to equal@glaa.org.