



TO: Candidates for City Council
FROM: Susie Cambria, MSW, Deputy Director/Public Policy
RE: Questions for 2006 City Council Candidate Voter Guide

As you may know, DC Action for Children is an independent, non-profit, multi-issue children's advocacy organization dedicated to improving conditions for children, youth and families in the District of Columbia. As the city's most visible and respected child advocacy organization, we are interested in providing information regarding children and families to colleagues, policy makers and most importantly, residents of the District of Columbia.

**Response to the DC Action for Children Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire
By Chris Otten, DC Statehood Green Party, Mayor 2006
July 17, 2006**

1. What is your plan to address the lack of substance abuse prevention services for adolescents?

Substance abuse is a symptom. It's a symptom of a lack of political will and inclination. Can you discern any interest from the so-called City leadership in fighting the root of the problems? And this gets back to the basics. Better public schooling, cross-generational mentoring programs, strong citywide nutritional feeding programs, continuing education for adults, parenting guidance lessons, and a focus on positivism. Look at our schools. It's a mixed bag... I recognize and appreciate the energy and potential power of our schools, but due to poor maintenance and neglect I tend to get a down in the dumps feeling and I only visit them, not attend them on a daily basis. Imagine what our kids are thinking?!?

2. How would you propose to meet the health care needs of children and youth?

One of my major objectives is to reopen General Hospital. It's time to refurbish what can be a beacon of healthcare and hope for the residents in Ward 6, 7 and beyond. The citywide clinical program that Mayor Williams and the City Council has spoken about for the past 5 years has been just that, words. There has been little action to implement and build urgent care centers in areas of our city where they're needed the most. It's only now, election season, that the City leadership is finally discussing clinics for Wards 7 and 8. I say we can revive General Hospital and integrate it as a central facility in what is a spokes wheel of community level clinics. General Hospital and these clinics can host onsite-training programs so our next generation of doctors and nurses can consist of children right here from the District.

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3. The District of Columbia does not have a child abuse and neglect prevention plan. Do you feel that one is needed and why?

Isn't curfews and juvenile detention the answer? **Of course not...** but has seemingly been the answer from the City Council and Mayor for years. Child abuse and neglect stems from the symptoms of poverty and illness. These are difficult issues to tackle and can be turned around only if we collectively decide to promote strong citywide programs that contend with classism, racism, and poverty. I'm talking about programs that reinvigorate government services such as our libraries. They can and must be centers of knowledge where parents can learn de-escalation and empowerment techniques to keep the family together through these tough times. Isn't it time that adults also have access to budget and vocational skills training so to help us grow our wealth and break the prison of poverty and build the will to end the abuse and neglect of our children.

4. What is the role of government to ensure that all children enter school ready to learn?

Our government must help to inspire hope and creativity in all of our communities. Our focus will be on the poorest communities first. Creating an atmosphere of value in education and fun in learning will help us work together to build a community built on trust and exciting economic and educational opportunities. Right now I feel we are mired in a pool of decline and dismissal whereby the so-called City leadership is resigned to stand at the side and wave goodbye as we sink!?! There has been too much demolition through neglect and development with severe displacement. This must end and will if our teams of concerned residents are elected -- DC Statehood Green Party.

5. What role do you think the government should play in supporting positive youth development? Please explain.

With me as Mayor, we will have a government that sees the importance of implementing a uniform and consistent volunteer intake service that can help parents and other community residents take some ownership over the direction of our youth. For example, right now one cannot readily be a volunteer at our schools. This can change and will if you elect DC Statehood Greens. We can provide the experience to implement a volunteer program whereby if you want to help our youth learn, you will get a background check, participate in an intake interview to identify your skill set, and then get additional and appropriate training to get in our schools and help our teachers and parents lift up the educational prowess of our students. This does not happen now and this will change.