

RINI SAMPATH FOR MAYOR

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance (GLAA)

2026 Primary Election Questionnaire Responses

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1. Fight for Home Rule

Q: To protect DC's LGBTQ+ communities, will you oppose every single effort to infringe on DC's autonomy?

Yes. I will oppose every effort to infringe on DC's autonomy, and I will use every tool available to defend our communities from federal interference.

As Mayor, I will not legitimize the disapproval process by using it strategically or selectively. When Congress acts outside established legal procedures to overturn our locally passed laws, I will work with the Attorney General to challenge those actions in court. I support the Attorney General's position on the 30-day window for the tax decoupling legislation, and I would support emergency legislation to reinstate it if necessary. I will decline to endorse any candidate who does not explicitly commit to DC statehood, and I will use the platform of the Mayor's office to advance statehood legislation nationally.

Congressional interference with DC's criminal justice reforms, including our pretrial detention laws, resentencing legislation, and human rights protections for transgender residents, is an attack on our democracy and on our communities. I will fight every single one of these incursions.

As a campus organizer at USC, I worked with the ACLU to defend my First Amendment rights to assemble and petition when my institution tried to suppress student advocacy during its largest sex crimes scandal. I understand in a personal way what it means to fight institutions that abuse their power, and I carry that commitment into this race.

2. Stop Enabling Federal Overreach

Q: Will you refuse to cooperate with the Federal Government in its undemocratic use of power, including the authoritarian deployment of National Guard troops?

Yes. I will refuse to cooperate with the federal government's undemocratic use of power, including the authoritarian deployment of National Guard troops and federal law enforcement against DC residents.

I will not take any action to facilitate DC government or MPD cooperation with ICE. I will direct MPD not to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement, and I will oppose any collaboration between DC agencies and DHS, Park Police, or National Guard deployments used against our residents.

I will also direct DC's Department of Transportation not to share DMV data with ICE, and I will support passage of the Safe Community Places and Policing Amendment Act. I will not participate in any federal taskforce that facilitates the deployment of federal law enforcement in the District against our communities.

I am an immigrant woman who came to this country at age seven. I understand what federal enforcement power means to immigrant communities because I have lived it.

3. Invest In a Just Legal System

Q: To support LGBTQ+ people involved in the legal system, do you support limiting pre-trial detention at a minimum to the evidence-based laws in place before 2023 and investing more resources into civil legal help?

Yes. I support limiting pretrial detention at minimum to the evidence-based laws in place before 2023, and I support greater investment in civil legal help for DC residents.

DC's pretrial detention law before 2023 was the gold standard nationally: 92 percent of people released pretrial were not rearrested, and only 1 percent were rearrested for a violent offense. The 2023 expansion was a mistake that is locking up more people while awaiting trial, including in a DC Jail where conditions are deplorable and deaths outpace the national average. With crime at historic lows, there is no evidence-based justification for maintaining the expansion. I will support letting it expire.

Lack of access to civil legal representation is an equity issue that falls hardest on LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, people with disabilities, elders, and children. I will prioritize funding for civil legal aid and work to expand access, including for DC residents facing immigration proceedings, housing disputes, and public benefits denials.

4. Safe and Warm Homes

Q: In light of disproportionate representation of LGBTQ+ among people without stable housing, do you support strengthening and enforcing the existing laws and investing the District's resources to end homelessness in DC?

Yes. I support strengthening and enforcing existing housing laws and investing DC's resources to end homelessness, including the disproportionate homelessness experienced by LGBTQ+ people, particularly transgender youth and young adults.

LGBTQ+ youth are dramatically overrepresented among DC's unhoused population. As Mayor, I will protect and expand emergency housing capacity with specific attention to LGBTQ+-affirming shelter options, because general shelter settings are often unsafe for transgender residents. I will fund the Homeless Prevention Program, Project Reconnect, and I will oppose further cuts to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

I will crack down on predatory junk fees and illegal rent increases that push long-term residents out of their homes. I will prioritize public land for deeply affordable housing and require that affordable units are produced in every ward.

I will also ensure that residents without a permanent address can access identification documents and that people whose gender does not match their birth certificate can navigate DC's systems with dignity. Bureaucratic barriers to ID access are a housing and safety issue for transgender residents.

5. Abundant and Nutritious Food

Q: Do you support increasing the nutrition assistance program benefits to fill the gap created by the federal government?

Yes. I support increasing nutrition assistance program benefits to fill the gap created by federal cuts, and I will treat food access as a basic right, not a budget line item subject to annual negotiations.

Federal cuts to SNAP and other nutrition programs are hitting DC's most vulnerable residents hardest, including LGBTQ+ families, older adults, and immigrant communities. As Mayor, I will work with the Council to use local resources to fill gaps created by federal reductions. I will also launch targeted SNAP outreach and enrollment initiatives so that eligible residents are actually enrolled.

Further, I will invest in community-based food infrastructure including urban farms, food cooperatives, and medically tailored meal programs. I will publish a ward-level food access heatmap annually and use it to drive investment to the neighborhoods with the greatest need. Food funding should not be subject to annual budget battles. I will work with the Council to establish a dedicated food access fund with stable appropriations.

6. Power to the People

Q: Do you commit to providing economic relief to DC's LGBTQ+ residents and businesses by investing in energy and water infrastructure that prioritizes the people of DC over corporate profits?

Yes. I commit to investing in energy and water infrastructure that prioritizes DC residents over corporate profits, and to ensuring LGBTQ+ communities and working families are not bearing a disproportionate share of utility costs.

As Mayor, I will oppose Bowser's proposed cuts to energy efficiency programs — cutting these investments transfers costs onto the residents who can least afford them, including low-income LGBTQ+ households that spend the highest share of their income on utilities. Delaying efficiency upgrades means DC stays reliant on dirtier, more expensive energy sources longer, and that cost falls on residents, not corporations.

I will also ensure that major energy and water contracts include strong labor standards, local hiring commitments, and genuine community benefits.

7. Healthcare is a Human Right

Q: Will you use every tool within your power to ensure transgender youth and adults have access to healthcare in DC?

Yes. I will use every tool within my power to ensure transgender youth and adults have access to healthcare in DC, and I will treat this as a non-negotiable commitment regardless of federal pressure.

At a moment when the federal government is actively attacking transgender healthcare, DC must be a firewall. As Mayor, I will ensure Medicaid coverage of gender-affirming care is protected and enforced. I will direct DHCF to ensure that DC's Medicaid program covers the full range of gender-affirming services and that providers receiving public funds are required to deliver culturally competent, trans-affirming care. I will expand community-based LGBTQ+ health providers and reduce barriers to care, particularly for transgender youth who face the greatest vulnerability right now.

I will ensure that DC does not comply with any federal effort to restrict or defund transgender healthcare. When federal interference threatens our residents' access to care, I will work with the Attorney General to challenge it.

8. Healthcare is a Smart Investment

Q: Do you commit to opposing cuts to the Health Care Alliance and Medicaid health insurance programs to balance DC's budget?

Yes. I commit to opposing cuts to the Healthcare Alliance and Medicaid to balance DC's budget, and I will pursue alternative revenue sources before reducing healthcare coverage for any resident.

The 2025 cuts to Healthcare Alliance eligibility were made in the name of a balanced budget that should have been balanced differently. Preventive care is cheaper than emergency care. Cutting insurance coverage shifts costs onto hospitals and taxpayers while causing suffering that is entirely preventable. I will not balance the budget by dropping people from insurance rolls.

My approach to the budget shortfall is sequenced: pursue every available dollar first — including the \$180 million the CFO is holding and the \$68.7 million Events DC owes the general fund — find efficiencies in a government where 83 of 97 agencies overspent their budgets, and then consider other revenue raisers before cutting benefits from those who need it most. The Healthcare Alliance and Medicaid are protected in that order of operations.

9. Access to Public Benefits

Q: Do you commit to creating the most accessible system for program beneficiaries possible to minimize LGBTQ+ people not being able to access benefits due to bureaucracy?

Yes. I commit to creating the most accessible system possible for program beneficiaries, with particular attention to the barriers LGBTQ+ people face in accessing public benefits.

Benefits must be designed to be used with dignity. As Mayor, I will require agencies to conduct regular accessibility audits of their enrollment and service delivery processes, with a specific lens on LGBTQ+ residents, immigrants, people with disabilities, and others who face structural barriers. I will direct agencies to create simple, humane, and accessible systems for Medicaid work requirement compliance, with generous carveouts for people with chronic illness, disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, and education.

I will ensure DC residents can access identification documents without a permanent address and that people whose gender does not match their original birth certificate can obtain corrected IDs without unnecessary barriers. ID access is a prerequisite for accessing almost every other public benefit and is a safety issue for transgender residents in particular. I will also expand language access across all public benefit programs and establish a centralized navigator service so residents are not bouncing between agencies.

I have spent my career working to improve government programs and citizen services as a federal contractor and field organizer. I understand from direct experience how bureaucratic systems fail the people they are meant to serve. My platform commits to a resident-facing budget transparency tracker and to overhauling agency service delivery so residents in every ward get consistent, dignified service.

10. Fight Crime At The Source

Q: Do you support decriminalizing sex work and making better investments in violence prevention activities?

Yes. I support decriminalizing sex work and making investments that address the root causes of harm. I support decriminalizing people who are engaged in sex work, especially those doing it because of poverty, housing instability, immigration vulnerability, addiction, or survival. Criminal records make people less safe, less likely to report violence, and more vulnerable to traffickers. The communities most harmed by criminalization are Black and brown, indigenous, transgender, and immigrant sex workers who live at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. This is not a theoretical concern for me as an immigrant woman. I understand what it means to be made more vulnerable by systems that are supposed to protect you.

But decriminalization cannot mean looking away from exploitation. I will aggressively prosecute trafficking, coercion, abuse, exploitation of minors, and anyone using force or control over another person's body. The line for me is consent and control. If an adult is making their own choices, the government should not criminalize them. If someone else is controlling, profiting from, threatening, or trafficking them, that person should face serious consequences.

As Mayor, I will pair decriminalization with housing, behavioral healthcare, legal services, and safe reporting pathways so people can seek help without fear of arrest. I will also ensure MPD does not use loitering or quality-of-life enforcement as pretexts to target LGBTQ+ people, particularly transgender women of color.