

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)?

I am a strong supporter of transgender health insurance for D.C. government employees and sex affirmation surgery. If elected to the D.C. Council, I can be counted on to support such legislation as well as publicly advocate on behalf of the transgender community. It is important for all D.C. councilmembers to acknowledge that the transgender community and transgender D.C. employees do not have full rights until transgender-inclusive health insurance (including coverage for sex affirmation surgery) is made available to all citizens of D.C.'s LGBT community.

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

It is crucial that future D.C. budgets include funds that address health disparities in the LGBT population. On the D.C. Council, I will fight to increase sustainable budget allocations for the Department of Health, Department of Behavioral Health, and related agencies as they relate to mental health and substance abuse treatment. Additionally, as a former public school teacher, I support educational initiatives and programs to erase the stigma of mental health issues and substance abuse. It is crucial for all D.C. residents to be able to recognize signs of mental illness and substance abuse, and to thoroughly learn how to cope and seek treatment for individuals suffering from such illnesses and abuse.

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 Will you support reforming the medical marijuana law and regulations to delete the outdated list of qualifying conditions and rely instead on a physician's diagnosis of medical needs?

I recognize the medical benefits of marijuana as prescribed by a physician for the treatment of chronic pain and chronic illnesses. The outdated list of qualifying conditions badly needs to be eliminated. A physician's diagnosis is sufficient for the use of medicinal marijuana. The outdated list unfairly and improperly comes between a physician and their patient. I can be depended on as a councilmember to make the expansion and availability of medicinal marijuana a top public health issue and legislative priority.

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.

While I appreciate the efforts made thus far in the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA) such as making HIV testing part of standard care, the D.C. Council must make a conscious effort to further improve performance and address many of the concerns raised by the DC Appleaseed Report of 2005 and since then its Eighth Report Card.

As a former public school and charter school teacher, and as the parent of children in both public and charter schools, I find it imperative that HAHSTA create an educational alliance to

improve sexual education programs in charter schools. It is a necessary and vital component to preventing the epidemic of HIV/AIDS that has greatly affected our city. These programs are urgent because over 25% of patients infected with HIV/AIDS do not inform their sexual partners.

Reducing the stigma of HIV/AIDS and STD testing can only take place if such procedures are implemented into standard care (annual physicals, emergency room visits, and other such medical appointments). Now that the problem is diagnosed, HAHSTA must make a sincere effort to educate all health facilities and testing locations as well as health care providers and patients to recognize symptoms of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. In addition, these facilities should be encouraged by HAHSTA to include testing as part of standard procedure and practice. Information should be available immediately in multiple languages that reflect the growing diversity of Washington, D.C.

To prevent HIV/AIDS and other STDs, condom distribution by the Department of Health must be made available, accessible, and plentiful at each D.C. public and charter school. Staff and students should be educated on how to use these contraceptives. Additionally, I support designating at least one member of faculty as an educational liaison on HIV/AIDS, STDs and other aspects of sexual education.

I am dissatisfied that the transgender community is continuously underrepresented in surveillance programs and status reports from the Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs. If elected to the D.C. Council, I will designate a member of my staff to monitor the accountability of such reports and by making sure that all communities are represented by HIV/AIDS surveillance and Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System reports as part of their responsibilities.

In order to adequately address LGBT mental health concerns, it is vital to support measures that would prevent conversion therapy, anti-bullying measures in all D.C. schools, and educational programs that promote LGBT inclusion, with a badly-needed focus on transgender tolerance and acceptance.

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?

I will press for increased oversight of Metropolitan Police Department's gathering and analysis of crime statistics to ensure comprehensiveness, objectivity and transgender-related hate crime data. The Metropolitan Police Department's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit must increase accountability measures to become the LGBT protection powerhouse that it once was. As councilmember, this will be a chief priority of mine.

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?

On the D.C. Council, I will call for the creation of drop-in counseling centers that will focus on transitional housing, education (including vocational and technical), employment and employability training, and health (including mental health) counseling to be able to leave the sex work industry. Court diversion programs are crucial—sex workers should not be in jail, they should be provided with the resources to leave the industry and become healthier members of society.

After serving as a public school teacher, I created a supplemental educational service center for at-risk youth where in Prince George's County, Maryland. I also participated in creating a mentoring program in D.C. called 'Phenomenal Teens.' Therefore, I understand the need to address at-risk youth, including homeless and transgender youth and sex workers.

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?

I strongly support funding for training police officers and other pertinent staff in the handling of intimate partner violence, LGBT competency training, and other sensitive domestic issues.

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?

I firmly believe that the best-qualified candidate for Director of Office of Human Rights must have professional training and background in civil rights law enforcement.

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?

As vice president of 'Phenomenal Teens' mentoring program, I matched up at-risk youth with potential employers. I understand the critical need to combat job discrimination against the underemployed trans population. We must carve out a future of opportunities available for our underemployed trans population.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

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

I strongly support improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth and seniors that will include transitional housing. My campaign co-chair, Dr. Sean Robinson, is a mentor for LGBT teens and seniors in D.C., as well as an advisor of mine on many LGBT issues. This has been a strong topic of our campaign, and will be a legislative priority of mine.

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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?

Citizen associations and ad hoc groups should not be able to intervene in alcohol board licensing, however, their opinions should be taken into strong consideration.

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?

D.C. should not prevent adults from attaining adult-oriented entertainment. Appropriately licensed and zones businesses should continue to be permitted to provide such material.