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Candidate for Ward 4 Council
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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 will speak out in defense of bills passed by the Council to repeal the Armstrong Amendment and to prohibit conversion therapy for minors, and I will certainly stand strong against congressional meddling on these issues and every other. I support the repeal of the Armstrong amendment, which simply eliminated an anti-gay exemption to our Human Rights Act. Opponents of the District's action obfuscate the reality that they want different rules to apply to them than the rest of the District. That is simply unacceptable. Moreover, the repeal does not trample on religious freedom; it protects the human rights of people in the District. The bill to prohibit conversion therapy for minors is a necessary protection for vulnerable young people and was enacted via our Democratic process. The District must be allowed to make and enforce its own laws like any other jurisdiction and our residents must be accorded the same fundamental democratic rights as all other Americans.

FAMILIES

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

Yes. Simply put, District laws must protect District families based upon current realities. It speaks volumes that the District is just getting around to amending its laws to recognize and provide for the protection of surrogates, donors, intended parents under surrogacy agreements. In the end, the District's legal recognition and protections (albeit, belatedly) of these agreements will give the parties much-needed certainty, help them navigate the important decision process, and finally establish rights and responsibilities that ultimately are in the best interests the affected child.

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?

We must understand that the District must be proactive to address its performance in these areas. If I were assigned to the Committee on Health and Human Services, I would first meet with each Director of the affected agencies to reinforce that the District must do better on this issue, not only when the cameras are rolling, but when the lights go out. Next, I would convene meetings with community groups, health providers, and local and national non-profit organizations to identify areas for needed improvement on HIV prevention, HIV/AIDS surveillance, and mental health services. Then, I would undertake a review of the District budget priorities to determine what changes need to be made in order to more effectively fund

programs and services essential to address the areas for needed improvements, as well as, continued funding for those areas where we are performing appropriately. Based upon these meetings, reviews, and information gathered, I would push for improvements by convening Council oversight hearings, requests for budget support, and implementation of a clear strategic plan to effectively address the identified needs and action items.

According to a 2013 D.C. Appleseed report, the District has a significant amount of work to do in these areas-- especially with regard to grants management, education on HIV/AIDS prevention in District charter schools, and housing for HIV-positive individuals. I would look into which improvements have been made since then and move from there to advocate for further improvement by District agencies having responsibility for these issues. Recent medical research has also indicated that distribution of prophylactic anti-retroviral drugs are effective and should be made available to at-risk populations. I would support the distribution of these drugs as well as the expansion of our mental health services.

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

Absolutely. In my family, three of my cousins are lesbian; one is gay. They openly recount and lament the cultural ignorance of healthcare providers. In some instances, it is innocent ignorance; other times, it is intentional. Everyone, regardless of their choice in life, should be able to count on their healthcare providers to give them accurate and relevant information and fair and professional treatment. Your report, "Building on Victory," further highlights the difficulties faced by lesbians. We can do better; we must do better.

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. We must dedicate and fully fund more resources to provide mental health and substance abuse treatment across the board. This is especially important in our chronically underserved populations. By addressing the cause, not just the condition, we can begin to attack this problem.

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?

Yes. More crime data must be made available to the public so the communities can independently and adequately assess MPD's effectiveness. Hate crimes are especially heinous. MPD must make data on these crimes publically available so the underlying issues can be addressed. To the greatest extent possible, we must be certain to protect the identity of the victims.

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

I applaud Councilmember Cheh for introducing this bill. People should not be forced to undergo the indignities of a terminal illness merely because others might feel uncomfortable or believe that the hope of survival outweighs the indignity and suffering of the patient. It is shameful to cling to ideas of the past. When our medical science of today predicts (with near certainty) that the manner of an impending death violates the wishes of the person, we should

afford that person the choice as to the manner that they will die.

HUMAN RIGHTS

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

Yes. Government has a responsible to lead by example and this is a great opportunity for the District to do just that. In fact, as discussed below, I have embraced the opportunity to work with the LGBT community and former-Mayor Gray on this issue.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

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

Yes. LGBT youth in particular are at increased risk of homelessness and make up a vastly disproportionate share of the homeless population.

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, within the bounds of current zoning rules. I would directly participate in convening stakeholder meetings in an effort to reach acceptable compromises, as the circumstances may warrant. However, I will be mindful and respectful of stakeholder input on both sides of this issue.

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.

During my career as an attorney at DCHR, I worked with the LGBT community on developing District policies protecting and promoting the District's hiring of people within the LGBT community. I met with Mayor Gray and several LGBT community representatives at the Wilson Building to discuss these policies. I also worked on DCHR regulations supporting the rights of the transgender community with respect to formulating a dress code. In addition, I also directly worked on DCHR policies pertaining to employee sensitivity and awareness of LGBT community within the workplace.