



## **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?

*Yes, I believe that marriage equality is a civil and human right that is not subject to the passions and biases of the electorate. I would publicly campaign against any such initiative and would also urge the DC Attorney General to initiate litigation to keep it off the ballot.*

### **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?

*Yes, I would support grant authority and increased budgets for the Office of GLBT Affairs and the Office of African Affairs. This is important not only to ensure equity, but also to improve the quality of services provided to DC residents and the civic health and vitality of our communities.*

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, medical marijuana has been scientifically shown to be a safe and effective treatment for the symptoms of cancer, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, glaucoma, epilepsy, and other conditions. More generally, I support the principle that public policies should be based on empirical data and science.*

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.

*I would collaborate with community organizations (including GLAA and the DC Trans Coalition) and other Councilmembers to provide close oversight of HAHSTA and to develop a comprehensive approach that incorporates best practices with respect to condom distribution, needle exchange, free rapid result HIV testing, and community-based support groups and peer counseling. I do not support mandatory testing. I would also focus on serious gaps in current programs, such as the failure to develop a*



*comprehensive approach to the acute vulnerability of transgender people due to systemic discrimination and economic marginalization. Generally, I believe we must adopt a broader conception of health and well-being that includes the underlying social and economic issues that make certain groups more vulnerable to particular health risks.*

## **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?

*A District-wide strategic plan to end violence toward the LGBT community should include the following components:*

*Education: As an educator and youth advocate, I am strongly in favor of starting the process as early as possible. Our children learn bullying and violence on the street, at home, and on the school yard. For 15 years, I have implemented in-school and out-of-school-time programs for grades K – 12 that teach the importance of peer conflict resolution, non-violence, inclusiveness, and diversity.*

*Reporting and tracking: MPD crime stats must track and report on hate crimes against LGBT persons. Hate crimes, especially against transgender people, are a serious problem in DC (and the surrounding area), and we must do more to document and communicate the gravity of these offenses.*

*Training: MPD personnel should be trained in how to identify, report on, and be sensitive to the communities they serve. Clearly, there has been unacceptable treatment of LGBT community members in the past, particularly transgender individuals. I will fight to eliminate these archaic behaviors and attitudes.*

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?

*Yes, see above.*

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?

*Yes. The PFZ law is neither effective nor fair, and its discriminatory impact on transgender people is particularly harmful.*



## 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?

*Yes, both because that training and experience would greatly enhance the Director's ability to carry out the duties of the job and because adopting that requirement would send a strong message about the importance of the Office of Human Rights.*

## YOUTH AND SENIORS

*Despite several years of so-called reform, DC youth are facing mounting challenges. Recent standardized assessments in Ward 4 and throughout the city have shown distressing reversals. Teachers operate under a punitive and highly-politicized IMPACT evaluation system. Meanwhile, the District has the worst teen unemployment rate<sup>1</sup>, the largest black-white achievement gap<sup>2</sup>, alarming social behavior statistics<sup>3</sup>, and one of the worst college graduation rates<sup>4</sup> in the nation. The top-down, technocratic approach is not working.*

*We need to change course and embrace the community-school and Promise Neighborhood movements. We must marshal all of our local resources to build a comprehensive cradle-to-career pipeline that expands education beyond the classroom and meets all youth needs.*

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. While I strongly support religious freedom, public funds should not be used to pay for schools or other programs or services that discriminate.*

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. It is critical that taxpayer-funded programs are based on empirically sound approaches and that young people have access to accurate, comprehensive information about sexual responsibility and health.*

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<sup>1</sup> 50.1%, Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Source National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011

<sup>3</sup> According to the 2009 CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 57.9% of HS students have had sexual intercourse, 25% of GLB MS students reported bullying at school, and 29% of GLB students have attempted suicide.

<sup>4</sup> 9% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders will graduate from college in 5 years, Source: DCPS (<http://1.usa.gov/Asejvo>), 2011



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, I am pleased that HHS has authorized states to enact these protections for same-sex partners and I will push for DC to do so, including providing local funding to pay for these benefits. This is basic equality. More broadly, however, we need to push for greater protections for LGBT elders, many of whom are not married and are more likely to be isolated and vulnerable than heterosexual elders.*

## **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 am a strong supporter of community accountability in business. To the extent that business owners respect the rights of their neighbors and do not infringe on their quality of life (e.g., noise, parking, safety, etc.) I do not see the need to restrict activities on a Ward-wide basis.*

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

*See above: I oppose the extortion and harassment of individual establishments especially when motivated by bias. I would consider legislation to prevent this practice. Law enforcement should be evenhanded and should not target bars or restaurants based on their locations, clientele, or other arbitrary or discriminatory reasons.*

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?

*I would support and, where possible, sponsor legislation and policies that 1) reduce the number of people relying on prostitution and being incarcerated (e.g., by supporting and strengthening the Mayor's trans employment placement program, mandating that judges consider probation and other alternatives to incarceration for LGBT youth and adults engaging in prostitution, and funding diversion programs for transgender people); 2) improve the experience of people who are incarcerated (e.g., by mandating gender identity appropriate housing and access to proper care, including treatments related to gender transition) and; 3) support people who leave incarceration and reenter the workforce, life, etc. (e.g., by funding reentry programs, making expungement easier, and banning employment discrimination based on having a criminal record for prostitution).*

*I would also strongly support problem-solving courts to deal specifically with homeless youth, prostitution, and mental health. These courts have specially trained judges and*



*staff, a non-adversarial approach, and an emphasis on treatment, case management and rehabilitation rather than punishment. Youth who are found to have violated prostitution laws should be kept out of the juvenile/criminal justice system at all costs, as studies consistently demonstrate that the more contact a person has with those systems the more likely they are to return. These youth are victims, not criminals.*

*We should also take aggressive steps to prevent LGBT youth from being arrested in the first place, such as making our law enforcement, school, child welfare, shelter and other youth-serving systems more LGBTQ-competent, improving job and housing opportunities for trans and runaway/homeless/aging-out youth generally, promoting family acceptance and support, and improving access to hormone therapy for youth. I agree with the recommendations promulgated by New York City Mayor Bloomberg in "All Our Children: Strategies to End Homelessness, Strengthen Services, and Build Support for LGBTQ Youth."*

**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.**

*For the past two years, my organization, Kid Power Inc., has partnered with Metro TeenAIDS to implement extensive sex education and diversity programming. In weekly sessions at all 5 of our middle school sites, mentors and students discuss healthy choices, anti-bullying strategies, self-esteem issues, stereotypes and inclusiveness, and other topics. Activities often lead to service projects, including neighborhood condom distribution, poetry slams at LGBT community centers, and fundraisers for LGBT causes.*