

David Garber – DC Council At-Large (D)

DC for Democracy Questionnaire for 2016 Democratic Primary

Please answer the following questions, which will help our members in making their endorsement decision. Responses should be sent to dcdemocracy@gmail.com no later than Friday, April 8, and will be published online shortly after that.

1. Bills now before the DC Council are intended to reduce the influence of big money donors through several approaches:

- **banning corporate campaign contributions,**
- **keeping donors who make very large contributions from getting government contracts and special tax breaks, and**
- **providing for public financing of political campaigns through a system that matches small donations, similar to what it used in New York City.**

Where do you stand on each of these approaches?

I am committed to reducing the influence of big money in elections. With recent changes in federal campaign laws that allow corporations to raise unlimited dollars for campaigns, now is time for us to advocate for approaches that limit the influence of big money, especially in local elections.

My campaign does accept corporate campaign contributions. Although I see the value in a system that is funded by individuals (and public financing, see below), and even volunteered for Initiative 71, I am running my campaign as competitively as possible, against an incumbent that accepts corporate contributions.

My opponent has been formally reprimanded by the Board of Ethics and Government Accountability for trying to keep his donors happy at the expense of public health and safety. Unfortunately, putting the interest of campaign contributors over the interest of District residents has been an all-too-common practice.

As a member of the Council, I intend to bring a community-centered approach to decision making, and would support legislation that prevents large contributors from getting government contracts or special tax breaks.

Lastly, I fully support an opt-in public financing option for District campaigns.

2. Do you support the pending ballot initiative to gradually raise the DC minimum wage to \$15 by 2020, and to eliminate the difference between the tipped minimum wage and regular minimum wage by 2024? If not, please explain your reasons.

I support the Fight for \$15.

3. Child care on average costs \$21,000 a year for families. What would you do to ensure access for all families? Do you support universal childcare?

I am in support of progressive paid family leave policies that aim at helping families. In the absence of paid leave, workers are faced with the impossible choice of losing their job or caring for their loved one. This impossible choice should no longer be a reality for District workers. While the District's universal pre-k program helps to curb the cost of childcare while providing children with early education access, I am very open to ideas that provide families with additional direct support.

4. In recent years, DC has lost tens of thousands of units of affordable housing. Over the next few years, we are projected to lose thousands more. How many of these units should the DC government replace or preserve? What steps do you propose to replace and preserve that many units?

Improving and increasing the stock of affordable housing for low-wage income earners, working families, people who have disabilities, and seniors who depend on fixed income is essential to addressing DC's housing crisis. A comprehensive approach should focus on expanding affordable housing District-wide (especially in communities with access to public transportation and jobs) with each new market-rate development, and do more to protect and improve the District's public housing stock.

When dealing with new market-rate development, the Mayor and the Zoning Commission must make sure that Inclusionary Zoning program serves those who most need affordable housing. However, there is room to improve IZ to allow for more units at deeper subsidy by sometimes allowing developers to pay into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for housing within the same geographic area as their development project, without forcing affordable housing into very expensive concrete / underground parked construction. By being creative about the way we build affordable housing, we can get more bang for our buck.

As outlined in a July 2015 Fiscal Policy Institute [report](#), fewer than 1 and 5 IZ units have gone to residents with incomes 50% below AMI, so there is remove for improvement.

While public housing provides a tremendous amount of security to individuals and families who earn less than 30% of AMI, shortfalls in federal funding have limited the DC Housing Authority's ability to improve properties. Proposals like the New Communities Initiative have made inroads in trying to improve property conditions, but there are valuable lessons learned that should guide our approach. Where possible, identifying nearby sites as "build first" locations can alleviate issues that arise with relocation while ensuring residents can stay in their communities. Additionally, more can be done to improve what counts as a one-to-one replacement so that displaced residents have a right to return that works in practice. For example, replacing a family's three-bedroom unit with a one bedroom should not count as a one-to-one replacement.

5. What actions would you take to enhance public safety and reduce violent crime while reforming racialized policing that unfairly targets people of color?

As an At-Large Councilmember, ensuring that every resident in every community feels safe will be one of my top priorities. We can make considerable improvements in public safety by hiring more officers and addressing the underlying issues that lead to crime including the disparity of economic opportunities.

Increase our police force to meet demands of population growth

Our population has continued to grow, and yet our police force has not. Last summer, our police chief warned of the large numbers of officers expected to retire over the next couple of years. I will fight to make the Metropolitan Police Department the most desired place for quality officers to work -- whether via cost of living wage increases, affordable housing options for officers, or making sure that our beat cops have a seat at the table when strategic decisions are made -- so that we have the right number of officers in each of our communities every day of the week.

Combat systemic poverty

I plan on addressing the underlying issues that lead to crime including the disparity of economic opportunities. In a city with a 41% high school drop out rate, finding work that pays the bills can be extremely difficult. I will work to expand employment opportunities, improve access to job training, and provide quality educational, housing and transportation options so that all residents in all parts of the District have a chance to succeed. No one should feel that they need to get involved in crime to make enough money to get by, and everyone deserves to live in a safe community.

Incentivize good behavior

Enforcement-based initiatives, including stiffer criminal sentences don't always work. Where appropriate, we should employ non-enforcement based strategies that assist and connect individuals to social and economic service opportunities. I applaud Councilmember McDuffie's proposal to incentivize better behavior for those most likely to commit offenses, and would support a health-based approach to improve public safety. With a renewed focus on neighborhood engagement, we can work to reduce crime.

6. Good government requires checks and balances between the council and the mayor. Which policies do you support that are different from Mayor Bowser's policies? Please be as specific as possible.

I support the Mayor's Homeward DC plan to establish new housing in every ward across the city for women and children experiencing homelessness.

More than anything, however, I think the Mayor and District residents will benefit from having an At-Large Councilmember who is dedicated to a community-first approach to governance. The current At-Large member has moved lockstep with Mayor Bowser or with his own interests; he does not represent the values we should have in a Councilmember. If elected to serve as the next At-Large Councilmember, I will champion policies that benefit residents across the District and the public interest over my own or the Mayor's.