

To: Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC
From: Courtney R. Snowden, candidate DC Council At-Large
Date: September 11, 2014
Re: 2014 Questionnaire for DC Council Candidates

PUBLIC HEALTH

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)? [Note: 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>

Transgender Americans experience overwhelming discrimination and harassment, the effects of which are even more significant in the context of health care and its delivery. Mayor Gray took several critically important steps outlined at the link above to ensure that transgender residents in the District have access to health care free of discrimination that covers the comprehensive health care needs of transgender people.

I was appointed to the Advisory Committee for the Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs on July 1st 2012, and I was honored to play a supportive role in helping to inform Mayor Gray's effort to expand health insurance to include coverage for transgender residents of the District. I fully support the action Mayor Gray took, and if I am elected to the DC Council, I will work tirelessly to ensure its continued effective implementation.

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

Absolutely! I would support targeted funds to address health disparities in underserved communities in the District, particularly the LGBT population, including mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Having served as a member of the National Coalition on LGBT Health and the policy team of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, I have an acute understanding of the overwhelming health disparities our community faces, and regrettably, many of us confront the effects far too often among our friends and chosen family.

As a member of the Council, I will work with the Office of LGBT Affairs, GLAA, DC Black Pride, the Center for Black Equity, Mautner Project, Whitman-Walker Clinic and other local LGBT organizations to ensure adequate resources are available to address health disparities in our community, and more importantly, I will work to ensure that organizations that serve our community have adequate support to close the gaps in healthcare that currently exist.

Additionally, I have been a long-time supporter of the Mautner Project, and firmly believe that the District government must prioritize the health care needs of lesbians, who too often fail to seek the health services they need. Further, it is incredibly important that health centers and hospitals – particularly those owned by the city – have the required cultural competency training and support to help them provide better care to lesbians and the trans population.



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. I believe that the doctor/patient relationship is sacrosanct - government nor insurance companies should not stand in its way. I fully support eliminating the qualifying medical conditions in the law and regulations to ensure that patients who would benefit from medical marijuana have access to it as needed and directed by a physician.

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.

There are two core areas that I believe are essential to improving HAHSTA's performance:

1. A strategic communications and public education effort to further engage DCPS and our city's charter schools. I will work with the newly elected mayor to ensure that we are utilizing best practices to engage and communicate with students on an age-appropriate level, parents, and teachers throughout the District's educational system.

Likewise, I will also advocate for local community/neighborhood based outreach to foster constructive dialogue and trust in communities about the importance of testing, knowing your status, and what it means to be protected. More specifically, the educational campaign must be included in all testing and health care facilities, and HAHSTA must continue to maintain anonymous testing sites and provide residents with the information on the difference between anonymous and confidential testing.

2. Stakeholder engagement. I will work to pull together and engage an Advisory Group of community leaders, advocates, providers, the private sector (i.e. drug manufacturers), and other experts to identify a solution to improve our city's ability to monitor, implement best practices from other cities, and putting in place the metrics to ensure the accuracy and privacy of the city's database.

Additionally, housing is another element to improving the services provided by HAHSTA. We must look to find adequate and stable housing options for individuals living with HIV. As a councilmember, I will work to ensure that the Housing Production Trust Fund is fully funded to make sure that city government can assist residents living with HIV/AIDS.

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. As a member of the Council, I will work diligently to provide proper and adequate oversight to ensure that our city government is working for all of our city's residents, and that includes the oversight of crime related data among the LGBT community.



In order for the Council to pass a budget that provides adequate resources/officers, we must have solid and efficient data. Effective oversight will ensure that the Metropolitan Police Department is accurately reporting and providing reliable data to decrease crime that impacts the LGBT community.

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?

For too many reasons, a subset of homeless youth and transgender people resort to sex work for survival. Incarceration fails to solve the problem that forced them into sex work in the first place. In my view, we have to develop a comprehensive approach that recognizes the need to keep communities safe from this unwelcome activity, while providing the services necessary to ensure access to adequate employment opportunities, transitional housing, substance abuse programs, health care, and job training. Like all of us, transgender residents and homeless youth in the District need clear, available, and easily accessible options for jobs and housing.

In my own neighborhood in Ward 7, there is a high-rate of sex work particularly within the transgender community, and I ultimately believe that we can improve their quality of life by bringing opportunities and options to local neighborhoods. Economic development, job creation, and education/training are all key solutions to ensuring that our most vulnerable have a way to be productive members of our community - ultimately benefiting our entire city - corner to corner.

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 Metropolitan Police Department must expand its community diversity and sensitivity training for all officers. As a councilmember, I will support moving this training away from a mainly volunteer model to ensuring that the city has the resources to address these needs - including working collaboratively with key stakeholders, and providing support and grants for these organizations to create a curriculum in tandem with the police department. The community trainer model with the participation of residents is essential to improving the competency and the relationship between MPD and communities of color/the LGBT community.

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 think it is critical to have someone in that office that has professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement. As a member of the Council, I will work with the newly elected Mayor to ensure the Director of the Office of Human Rights meets this standard and has the additional qualifications to carryout the required responsibilities.

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

Yes, absolutely.



The provision of sound job training is the key to transitioning many of the District's residents into the middle class. However, many District residents are without jobs that provide sufficient living wages, not only does the District's current job training system waste our tax dollars, it also inadequately prepares job trainees for employment opportunities that are secure and moves them into the middle class. This is particularly acute among underrepresented populations, and specifically our most vulnerable transgender neighbors.

On the Council, I will work with my colleagues to push for the much-needed oversight of DOES as it relates to the hiring of underserved communities particularly the transgender community. It is essential, that we bring together stakeholders across the city to identify the proper training programs and partner with local businesses to identify placement opportunities.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

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

Yes. As a Councilmember, I will support improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth and seniors including transitional housing. As a former SMYAL board member, I have seen too many LGBT young people put out of their homes only to be placed in a foster situation that is rampant with homophobia and abuse. The Wanda Alston House serves an incredibly important role in meeting the housing needs of some, but sadly, the demand continues to be great. I will work tirelessly to expand services and treatment for LGBTQ homeless youth, and I will work to increase transitional housing options for this very vulnerable population.

My grandmother lived out her final days in a nursing home, and one of the other residents was a gay man. I watched in horror as many of the other residents refused to talk to him or engage him. I saw firsthand the isolation that too many LGBT seniors experience in community residential settings, and I believe we owe all of our seniors deserve better. As a member of the DC Council, I will work to ensure that all seniors, including LGBT seniors have access to high quality services, care, and treatment. This includes having well-trained health care workers who understand the isolation that too many LGBT seniors experience.

Additionally, I will work to increase the supply of affordable housing, and push for increased funding for current District government programs—such as the Local Rent Supplement Program, the Permanent Supportive Housing Program, Housing Purchasing Assistance Program, and the Housing Production Trust Fund—to ensure that District residents, including LGBT seniors, receive needed governmental assistance when purchasing/renting a home.

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 will support strengthening the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) reforms by requiring stakeholders to participate in the robust community process provided by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC).



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. I fully support and will defend the rights of adults in the District to choose legal adult-oriented entertainment for themselves, and the right of appropriately licensed and zoned businesses to provide it.

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.

2014 Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund Endorsee

Career Highlights

- As a principal at The Raben Group, I've worked to advance public policy on behalf of the Human Rights Campaign, Immigration Equality, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association.
- I began my career in the office of the first out lesbian ever elected to the US Congress, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and was responsible for advising the Congresswoman on an array of legislative issues including small business, labor and Native American and women's issues.
- Served in the political department of the Human Rights Campaign, the largest gay and lesbian civil rights organization in the United States, working to advance LGBT equality including work on bullying, hate crimes, and employment no-discrimination legislation. She played an integral role in securing additional co-sponsors for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.
- Served as the first Federal Policy Manager for the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), and developed proactive strategies to raise awareness among members of Congress and the public on the detrimental impact of bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity in our nations' schools.
- Served in a leadership role in the effort to retain a hate crimes prevention program in the legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act also known as No Child Left Behind. This program - funded under the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program - provides resources to educate our nation's young people about the importance of respecting diversity and preventing hate-based harassment and violence.
- Served as the Director of Communications and Detroit Field Operations for the "No On 2" Campaign, the organized effort to defeat the anti-gay marriage initiative in Michigan.
- Worked with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force to defeat the anti-gay marriage initiative in Texas by managing field operations in Houston and providing media training to African American gay and lesbian couples in preparation of media opportunities and public appearances to discuss harmful impact of the anti-gay marriage referendum.



Community Involvement

- For the last eight years, served as a trainer for the Victory Fund's Gay and Lesbian Leadership Institute's Campaign and Candidate Training.
- Active member of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club; 2009 recipient of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club Richard Rausch Equality Award
- Former Member of the Advisory Committee for the Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs
- Former President [and first female] of DC Black Pride
- Former board member of SMYAL, DC Black Pride, National Black Justice Coalition, and the Victory Campaign Board
- An active member of *LGBT Americans for Obama* during the 2008 presidential cycle. Traveled around the country in 2008 as a surrogate for presidential candidate, then Senator Barack Obama. Dedicated the last four weeks of the election cycle to organizing LGBT and African American voters in Colorado.
- Developed and implemented a strategic partnership between the Arcus Foundation and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation focused on educating member of Congress and their staffs about how to talk with African American constituents about issues of LGBT equality.
- Worked with the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and the Gill Foundation to create model state policy to prevent bullying and harassment in schools and strengthen hate crimes legislation in key states. Moderated a three-day symposium for black state legislators on best practices and recent research to prepare them for legislative campaigns to advance this legislation in their states.

