

2014 GLAA Questionnaire

Graylan S. Hagler for Council at Large

Question 1

Will you act to ensure that the District provides transgender-inclusive health insurance to all DC Government employees, to include coverage for sex affirmation surgery (also known as sex reassignment surgery?) [Not: this question has been overtaken by events since it was drafted at the start of 2014. Study the Mayor's executive action here: <http://tinyurl.com/kn2dzty>]

As a result of a Mayoral order, the District has begun the process of removing exclusions in health insurance on the basis of gender identity or expression. This is a major step towards leveling the playing field for the District's trans* residents, so that they won't have to pay exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses for medically necessary treatment.

Unfortunately, what Mayor Gray has done some subsequent mayor may undo, and hence we must take the mayor's order and turn it into law. I will sponsor and fight for such a law.

Question 2

Will you support budgets that target funds to address health disparities in the LGBT population, including mental health and substance abuse treatment?

Yes. The District has been cutting back funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment for quite some time. The result is that these services are less and less available to all of our residents who need them. Furthermore, it is critical that these funds be allocated in such a way that they are meeting community needs. These service cuts should be reversed, funding should be increased to an appropriate level, and city officials should work to grow important partnerships to ensure that service provision is directed where there is need, including within LGBT communities.

Question 3

Will you support reforming the medical marijuana law and regulations to delete the outdated list of qualifying conditions and rely instead on a physician's diagnosis of medical needs?

Yes. Unfortunately, what we have now is a convoluted system where patients are denied their meds and doctors are afraid to write prescriptions. I support improving the law to allow greater freedom to let the doctors do their jobs and provide the treatments they determine their patients to need.

At the same time, it is important that we ensure that this program is well regulated. A program without adequate safeguards will likely attract unwanted attention from federal law enforcement officials. The improvements must be carefully crafted with this potential problem in mind.

Question 4

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

Progress is being made as HAHSTA has been pushing for testing and treating all DC residents. As HIV testing becomes routine, the stigma will decrease. Once we provide treatment to all who need it, the transmission rate will fall dramatically. I will use oversight to make sure this continues. Furthermore, I will work to make important preventative medical treatments like Truvada for the prevention of HIV transmission available to people who determine, with the support of a doctor, that it will decrease their likelihood of seroconversion.

Universal access to health care has driven the uninsured rate in the District to one of the lowest in the country, second only to Massachusetts. Where we often fall short is in our provision of wrap around services for people suffering from acute illness, from housing to mental health services, wellness is about more than regular access to a medical doctor. I will work to ensure that HAHSTA has the resources needed to fully meet the needs of their patients – from medical care to comprehensive wrap around services.

Judiciary and Public Safety

Question 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, I will engage in strong oversight over crime reporting and police response. With last year's series of police violence against transwomen, the need for a commitment to cultural competency trainings was severely brought to light. Like with so many other vulnerable communities in our city, it's critical that we work members to build trust with the police and see them as community resources, rather than a threat. This is a critical step to ensuring that crimes are even reported to allow us the ability to adequately track hate crimes. During this process, we will work with the lgb and especially trans* communities to develop strategies to address reporting issues and prevent hate crimes. Hate crimes are outrageous, but failing to properly identify them as such and respond to them compounds the injustice.

Question 6

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

For those who turn to prostitution to survive, incarceration is of no help in improving their lives or providing alternatives. I agree with GLAA that “the city must pursue safer, healthier, and more sustainable alternatives by providing drop-in centers, transitional housing, job training and other educational programs, counseling, addiction recovery programs, mental health services, and STD testing and treatment for at-risk populations.”

These should be at one-stop centers so that a person need not run around from agency to agency for help. Positive examples include the Wanda Alston House to help provide LGBT youth with life skills and alternatives to living on the street, and Casa Ruby, a drop-in center providing services for transgender people. In addition, harm reduction and trauma informed services are critical pieces to the puzzle of ensuring the dignity and respect of sex-workers. Many prostitutes and other sex workers have experienced severe trauma and have needs more immediate than finding socially respectable jobs. Building trust in sex-worker among sex-workers is critical to being about to provide important services. Policies like enforcing “Prostitution Free Zones,” which just force prostitutes further underground and away from the eyes of organizations that seek to support them makes matters worse for sex workers, not better.

This is a start, but we must do more of this to remove the sense of prostitution as a last resort – we must work to provide more opportunities for good jobs for people who are drawn to prostitution – as I propose in my response to Question 9. This will include an intentional critique of the classism, sexism, and transphobia that often drives people into the streets and out of the mainstream economy.

Question 7

Will you support funding to hire qualified trainers to provide LGBT-inclusive cultural competency training to all police officers, including in the handling of intimate partner violence?

Yes. As I mentioned in question 5, this is a critical step to standing up for our LGBT residents. All our public safety responders, including the Metropolitan Police Department and the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, need to be trained to be responsive to the needs of the LGBT community. They should be trained to handle intimate partner violence, with a focus on cultural competency within LGBT communities. Proactive community outreach for law enforcement officers is integral to proper police work, and this requires training. This must be more than a budget line-item: it must instill real sensitivity to LGBT needs from top to

bottom. I will work to ensure that this training is part of the curriculum, including continuing or refresher training.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Question 8

Will you insist that anyone appointed as Director of the Office of Human Rights be required to have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement?

Yes. Civil rights law is a specialized field, and the staff and director must make judgments on the law's applicability, breadth, and limitations, all the while being sensitive to the economic and emotional nature of discrimination. Some reasonable minimum qualifications, especially with respect to civil rights law training and experience, can and should be adopted.

Question 9

Given the limited results from trans-inclusive Project Empowerment training, will you push to establish a project at the Department of Employment Services to increase government hiring from under-represented populations, including the chronically underemployed trans population?

Yes. While I'm happy for the (few) people who got DC Government jobs through Mayor Gray's Project Empowerment program, there's much more to be done.

The basic problem is that there aren't enough good jobs in the District. Pair this with the many layers of oppression that many in the LGBT communities of the District are up against, like racism, sexism, classism, and last but certainly not least, transphobia. One of the first steps to this is ensuring the availability of good jobs. The first step is raising wages, and last year I led the movement that resulted in raising the DC minimum wage to \$11.50/hour over a few years. Cities are beginning to increase their minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and I believe we should follow in suit.

But creating good jobs won't necessarily mean that transpeople have access to them. I believe the proposal to create a specialized office within DOES to run a dedicated trans* employment program, alongside similar programs for other marginalized groups is an important step to increasing employment rates within lower-income LGBT communities across the city. I will work with DOES and other allies to ensure this office is a reality.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

Question 10

Will you support improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth and seniors, including transitional housing?

Yes. LGBT people suffer discrimination in homeless shelters from the staff, and often are victimized by other clients as well. The DC Government and shelter providers must ensure enforcement of LGBT nondiscrimination policies in District homeless shelters and transitional housing, provide LGBT sensitivity training to guards as well as staff, and ensure that all shelter clients are protected.

However, this hasn't worked well in the past and, despite all these efforts, it may not work well in the future. If it doesn't work out, I think the District should provide separate shelters and transitional housing for LGBT people.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

Question 11

Will you support strengthening Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) reforms by eliminating license protests filed by citizens associations and ad hoc groups, requiring stakeholders to participate in the community process provided by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission?

Yes and no. My parents ran a small market, and I'm very sensitive to the problem of businesses harassment. The regulatory problems faced by Hank's Oyster Bar demonstrate failures in the process. Legislation to help these businesses may well be needed, but the regulations must also permit adversely affected neighbors, ANCs, and community associations to comment. The "Omnibus Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Amendment Act of 2012," 819-0824, has provisions clarifying what these voluntary agreements may consist of. ANCs weigh in on community concerns, such as liquor licenses, with a broader community-wide point of view than a self-appointed group of any size can provide.

We should restrict people who abuse the regulatory process to harass businesses. There would have to be great concern for due process, however, so that people are not prevented from petitioning for a redress of grievances. The process also must not be allowed to drag out. Currently it can take as long as a year for the ABC process to finish. We must find a balance between the rights of neighbors and the rights of businesses.

Question 12

Will you defend 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?

Yes. Consenting adults can decide what is best and appropriate for themselves. Adult entertainment is part of the wide range of entertainment that is and should be

available in the District, and should be viewed in terms of freedom of speech and expression.

While I don't sympathize with people who want to legislate other people's morals, I do sympathize with those who fear that their property values will decline because of certain kinds of businesses. Thus we may should zone adult entertainment in industrial areas where this isn't a factor.

Graylan Hagler's record on LGBT issues

I have advocated for marriage equality in DC, talked about the issue in forums with clergy groups of differing points of view, and I have always stood up for those seeking justice and dignity.