



National Partnership
for Women & Families

D.C. Women's Agenda Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire
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Health Care

What will you do to help workers access the time required for the arrival of a new baby or the terminal illness of a spouse without risking a slide into poverty? What else will you do to help workers recover from short-term, but serious, illnesses or take care of a sick child or elderly parent, without undermining their economic security?

Helping working-class families is at the top of my campaign priorities. Hence, I will do what it takes to make sure there exist supportive programs and funding in place to help with all of the situations highlighted by this question.

In DC, 20% of all women aged 15 - 44 live below poverty, and nearly all of the women in this group are uninsured (i.e. no private health insurance and no Medicaid coverage). Overall, 18% of DC residents (80,000) have no health insurance. How do you propose to secure and improve health care for all DC residents?

Reopen General Hospital immediately. Our General Hospital campus is essentially sitting empty offering a small percentage of the services it once used to. We can turn around the pitiful medical coverage in this city by revitalizing what can again be a beacon of hope and concern for our residents, the General Hospital Campus. We have the funds... but I ask where is the political will and inclination from our so-called city leaders?

Family planning clinics in DC only serve half of all women in need of publicly supported contraceptive services, and only 56% of teenagers in need. How would you ensure that all DC women have access to contraceptive services that they need to make decisions that are right for their health, families, and overall well-being?

Strong citywide access to contraception services is critical. We can have a spokes wheel of services centered at DC General and expanding outward to clinics and schools throughout the city. These services shall include counseling and material resources to help our women make good choices in their lives. But these services will be useless unless women know about them, thus we can implement an advertising campaign at our schools and through

various related government departments and in the general public to promote this very important program.

DC's annual rate of new HIV/AIDS infections is nearly 12 times the national average, and quite possibly the highest of any major US city. Current data suggests that an estimated 1 in 20 DC residents has the virus. What proposals do you have to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS infection in DC and improve access and quality of treatment, especially for those residents without access to private health insurance?

Access to protection as addressed above is critical. Education is another leading factor here as well. Hence, frank open discussions about preventing STD's must be had at our high schools and counseling for those young people already infected must also be provided. The General Hospital campus will once again be called upon to center a program of serious and committed STD prevention services for the general public and play a role in making sure all of our clinics are provided the resources they need to offer solid service to the public. You will be able to access all of these services if you live here in the District and regardless of your health insurance status.

Housing/Homelessness

In D.C., there were over 8000 homeless individuals and families in 2005. This represents the fourth consecutive increase over a previous year. What commitments are you personally prepared to make to turn around these increases and address the homelessness situation in the District of Columbia?

Building clean, quality shelters offering temporary housing, vocational programs, medical care, and counseling to allow folks to play a more positive role in our city's direction. Currently I get the sense that the way to deal with the homeless is to remove them from the City. This has been seen with shelter closures and slashing of funds to homeless programs. There must never be another closing of a shelter without the building of another to replace that need. And, the new shelter must be built before the old one is demolished. Shelters should be placed near effective transportation hubs so that folks can more easily get around to their new jobs and interviews. I would also like to see strong citywide nutritional feeding programs for all residents but especially targeting the homeless and working poor. This helps eliminate another daily expense.

In the 1990's, the District lost over 16,000 rental housing units. Additional losses of affordable housing are expected. Describe the steps that you would take to address the affordable housing crisis in the District. Please include your definition of affordable housing—specifically, what level of Annual Median Income are you using?

My first step would be a moratorium on any new condominium development as this type of development is most quickly displacing working families in this city. Second we must have strong inclusionary zoning laws. As these new condos go up and replace older buildings, the people displaced cannot afford the new units. This must end. Everyone moved out of a

building should have the right within reason to move back into the new building. I would also like to see strong Rent Control regulations, as most working families cannot afford a mortgage and thus why they rent. But rent is skyrocketing under the current city-leadership. Strong rent control can help stem the mass migration of long-time DC families.

Homelessness is a complex issue. Developing successful approaches to addressing homelessness means developing partnerships between many players at all levels of government and in communities. What is your strategy to bring these partners together? Furthermore, how do you intend to include the voices of service providers and service organizations in your decisions about affordable housing and homelessness in the District?

I was the Project Director of a homeless services organization called Charlie's Place. I spent several years working with other organizations to raise money and resources to provide good services to our homeless population. Instead of our city leadership meeting a few times a year to discuss the plight of our homeless, I'd like to see the City play a major role in facilitating monthly homeless networking events whereby city leadership, service organizations, and the homeless themselves gather to discuss progress, future plans, and continue to build bridges to enhance provided services.

Wages and Benefits

The D.C. City Council recently passed the Way to Work legislation. Among its key provisions for District employees and employees of firms receiving District contracts or economic assistance are: the creation of a Job Opportunity Bank; the First Source Employment program, and the Living Wage bill, which requires employers to pay a wage of \$11.75 per hour. What will you do to monitor and enforce its key provisions?

Oversight is key to all government functions. Having an executive level committee to oversee the implementation of this bill can assure that key provisions are met and met successfully. Businesses and government departments struggling to meet these provisions can be assisted and provided suggested resources to help. If they continue to fail then they can be sanctioned.

In January, the District's minimum wage was increased to \$7.00 per hour. Even after this increase, the real purchasing power of the minimum wage rate is 8% lower than it was in 1997. An inflation-adjusted minimum wage would help low-income workers keep pace with the cost of living, but it would be particularly beneficial to women, families, and minorities. If elected, would you support a minimum wage that adjusts for inflation each year? If not, why not?

Yes, of course. The real living wage for a single person in this city is closer to \$12.50 an hour. This will continue to increase until city leadership grasps the consequences of the recent condoization push. I will fight for a real living wage and work to get at the root of inflation problems.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assists 17,000 households representing 50,000 low-income parents and children in DC. Current TANF benefits for various family types only come to approximately 28% of the federal poverty line. Would you support the adjustment of TANF benefit amounts to inflation each year? If not, why not?

Yes. TANF is a critical service for our working families and helps to retain our city's economic and cultural diversity.

Teens

Nationally, 1 out of every 3 teens will experience dating violence in their lifetime. Locally, DC has the highest rate of teen dating violence in the country, according to a 2005 study by the Center for Disease Control. Many of the DC schools do not provide health classes and those that do have health classes don't require teen dating violence education. How will you guarantee that this important education piece is required in all DC public schools?

A great many of our schools don't even have librarians or books newer than 10 years old. Our school system is a mess. There needs to be a general overhaul of school management style, philosophy, and action here in the District. I am advocating for a fully elected School Board, less top-down management and more school level decision-making, and more creative ways to maintain our school buildings. With this said, yes, I will work with the School Board to provide access to health classes and counseling at the school level so that serious social dilemmas such as dating violence can be addressed.

There have been initiatives in the past to curb youth gang violence in DC, including DC Metropolitan Police Department's Summer Midnight Basketball Program. However, these initiatives have been specifically geared toward boys—even though girl gangs and girl gang violence are on the rise. Describe programs and initiatives that you would implement to curb the youth gang violence, particularly among girls.

Crime is a symptom of something worse, lack of political will and inclination to recognize that when children don't have positive activities and role models during free time they will seek out other possibly not so positive activities such as joining a gang. Why is it that the City's summer jobs program struggles every year to get going on time? Why is it that after school programs in schools and libraries are nearly non-existent? Why is there almost no vocational training programs left in this city? City leadership should be answering these questions first before applying pointless early curfews and a police state response in poor communities to deal with a 'Crime Emergency.' The root of the problem is highlighted in everything that is wrong with this city. We can turn this around with creative programs for our children. These programs must consist of fun and educational activities derived by the stakeholders themselves, the children, parents, and neighborhood leaders with the help and resources of the District. This will go along way to preventing crime and gang activity.

Child Care

Under the reauthorization of TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), many individuals will face work requirements. However, in order to do so, they often will need access to child care. In D.C., this particularly affects women, since they represent 89% of all single parents. What specific steps do you propose to ensure that individuals needing subsidized child care have access to it?

The reauthorization of TANF happened under Clinton way back in the late 90's. The fact that we still don't have adequate child-care programs to deal with the consequence of this re-rigging of TANF should tell you about national and local leadership skills. Childcare is a right, period. How can Mom or Dad find a job and work at a job unless they have access to affordable or better yet free childcare. We must budget enough funds to provide childcare services for every child in this city. The money that is not expended can go back into our general fund. I will also seek to diversify childcare locations so that parents can find them more easily. We can couple childcare facilities with neighborhood libraries and clinics so that parents are more able to access such services.

Currently, less than one-third of all subsidy childcare providers are Gold level providers, the highest ranking. What will you do to increase the availability of quality childcare?

There can be an executive level committee dedicated to bring together child care providers regularly so to share good working models, provide links to city resources to improve services, and to continue to build relationships between providers so they can rely on each other in times of duress. I'd like to see these childcare-networking events happen at least once every two months with all stakeholders invited to attend.

D.C. residents complain about the quality of service at the Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD), as well as various barriers they face when trying to access affordable child care. Examples of the problems include not getting phone calls returned, a lack of after-work and weekend hours at the OECD, and centers not being able to accommodate children with special needs. How do you plan to improve the quality of service and accessibility of the OECD?

Oversight, again key to making sure the government functions correctly. I believe my campaign priorities are clear. Childcare is near the tops and hence why I will see quality managers who have childcare experience in the District and the managerial skills to make sure our residents are provided the best service we can give and staff well our OECD.

Transparency

Given that community participation and involvement is essential for any democracy to be effective, what will be your communication and involvement strategy in order to keep your constituents actively engaged in legislative activities?

One of my platform points focuses on the empowerment of our Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. I recognize that our elected ANC Commissioners take the pulse of each neighborhood in the city, much better than I could as I will be too busy managing your team of city executive facilitators and an office downtown. So I will be listening carefully to what our ANC Commissioners testify to as neighborhood problems, needs, and the reality of what's happening there. Thus my leadership style is obligated to be transparent and growing from the people on up, just like a healthy plant in a glowing garden of love and support. I also plan to support solid citywide civics educational programs at schools and libraries to help folks learn how our government operates and how we all can play a role in the direction of the nation's capital, Washington, DC.

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