

**Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC
2012 Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates**

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

1. In the event of congressional action leading to a ballot initiative in the District that would take away the civil marriage rights now enjoyed by same-sex couples, will you oppose the initiative and will you publicly defend civil marriage equality?

Let me begin by saying without hesitation yes. Yes I will support marriage equality, yes I will oppose any initiative that would seek to turn back the tide on hard earned and won recognition for same sex couples and families. Yes I will defend publically and vocally equality in every area and in this case in marriage. I will oppose any form of discrimination and any attempt to legislate such in the District of Columbia.

PUBLIC HEALTH

2. Will you support legislation giving the directors of the Office of GLBT Affairs and the Office of African Affairs the authority to issue competitive grants as other minority constituent offices have, that will be open to organizations serving the populations within the offices' purview?

In general I would support the idea. I am cautious of the Mayor's appointments and making sure that the offices are actually responsive to the needs of the community. If the offices are staffed by the Mayor with persons who are familiar and supportive of the community then this would be a great way to expand the kinds of services and support the District government is able to offer. If not then we need to find another mechanism so that we can increase support and maximize the disbursement of funds to the community and meet the diverse needs of the community across the spectrum.

3. Will you defend the District's hard-won and life-saving medical marijuana program against attacks or further restrictions, whether from Congress, federal officials or D.C. officials?

Yes. DC continues to be a leader in some areas around progressive ideals and progressive programs that help its residents. I support these measures and the lives that they save as well as the quality of life they bring and will fight to continue them.

4. Describe steps you will support to improve performance at the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA), including in HIV prevention, HIV/AIDS surveillance, and mental health services.

/s/ Renee L. Bowser

I believe that HAHSTA is doing a great job in working to combat this epidemic. Specific steps would be to ensure that we do more to provide expanded, consistent, funding and allocation of other resources to the department so it can increase both its surveillance and initiatives in this fight. We must make sure that the funds allocated via our grants process are getting into organizations and into the hands of the community as rapidly as possible so that these community organizations can do the real work of reaching people most vulnerable and most in need of services. Specifically, I would work to make sure that targeted programs are, first, affirming, and second designed to have an impact, not just "say we did something." We have to set goals and establish reasonable timely measurable plans to evaluate our progress and efforts and be willing to be innovative and make changes if our efforts are not producing change.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUDICIARY

5. Will you press for increased oversight of the Metropolitan Police Department's gathering and analysis of crime statistics to ensure greater comprehensiveness and objectivity, including transgender-related hate crime data?

Yes; this is crucial. We cannot eradicate the problem unless we have adequate data and resources dedicated to both its study and its solutions.

6. Will you support funding for MPD to hire or contract qualified trainers to provide LGBT-inclusive cultural competency training including the handling of intimate partner violence?

First, I will support MPD reallocating funding from within its existing budget to better direct that funding to this critical area as well as others. Once that was done and additional needed funds were identified, then I would support expansion of the budget in this area. However, I do not think throwing money at problems is the only solution. The culture of the MDP and our first responders as well as services funded or contracted via DC resources need change. It is important to ensure not only training but also changes in the mechanisms and climate so that the initiative will be fully implemented in practice.

7. Will you oppose legislation to make permanent the so-called Prostitution-Free Zones (PFZs), which facilitate anti-transgender profiling, and will you vote to repeal the current PFZ law?

I will oppose legislation to make permanent the prostitution-free zones and would support the repeal of the current law because it is constitutionally flawed. I would also work to develop better diversion and support services to get at the root of the problem. I would also try to work with communities which are impacted by prostitution to develop solutions without demonizing particular classes of people. /s/
Renee L. Bowser

HUMAN RIGHTS

8. Do you agree that the Director of the Office of Human Rights should be required to have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement?

I believe the person should have the necessary qualifications to perform at an optimal level on behalf of the residents of DC. There may be variety of ways to acquire that knowledge and skill base; but having some training and awareness of legal issues should be part of the ongoing competency to hold the position.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

9. Will you oppose both federal and local voucher programs that fund students in religious schools that are beyond the protections of the D.C. Human Rights Act?

Yes. Public funds should not be redirected away from the system to support other entities not held accountable or responsible to the public source of the funding, the people.

10. Will you oppose the use of either federal or District taxpayer funds to promote "abstinence only until marriage" sex education that undermines safer-sex programs by excluding more comprehensive information?

Yes. I will oppose any limitation on healthy sex education and realistic approaches to combat sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and other socio-cultural issues that stem from a narrow scope of education and preparation for our residents and especially our youth.

11. Will you support legislation to ensure equal Medicaid spousal impoverishment protections for same-sex partners, including providing local funding to pay for benefits that are denied at the federal level due to the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act?

Yes. We must ensure an equitable quality of life for all of our residents and the myriad of families that exist in our society.

/s/ Renee L. Bowser

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

12. Do you support the right of adults in the District to choose adult-oriented entertainment for themselves, and the right of appropriately licensed and zoned businesses to provide it, without excluding any ward?

I believe that adults should be able to choose the kinds of entertainment and lifestyle they desire in commercially zoned areas. I also believe that we must also ensure that children are protected from exposure prior to the age of consent and outside of the desires of the family. That being said I also believe that residents all across the district are fully capable of being reasonable in determining where and how any type of business should operate. There are no golden commercial areas from which any industry should be excluded or to which any industry should be limited.

13. Will you support legislation to curb abuses involving endless series of baseless complaints to harass or extort bars and restaurants?

I do not believe that any business should be subject to baseless complaints which hinder the right of people to have a business and support themselves and their families. However, I cannot respond more concretely without more specific information regarding the type of complaints and the conduct said to constitute harassment.

14. What will you do to provide alternatives to incarceration for marginalized and at-risk populations like homeless youth and transgender people who resort to prostitution for survival?

These are pervasive problems that require a lot of work. Incarceration is not a social service; neither is it an alternative to healthy and sustainable families and community life. Our most vulnerable must be better protected and incarceration should not be an option (or the primary option) for those who need help the most. Again, I would encourage the development of a District-wide task force led by individuals and groups working with these vulnerable populations to develop initiatives and recommendations for remedies to the situation. In the meantime, the creation of safe haven locations and making it easier for DC residents to offer these kinds of supports should be in place.

Your record is part of your rating. Please list any actions that you have taken that may help illustrate your record on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

I have been an activist for affordable housing, healthcare, education, jobs as well as community and worker empowerment. I have not, however, been active on issues targeted to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

/s/ Renee L. Bowser

Please return your signed questionnaire responses by Wednesday, February 15 to GLAA, P.O. Box 75265, Washington, D.C. 20013.

In addition to sending your signed hard copy, please email a copy (in any major word processor or text format) for loading on GLAA's website (www.glaa.org) to equal@glaa.org. Thank you.

/s/ Renee L. Bowser