



## 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.*

**Christina Henderson**

**At-Large Councilmember**

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- 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?

In 2021, I supported the Homes and Hearts Amendment which through a modest increase in income taxes which enabled us to increase the wages for early childhood educators and expand the number of housing vouchers available. I have not supported more recent tax proposals for a variety of reasons. Locally it is proven that when we tax at a higher rate than our surrounding jurisdictions, those of means can simply move elsewhere to escape the tax burden. During the pandemic era, [DC lost a net of about \\$600 million in taxable income](#) to Montgomery County alone. That wasn't just about taxes, but it speaks to the mobility issues

we are combating. When I talk about fiscal stability, I also mean that we need to keep high income earners in DC, tax them at a reasonable rate, so we can invest in our safety net programs. If we are not judicious with this approach, we risk fiscal losses and upending our tax base. This includes corporations. Unfortunately, this is the reality of the size of our jurisdiction and the competitiveness of the region.

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?

I support harm reduction activities and am supportive of organizations that engage in harm reduction work, such as HIPS, efforts to secure permanent locations. As chair of the Committee on Health, I amplified the need for DC to treat the opioid epidemic as a public health emergency. We launched the Opioid Abatement Advisory Committee tasked with recommending how opioid settlement funds should be spent. And the Committee has used local dollars to fund substance abuse and behavioral health services targeted outreach grants in Wards 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Though I have visited OnPoint's site in NYC, I would not support the creation of harm reduction centers that allow for drug consumption onsite at this time.

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?

I do support reducing barriers for individuals to become social workers. Through the Committee on Health holding a hearing on legislation to end the exam requirement, the DC Department of Health began a process to design an alternative pathway to social work licensure without an exam. DC Health presented the proposed new regulations to the Board of Social Work and I look forward to that process being finalized in 2025. In the meantime, when the Committee on Health took up and passed [B25-545](#) the Health Occupations Revisions General Amendment Act of 2023, I included a provision that allows for individuals with Bachelors, Masters, or Doctoral degrees in social work to participate in non-clinical practice without becoming licensed social workers—this includes non-clinical case management (coordination of social services, assessment of service needs, and facilitation of resource access); community organization efforts; advocacy work for client and community interests; and administrative responsibilities. This means that many who previously would have been required to take the social work exam for these kinds of jobs will no longer be required to do so to perform their indispensable work.

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. I have supported increasing funding for the crisis response teams at the DC Department of Behavioral Health. In 2023, the Committee on Health provided additional \$100,000 for retention and hiring bonuses crisis response staff that specifically work with youth. We continue to work with DBH on this effort, especially publicizing the phone number that directly deploys that unit and getting the Office of Unified Communications to properly deploy the crisis response unit over MPD as the default.

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?

Absolutely. During my first term as Councilmember, I have raised these very issues at performance oversight and budget hearings and worked with my colleagues to increase investments at the Office of Human Rights (OHR) and with the Office of Administrative Hearings, who hear the appeals from OHR. There is no reason that our residents should have to wait months and often times years for their cases to be heard, adjudicated, and settled. Due to oversight efforts, OHR now reports quarterly on its performance.

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 supported the Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2019 which would remove criminal penalties for consensual sex work among adults in the District and create a task force to study the effects of the law and make further recommendations for further public health interventions. I view this as an issue of safety, dignity, and human rights. The hearing on this legislation provided an opportunity for us all to hear from sex workers—a group who has been traditionally marginalized by our government—about the very real harm that criminalization causes, especially to trans women and women of color who engage in sex work. Decriminalizing consensual adult behavior will empower individuals in this industry to report instances of crime and violence committed against them, work with law enforcement when there is suspected coercion and trafficking, and to negotiate safer sex practices, which is a public health issue. It is important that we do not conflate sex work with sex trafficking, which happens often during the debate of this issue. It is absolutely necessary that we protect children and adults from exploitation, and the Community Safety and Health Amendment Act

does maintain the strict prohibition against coercion, force, and sex trafficking of minors and adults. I will always fight for justice for survivors of trafficking and assault.

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

I support increasing investments to support those struggling with substance use disorder (SUD). In addition to what I described in question 2, as chair of the Committee on Health, I have also advocated for a quality provider network for SUD treatments. In particular, we are working on expanding the number of beds available for in-patient residential SUD treatment for youth. Candidly we need more residential options for adults as well, and we will be working with DC Department of Health Care Finance to reexamine the reimbursement rates for this service to ensure that DC is competitive for recruiting providers, but also providing a quality treatment experience for our residents. Decriminalizing drug use is not a viable policy solution for the District at this time and I would not support it.

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, record sealing is very important to me. In fact, components of the bill I introduced on record sealing, the [Record Expungement Simplification to Offer Relief and Equity \(RESTORE\) Amendment Act](#), were incorporated into the final bill the Council approved.

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?

I support the goals of the Green New Deal for Social Housing, which ultimately is to rethink how we create and grow the affordable housing supply in the District. However, I think that implementation of this particular proposal has some very real challenges. The District has a sordid history when it comes to government-affiliated housing. Like the concept of social housing, the government has bought and built apartments directly and we've failed to maintain them as government funding, both federal and local, has waned. We need to deliver on our existing housing commitments and improve our reputation as a developer and/or landlord. Our existing housing stock managed by the DC Housing Authority (DCHA) needs over \$2 billion of improvements—a cost that continues to rise with growing inflation. We have communities like Greenleaf Gardens, Potomac Gardens, and Park Morton who have been promised for decades new developments (some mixed-income), modernizations, overall community improvements, and we have yet to deliver. We have high vacancy rates, units that are likely impacting residents' health, and earlier this year - an average of a 4 hour wait if you call DCHA's customer service line for help. Since I have been a Councilmember, I have

been working to address these issues through supporting increased local funding for DCHA capital needs, and oversight of necessary reforms. I'm also hopeful that the new Executive Director for DCHA, who has a background in housing authority turnarounds, will deliver. There needs to be a critical turnaround with DCHA before we launch a new agency to implement the Green New Deal for Social Housing. If we are unable to increase the public's confidence (particularly market-rate renters who are needed for these projects to be financially viable) in DC government's ability to actually acquire and manage housing, I question the initiative's ability to be successful in meeting its goals.

*Please return your questionnaire responses in PDF format **by 11:59pm ET on Friday, September 27** on GLAA's [homepage](#). If you have trouble submitting your response through the page, you can email it to [equal@glaa.org](mailto:equal@glaa.org).*