

Response from Eugene Puryear
D.C. Statehood Green Party candidate for At-Large D.C Council to
Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC
2014 Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Will you act to ensure that the District provides transgender-inclusive health insurance to all D.C. Government employees, to include coverage for sex affirmation surgery (also known as sex reassignment surgery)?

Yes. Any insurance plan provided to government employees, or any other plan for that matter, which refuses to cover the full range of transgender health needs implicitly suggests transgender people are second-class citizens. It is crucial that sex affirmation surgery is included in the definition of "full range." Given the recent shift in definitions by the APA with the DSM-V, the medical consensus is clear, as is the moral one, that the ability to access sex affirmation surgery is a crucial part of the human rights agenda.

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

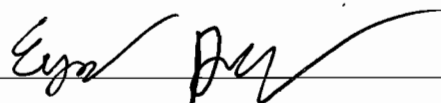
Yes. The general lack of health insurance coverage, the stigma and bigotry toward LGBT individuals, and issues of cultural competency all impact heavily to create negative health disparities for the LGBT community. I would support budgets that target funds to universalize health care for all individuals, including whatever mental health and substance abuse care they need. Further, I would support funds that increase the ability of the city to get accurate statistics on LGBT health disparities and needs. I would also want any budget funds targeting this area to deal with the issue of cultural competency, including making sure service providers have the language support necessary to deal with the ethnic and national diversity of the LGBT community.

I will also work with LGBT advocacy organizations to explore ways in which the Council can work to support efforts to identify service providers with records of stigmatizing and discriminating against LGBT patients to enable us to more effectively root out bigotry in health care services inside the District.

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. My campaign supports legalization of marijuana. The criminalization of marijuana has negative effects on the ability of physicians to prescribe the appropriate treatment, as well as having a massively devastating effect on communities of color who disproportionately suffer from the criminalization of small-time marijuana possession and use.

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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.

The Council needs to be proactive in assuring the District takes steps to solidify the leadership at the top of HAHSTA (and DOH) to facilitate long-term planning and to establish that there will be a continued commitment to important and effective programs, such as citywide condom distribution. The Council needs to continue to use its oversight functions to make sure that data collection of HIV/AIDS is up to date, and that technological tools are fully operational for HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD and TB. The Council also needs to use all its leverage to ensure that charter schools that educate almost 50 percent of the District's students not only have appropriate HIV/AIDS education, but that there is transparency in regards to their curriculum. I would urge charters to study the DCPS curriculum and to harmonize best practices. As part of our total commitment to providing housing to all the District's residents, I would push to have more funds appropriated to HOPWA and make sure the needs of PLWHA are fully integrated into an overall agenda for affordable housing for all residents.

Also, given the recent outbreak among MSM of meningitis in New York City and cases reported in other U.S. cities, the DOH should take extra steps to facilitate the availability of the meningitis vaccine, particularly to the HIV/AIDS population and all those who are at risk, especially given the effectiveness of the vaccination campaign in NYC. I would support the appropriation of funds to DOH to provide the vaccine for free since local non-profits have not been able to provide it without charge.

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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. Accurate information regarding crimes specifically targeting LGBT persons is crucial in constructing effective policies to making sure our city is safe for all of its residents.

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

My campaign feels strongly that alternatives to incarceration are crucial for all sectors of the population, as mass incarceration has a devastating effect on our most marginalized and oppressed residents. I will press for resources to be directed to an all-around approach that supports frontline services, such as drop-in centers, counseling and substance abuse treatment, while at the same time integrating the special concerns of homeless youth and transgender people into broader plans to provide affordable housing for all people. I am also committed to pursuing employment for all as a basic right of every District resident.

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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. The Office of GLBT affairs should have the ability to oversee funds to hire trainers. However, the Council should make special efforts to make sure that volunteer organizations doing training work are able to benefit from the professionalization of cultural competency training.

HUMAN RIGHTS

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. I would not, however, require a J.D. in particular. I believe this would create too restrictive a requirement that could disqualify individuals with significant experience advocating for the human rights of District residents, but whose vast expertise does not include “professional” knowledge of the law. This of course does not suggest they do not have more than adequate knowledge of the relevant legal issues.

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. I state clearly in my campaign program that I believe a job is a right. Any and all efforts that can increase the presence of under-represented populations in government employment should be pursued. This is crucial not simply from the perspective of a job being a basic right, but increasing the responsiveness of government agencies to the particular needs of marginalized communities. The Council could hold hearings to explore successful projects in other localities to establish best practices for the District to pursue in this regard.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

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

Yes. The Council should use its oversight power to ensure that discrimination in both homeless shelters and transitional housing is not happening, and that, where it is, it is stopped immediately and the responsible persons are removed from the environment, and educational and training remedies are applied to eliminate the issue. It is crucial the Council provide the appropriate funding for shelter space, transitional housing and the training for culturally competent care. More than anything, the Council must aggressively pursue enough affordable housing as need requires. This is a large task and requires unrelenting effort. I view housing a key human right and plan to make it one of my key agenda items.

I will also support a requirement for OSSE to include transgender youth in the YRBS. This data is crucial to being able to identify our at-risk youth and reduce drug abuse and suicide rates. I

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also believe the Council must use its oversight power to make sure that DCPS policies on bullying are strong and effective. Further, the same powers should continue to monitor health education efforts that address sexual orientation and gender identity. Council oversight should also monitor condom distribution in DCPS to ensure that comprehensive coverage is continued and, if and where necessary, expanded. The Council should also continue to monitor health education policies at DCPS to make sure bias does not contravene the existing curriculum.

We need funding for senior services directly targeted at LGBT populations. We also need funding to collect more information to diagnose the needs of our LGBT seniors. On the Council, I will support and seek to advance legislation to that effect.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

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. I believe that the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions are one of the most unique democratic institutions in the United States. They are by intent the appropriate arena for neighborhoods to deal with license protests. That being said, I believe that the ANCs' ability to use Settlement Agreements is, in principle, an important tool in navigating these disputes. Abuse is clearly an ever-present factor, and I believe the Council needs to continue to discuss various ways forward regarding the scope of Settlement Agreements.

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?

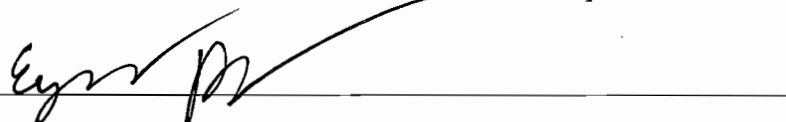
Yes. The Council should not be in the business of prohibiting the expression of private choices regarding entertainment activities as long as it occurs in accordance with the appropriate regulations, which of course are always subject to review and amendment by the Council.

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

As part of my volunteer activities with the ANSWER Coalition, I have participated in a range of actions in solidarity with LGBT people and in advancement of LGBT rights.

I helped to promote and attended the National Equality March in 2009, advocating for full federal equality for LGBT people in all areas of law. Prior to that, I had participated in activities opposing Proposition 8 that took place in the District. I also worked to support marriage equality in the District, including supporting efforts to bring together a diverse group of clergy to stand with the LGBT community, which was launched at an event I attended at Covenant Baptist Church. Prior to the 2013 election, I worked actively to support Question 6 in Maryland to ensure that the marriage equality law there went into effect. I have advocated for marriage equality nationwide, including participating in the gathering outside of the Supreme Court on June 26, 2013, when the decisions in the DOMA and Prop 8 cases were announced.

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Further, every year since I moved to D.C. to attend Howard University, I have played an integral role in organizing the ANSWER Coalition's contingents in Capitol Pride, which have consistently sought to show solidarity with the struggle of the LGBT community against bigotry and hatred by bringing a political message to the parade.

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