

At Large Council Race

Robert White's Responses to 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. Equity requires that everyone in DC feel about the same tax burden. This requires substantially higher taxes for those who most easily can afford to pay them. With this principle in mind, I support these reforms:

Take steps to eliminate or reduce child poverty, through a child tax credit.

More fairly distribute tax burden, by restructuring individual income tax rates and by taxing most valuable residential real estate at a higher rate.

Broaden the business tax base by replacing DC's Business Franchise Tax with a value-added approach, that is a Business Activity Tax.

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. In the interest of public health, the harm reduction centers should prevent the spread of communicable diseases by providing clean needles. Furthermore, harm reduction center staff should be ready to provide clients with information about a wide range of services, including housing and health care.

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. I have serious concerns about racial bias in the current social worker exams. Further reason to question the exams' validity: some highly competent social work practitioners have difficulty in passing the exams.

Thank you for mentioning the legislation for free social work education. I am the proud introducer of that law. I worked to get it enacted, and I will fight to assure its funding.

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. For the most part, police officers are ill prepared to deal with behavioral and mental health crises. Furthermore, the very nature of their enforcement duties hampers their effectiveness in this kind of crisis intervention.

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. I support continued funding at the current level, if not higher one. However, a lack of funding may not be all that limits the Office of Human Rights effectiveness. As with many DC agencies, OHR leadership needs to be accountable for their operation. As is the case with all government agencies, there must be clear priorities as well metrics that can be used to evaluate the organization's work.

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?

Yes. From the lens of harm reduction, we see no merit in criminalizing sex work. Furthermore, decriminalizing sex work will make it easier for government organizations, including the police, to protect sex workers from abuse.

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

Yes. As is the case with decriminalizing sex work, harm reduction should inform laws about drug possession. Similarly, decriminalizing drug use would make it easier for government agencies to provide users with help they may need. Finally, DC would find it easier to tax drug use in a decriminalized setting.

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.

I favor strengthening Corrections Information Council capabilities with respect to monitoring the operations of the DC Department of Corrections and the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services.

To be effective, the Metropolitan Police Department must have the confidence and trust of the community they are supposed to protect and serve. To build that confidence, there must be adequate external oversight.

Finally, I have long advocated for measures that help returning citizens turn their lives around and become productive members of society. Toward this end, I strongly support the implementation of record sealing reforms.

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?

Yes. I am a proud co-introducer of the Green New Deal for Housing Amendment Act of 2023. As Chair of the DC Council's Housing Committee, I have directed substantial staff resources to enhancing the legislation. We already have held a hearing on the legislation, and I look forward to its passage this year.

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.