

Fr: Andy Shallal

To: Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC

Re: 2014 Questionnaire for D.C. Mayoral Candidates

Dt: February 6, 2014

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)?

Answer: Yes. I will ensure that the District provides transgender-inclusive health insurance to all D.C. government employees, including the coverage for sex affirmation surgery. Major medical organizations agree that sex affirmation surgery can be medically indicated. I would like to see the District provide leadership for other employers in DC to recognize the medical necessity of such treatment, and to incorporate this coverage into all public and private health coverage.

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

Answer: Yes. In targeting funds to deal with health disparities in the LGBT population, I will make sure that we keep in mind the complicated interactions and connections between issues like mental health, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS. It is all too easy to create bureaucratic silos that end up making our efforts less effective than they might otherwise be.

3. 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.

Answer: The most important step in improving performance at HAHSTA is for HAHSTA to listen and deepen the dialogue with those most affected by these issues to get a better understanding of how to add to and improve the services HAHSTA offers, and to make those services more efficient and more effective.

As the next Mayor, I will take the following specific steps to support and improve performance at HAHSTA:

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Continue to enhance and evaluate the DOH/ HAHSTA contract and grants management system so that services can be offered timely, effectively and efficiently

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- Continue to work closely with CDC to improve HIV surveillance capabilities within DC
- Enhance monitoring and evaluation efforts to offer essential feedback (Report card)
- Improve efforts to provide comprehensive sexual health education to all public and charter school students

Testing

- Continue to educate providers of their role in ensuring that all individuals between the ages of 13 and 84 are routinely tested for HIV in DC
- Continue to educate providers of the need to have newly diagnosed HIV patients quickly referred to an HIV specialist and co-managed by them

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)

- Educate all providers that treating PEP is medically urgent; individuals should be offered therapy within 72 hours of exposure
- Develop guidelines for providing PrEP (in compliance with CDC) in sero-discordant couples.

Prevention

- Continue to improve services that target overlooked populations (e.g. seniors, the disabled, transgender individuals and immigrants)
- Continue needle-exchange program
- Continue condom distribution
- Better understand how to make more funds available for patient support services
- Continue Support of 3 hours of CME credits on HIV as a requirement for license renewal in DC

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

4. Will you require the Metropolitan Police Department's gathering and analysis of crime statistics to ensure greater comprehensiveness and objectivity, including on LGBT-related hate crimes and intimate partner violence?

Answer: In all of my dealings with the Metropolitan Police Department, I will be looking for opportunities to increase contact between the community and the police department. I will require the MPD to take steps to improve the

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comprehensiveness and objectivity of its reporting of crime statistics, including on LGBT-related hate crimes and intimate partner violence.

I do not think that a training program that consists of little more than checking off boxes on a form is acceptable. I would bring in experts to design training that involved actual interactions between the police and the community. At my restaurants, our regular training for new employees includes dealing with gender issues.

5. 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?

I would look to how we handle some drug issues as a model for how to approach providing alternatives to incarceration for people who resort to sex work for survival. For example, if I am with someone who is overdosing and I call the police, I cannot be arrested for any drugs that might be on the scene. Without this policy, people would be much less likely to seek help for people with overdoses, resulting in more deaths. Sex workers are often the victims of assaults, but their willingness to go to the police without the risk of being prosecuted for their sex work means they often fail to report assaults, exposing them to more danger in the future.

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

I will hire highly-qualified trainers to develop a program designed to generate a community conversation, not something that happens inside a police building. This program will include handling intimate partner violence. We know that these sorts of interactions are the key to building better relationships between the police and the communities they are working in

HUMAN RIGHTS

7. Will you require that anyone you appoint as Director of the Office of Human Rights have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement?

Yes. In filling critical positions like the Director of the Office of Human Rights, I will be looking for people who are the best in their field, as opposed to hiring career politicians without professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement.

8. Will you renew, enforce and update as necessary the Mayoral Order mandating explicit inclusion of every class protected under the D.C. Human Rights Act in all D.C. government agency nondiscrimination statements?

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Yes. DC is arguably one of the best places in the U.S. for a queer person to live because of its laws, including trans-inclusive provisions. But all the laws on the books are not worth much without strong enforcement. I would make it clear from day 1 that I expected every employee of the DC government to carry out this mandate, and produce a yearly report documenting how well the city is carrying out its responsibilities under the order.

9. Given the limited results from trans-inclusive Project Empowerment training, will you establish a project at the Department of Employment Services to increase government hiring from under-represented populations, and will you hire trans persons in your own office?

Yes, I will establish a project at the Department of Employment Services to increase government hiring from under-represented populations.

Yes, I will hire trans persons in my own office. I want my office, and city government as a whole, to reflect the rich cultural diversity of our city. As discussed earlier, I have hired trans persons to work in my restaurants. I have also learned a great deal about the employment problems facing such populations from talking with people who have participated in the many programs relating to sex and gender at Busboys and Poets (see below for a detailed description of these programs.)

YOUTH AND SENIORS

10. Will you act to ensure improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth and seniors, including expanding transitional housing and emergency shelter space?

Yes. I will act to ensure improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth and seniors, including expanding transitional housing and emergency shelter space. Both of these groups have special needs which I would

We should immediately change the current regulations that prevent shelters from taking in young people on hypothermia nights. Most of our homeless programs were not designed to deal with the problems of the young or seniors.

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?

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I am familiar with the problems that face the owners of restaurants that serve alcohol. My restaurants all serve alcohol, and I have had to deal with the ABC's regulations for each of them. I understand why neighbors would be upset over any business that caused late night noise or worse. But I also know that serving alcohol does not automatically mean problems with loud drunks and fights. There are no such shennigans at my restaurants.

I am concerned, however, that current regulations make it possible for people to use complaints to the ABC to hide homophobic agendas. In order to avoid such problems, I support strengthening Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) reforms by eliminating license protests filed by citizens associations and ad hoc groups, and by requiring stakeholders to participate in the community process provided by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission.

12. Do you pledge to find a suitably located space for The DC Center when the Reeves Center closes?

Answer: Yes, I will find a suitably located space for the DC Center when the Reeves Center closes. (I donated the food for the opening of the DC Center, and am quite aware of its importance to the LGBT community.)

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.

I have taken many actions over the years on behalf of gay, lesbian, bixesual, and transgender people. I have sponsored a monthly gender and sexuality series called Zami at Busboys and Poets. The DC Center, university gay and lesbian alumni associations, and others have partnered with Zami to energize community discourse regarding the intersections of sexuality, gender, race and human rights by bringing together community members to talk about their work as people committed to LGBTQ values and action.

<http://busboysandpoets.com/events/info/zami>

Busboys and Poets also sponsors "Sparkle," a monthly queer open mic series that encourages self-expression for the LGBTQ community.

Busboys and Poets has given in-kind donations to LGBTQ organizations like The DC Center, HRC, and Food & Friends. I have attended many community events and forums on LGBTQ issues, including the community forums at The DC Center on stopping violence against trans people.

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