

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 dcfordemocracy@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 do not support the ban on corporate campaign contributions.

I believe that government contracts should be fairly awarded based on the capacity of the applicant through a transparent process that includes participation from the community. I have been very vocal regarding preference for Ward 8 businesses and small businesses. I believe tax breaks should be awarded based on the value of the project to the residents of the District of Columbia. It is too broad to state no tax breaks generally because that would prohibit affordable housing opportunities.

Currently, there are countless programs and initiatives throughout Ward 8 that would greatly benefit from additional funding and resource support from DC government. I would much rather have those resources go to support programs and initiatives that meet the immediate needs of Ward 8 residents than local candidate elections. Our communities need financial support from our local government now more than ever. This is why it is important for community leaders and local elected officials to appropriately prioritize available government funds and resources in order to equitably uplift our community.

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'm happy to support any initiative that reflects the will of the people in Ward 8. It is extremely important for voters to weigh in on what wage they think is needed to best support their families at minimum. On July 1, 2016, the minimum wage here in DC will raise from \$10.50 to \$11.50. Even with the annual mandated minimum wage increase, families still experience a considerable gap in pay as compared to the ever increasing

living wage in our city. For the average part-time minimum wage worker, this gap in pay equates to about \$308 a month. For some DC families, an extra \$308 a month can be the difference between living in a safe apartment or living on the streets. We must do what we can to ensure that all DC residents receive an honest day's pay for an honest day's work.

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 child care?

As a former early education provider in Ward 8, increasing access to high-quality affordable early education is one of my top priorities. I am a supporter of universal child care and believe that every child should have access to a high quality early education program in DC. Although I have a laundry of things we can do to reaffirm our commitment to early education, I think we need to start by advocating for more ECE funding to increase access for families who need it the most. I am happy that the Mayor including ECE funding in her budget and look forward to working with my colleagues on the council to identify additional funding.

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?

There are a number of things we can do to provide better housing opportunities for low-income residents in the District. First, we need to make low-income housing a priority in the District instead of "affordable housing." Affordable housing is a mandated term defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is based on the average household income of residents regionally. As you can imagine, in Ward 8 our regional income is skewed a great deal given the existence of high wage workers in surrounding communities. Housing costs will remain out of reach for many Ward 8 families until we switch our focus from providing "affordable housing" based off of income levels that are not reflective of our community. It is totally wasteful for us to pour our resources into housing opportunities that low-income families simply cannot afford.

Secondly, I think it is important for us to reprioritize our focus on home ownership as the preferred long-term housing option for low-income families. Home ownership is one pathway to the middle-class that many low-income families may never explore. We must find ways to help low-

income families move into the middle-class through home ownership. One challenge we face in Ward 8 is the transient nature of our communities due to the overabundance of rental properties. Through the support of first-time homebuyer programs, community revitalization and other supportive efforts, we can help low-income families move into their dream homes and increase the viability of communities in Ward 8 as a whole.

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

I understand that the community plays a significant role in the reduction of crime in our communities. In addition I know that unemployment also is a major variable in the high crime equation. Working with the community on implementing their thoughts around public safety is what I have been doing. It is important to have the community engaged. I also know that the relationship between officers and the community is an indicator of public safety. I suggested a community engagement program for MPD that they have implemented that has shown some progress in the area of community relations.

As the legislator I will do all that I can to change laws that unfairly target people of color and continue to work with MPD and private security companies on hiring more residents from the community and making sure that training is increased and that accountability is maintained.

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

Being a good legislator for the residents of Ward 8 means working and advocating for the people I am blessed to serve. I do not focus on where I differ with the Mayor, yet I focus on how I can leverage my vote to bring more resources and investments into our community. But in an effort to be responsive to the questions. I fully support the NEAR Act which was introduced by Councilmember McDuffie and opposed by the Mayor.