

CANDIDATE NAME: Sheila Bunn  
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**Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC  
2015 Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates**

**HOME RULE**

**1. If Congress acts to block recent bills enacted by the District to repeal the Armstrong Amendment and to prohibit conversion therapy for minors, will you speak out during your campaign in defense of these bills, and if elected will you stand with your colleagues against congressional meddling?**

YES. I am a strong supporter of Statehood for DC, and budget and legislative autonomy in the interim. If Congress acts to block these bills, I will defend the District's right to pass local laws. Additionally, I will actively lobby members of Congress to get them to stop their interference into District affairs. I will work with and support the Mayor, DC Council, and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton on expanding support for these issues on Capitol Hill. I will stand united with my colleagues in rejecting all congressional intrusion into the District's affairs. In view of the Armstrong Amendment (Human Rights Amendment Act, Bill 20-803) and the Conversion Therapy for Minors Act of 2013, I welcome the opportunity to campaign in defense of these bills. The DC Council enacted these bills with clear intent and full political will to eliminate unfair treatment and questionable healthcare practices that negatively affect the LGBT community. Repealing the Armstrong Amendment will ensure that gay student groups like those at Catholic University and other religious institutions have equal access to facilities and services on the same level as other student groups. It is the right thing to do. As a member of the DC Council, I will work to ensure that these two important pieces of legislation are fully implemented. Additionally, I look forward to the opportunity to work directly with GLAA to shape and frame legislation and policy to strengthen the lives of LGBT residents of the District and all District residents.

**FAMILIES**

**2. Will you support Bill 21-16, the Collaborative Reproduction Amendment Act of 2015, to legalize and regulate surrogacy agreements?**

YES. The core principle of this issue – the right to form families and raise children just as their non-LGBT counterparts – resonates with me as someone who has been labeled as having a non-traditional family because I am a single mother. I am happy to see the diverse nature of DC families and value their contribution to our community. The definition of family has evolved over the years and comes in many forms. And, being genetically tied to a child is not always essential to having a loving, caring and thriving family. Because these agreements are very serious and should not be taken lightly, it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that both parties, and the children, in these agreements are protected. This bill will give individuals longing to be parents, but can't biologically for whatever reason, another option at parenthood. Legislative and judicial mechanisms must be used to protect the sanctity of legally binding contracts. Once this bill is passed, we will have the basis to establish a full range of protections for those who wish to enter into surrogacy agreements.



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## HEALTH

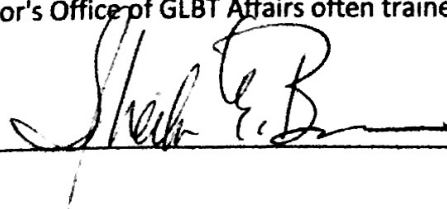
**3. If you are assigned to the Committee on Health and Human Services, what will you do to improve performance at the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA), including in HIV prevention, HIV/AIDS surveillance, and mental health services?**

HAHSTA has made great strides over the years. But with any program or service, there is always room for improvement. If I am assigned to the Committee on Health and Human Services, I will push for improved management and oversight of its grant funds, greater HIV surveillance and implementation of sexual health education programs across charter schools. I would encourage HAHSTA to develop and implement new approaches to stemming HIV-infection, like offering post-exposure prophylaxis in all emergency rooms, urgent care centers and health clinics; doing HIV testing in non-traditional sites (such as pharmacies, income maintenance centers and schools); and continuing needle-exchange to prevent blood-borne disease without increasing drug use. I would encourage the training of healthcare providers to refer patients to specialized testing if the need should arise. Such educational programs are necessary because over 25% of patients infected with HIV/AIDS do not inform their sexual partners. I would also support increased funding of LGBT health initiatives to properly address the unique needs of the community, including funding for mental health and substance abuse programs. We must also make a concerted effort to support targeted campaigns aimed towards high risk populations like our seniors and teens.

In order to ensure that there is adequate funding for LGBT health issues, I will work to ensure that the Department of Health (DOH) includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression as specific risk factors in its data collection. In fact, during the Gray Administration, I supported the efforts of the Mayor's Office of LGBT and DOH to conduct a LGBT Health Survey, a first for the District (the 2010 survey did not include the transgender community). Although the survey process was not finalized during the Gray Administration, the framework was developed and partner organizations were identified and asked to reach out to randomly selected members. This will ensure that the data collected is generalizable to the entire community.

**4. Will you support legislation establishing a regulatory framework to set LGBT cultural competency standards for healthcare providers?**

YES. I will support all efforts to eliminate barriers to comprehensive healthcare in the LGBT community. Having such a framework is very important because most health professionals get very little exposure to LGBT health issues and culturally competent care during their years of formal education. These professional haven't learned how discrimination has led to health problems in many LGBT people. As a result, too many members of the LGBT community often go to healthcare providers wary and scarred from experiences of discrimination and harassment in the offices of other providers. If we want our healthcare providers to offer safe and respectful care to their LGBT patients/clients, we have to educate them on how their current practices may be sending a message of unwelcome instead. During the Gray administration, the Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs often trained healthcare providers in LGBTQ cultural



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competency. In some cases, the Office found that many healthcare providers were guilty of heterosexism, not always homophobia or intolerance. For example, many healthcare providers had magazines in their patient waiting areas that only showed heteronormative images. By including publications that included images of same-sex couples and openly LGBTQ people (such as Metro Weekly, TAGG Magazine, and The Washington Blade), these healthcare providers would do a great deal to create a welcoming environment for their LGBTQ clients. I will work with Mayor Bowser, the District Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking (DISB), the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs, DOH and stakeholders like GLAA to formulate this framework and issue an official bulletin mandating cultural competency standards.

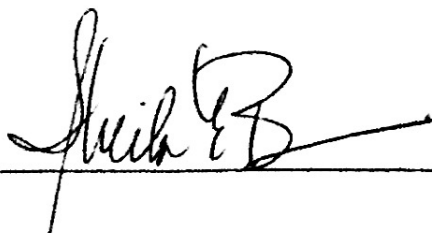
The District has proven its commitment to ensuring comprehensive healthcare delivery to the LGBT community. As one of Mayor Gray's senior staff members, I helped facilitate Mayor Gray's efforts to end discrimination in health insurance on the basis of gender identity or expression with DISB's 2013 issuance of a bulletin that struck trans-exclusionary language from the insurance plans operating in the District. The bulletin made it clear that health insurance companies in the District could no longer deny coverage to transgendered individuals. Further, these insurance companies would now have to cover services like mastectomies for breast cancer and hormone replacement therapy in the same manner that they covered them for their non-transgendered patients. In addition, in February 2014, DISB, the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs, the Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF) and DC Human Resources (DCHR) issued another clarifying bulletin that specified that health insurance (including DC Medicaid) must cover transition-related services (including gender reassignment surgeries) for individuals diagnosed with gender dysphoria when deemed medically necessary from a medical professional. This was a major leap forward for the District's transgender residents and put the city at the forefront of equality in healthcare for members of the transgender community. As a Councilmember, I would work to bring more licensed surgeons into the District to perform gender reassignment surgeries, so District residents do not have to travel across the country to have these medically-necessary procedures.

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

YES. I will support budgets that target funds to address health disparities in the LGBT community, including in mental health and substance abuse treatment. If elected, one of the Council committees that I would request to be a member of is the Committee on Health and Human Services. As a member of this committee, I will work to ensure that funds are targeted to address these disparities.

#### **JUDICIARY**

**6. If you are assigned to the Committee on the Judiciary, 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?**



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**YES.** The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) already has a field reporting system for officers to create police reports indicating whether a criminal act is a potential hate crime. When properly used and monitored by MPD leadership, the data collected gives a full overview of police reports that are created for hate/bias offenses. Nonetheless, I will work with MPD to ensure that potential hate crimes, especially transgender-related, are tracked consistently. Additionally, I will encourage MPD leadership to offer more extensive compulsory training for all police officers to properly identify and report hate crimes, particularly those against the LGBT community. Moreover, in view of this training, MPD leadership must also strengthen measures to require compliance and promote officer accountability to the community. It's only when officers face severe consequences for failing to enforce rules on hate crimes and interactions with LGBT people that the message is sent that bias on the force will not be tolerated.

I welcome the opportunity to engage with the LGBT community on a regular basis to discuss emerging public safety issues in the city and in Ward 8, as well as the quality of services to LGBT hate crime victims. For example, I would try to meet on a regular basis with members of the Violence Prevention and Response Team (VPART). The VPART is comprised of representatives from four LGBT organizations (Rainbow Response Coalition, Gays and Lesbians Opposing Violence, DC Trans Coalition, and SMYAL) and members of the MPD's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) who meet on a monthly basis to discuss crimes against members of the LGBTQ community. The VPART members provide suggestions to MPD on how to reduce crimes directed at members of the LGBTQ community, including potential hate crimes and domestic violence. Outcomes from such dialogue could eventually guide decisions to update reporting procedures. In turn, conclusions drawn from the analysis of the police reports will inform MPD leadership on the effectiveness of police protection and outreach to the LGBT community.

**7. Will you support Bill 21-38, the Death with Dignity Act of 2015?**

**UNDECIDED.** I am aware that voters in Oregon and Washington passed ballot measures allowing the practice, while legislators in Vermont and judges in Montana and New Mexico have authorized it. This issue is gaining momentum in the media and note increasing advocacy and pending legislation in an additional 20+ states and the District. In review of Councilmember Cheh's bill, I have yet to take a position. From my vantage point, this bill affects all citizens of the District with respect to their quality of life in the face of a terminal illness. I agree that we as a community need to help those who are suffering with terminal and debilitating diseases, and in this regard, death with dignity advocates present a compelling case to enact such laws. I want to engage in substantive dialogue with stakeholders on both sides of the issue before I pledge my support. I welcome the opportunity to hear more from GLAA on this issue.

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**8. Will you push to establish a project to increase government hiring from under-represented populations, including transgender people?**



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YES. In fact, as one of Mayor Gray's senior staff members, I assisted in the launch of the District's first-ever transgender employment initiative under the Department of Employment Services' Project Empowerment Program and in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs. The transgender-specific cohorts of Project Empowerment were designed to increase training and employment opportunities for transgender residents of the District. To reinforce our commitment to the program, we requested a member of the transgender cohort to be placed in the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs. The participant proved to be such a great asset to the office that we decided to hire the participant after completion of the Project Empowerment tenure. The individual is still employed with the District government. In pushing for the development of this project, I would consult with the DC Office of Human Rights to ensure that any new project does not end up violating inadvertently the DC Human Rights Act.

#### **YOUTH AND SENIORS**

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

YES. I strongly support efforts to improve services and treatment of LGBT homeless youth and seniors. In view of the LGBT Homeless Youth Reform Act of 2013 and other policy directives from the Mayor and the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs, I welcome the opportunity to work with the community and explore other measures to increase transitional housing and shelter space for LGBT homeless youth and seniors. I recognize the District's affordable housing inventory is inadequate to meet the needs of the target population. As one of Mayor Gray's senior staff members, I helped facilitate the work of the Comprehensive Housing Strategy Task Force. As a result of this important work by the Task Force, the Gray Administration made an unprecedented \$187 million investment to create or preserve 10,000 affordable housing units for District residents. This historic investment increased funding to the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF), Permanent Supportive Housing and the Local Rent Supplement Program. The HPTF is a viable mechanism to ensure provisions for transitional LGBT housing. I support and will champion an annual contribution of \$100 million to the HPTF and will work to find a more predictable funding stream for the Fund.

#### **CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES**

**10. 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 believe adult residents of the District have the right to engage in adult-oriented entertainment as long as it does not infringe on the rights of others. Further, it is the right of appropriately licensed and zoned businesses to provide it.

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

Over the course of my years of public service, I have always worked to defend the rights of and improve the quality of life of the LGBT community. When I served as Chief of Staff to Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, I worked with her to stop the District's 2009 marriage equality bill from being overturned by Congress. I also worked with Congresswoman Norton to rid the District's appropriations bills from riders prohibiting the District from spending locally raised funds on its needle-exchange program which has been instrumental in the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

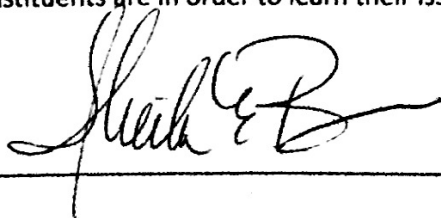
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In May 2013, I worked with the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs to coordinate Mayor Gray's first-ever Youth LGBTQ Town Hall meeting to learn about the concerns of LGBTQ youth.

I also participated in the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs cultural competency trainings to ensure that as a senior-level manager, I was trained on best practices for interacting with the District's large LGBTQ population.

I am currently a member of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club. I've marched in the Pride Parade and participated in DC Black Pride and Youth Pride festivities over the last 19 years. I have attended fundraisers for LGBT elected officials and celebrations for the victory of marriage equality. During my campaign, I have outreached to churches serving the LGBT community. I believe that one must go directly to where your constituents are in order to learn their issues and effectively represent them.



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Lastly, I look forward to the opportunity to work directly with GLAA to shape and frame legislation and policy to strengthen the lives of LGBT residents of the District and all District residents.

Your answers should be typed in a separate document rather than on this form. You must sign your name on each answer sheet to indicate your personal commitment to your answers.

Please return your signed questionnaire responses by Thursday, March 5 to GLAA, P.O. Box 75265, Washington, D.C. 20013; or email it as an attachment in PDF format (for loading on GLAA's website) to [equal@glaa.org](mailto:equal@glaa.org). Thank you.



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