

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Candidate Personal Contact Information (Fields marked with asterisks are required)

Name: * Kendra Brooks
Registration Address:
E-Mail:
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Campaign Contact Information

Full Name of Campaign Committee: * Friends of Kendra Brooks
HQ Address: * PO Box 22363, Philadelphia PA 19110
Campaign Manager Name: * Arielle Klagsbrun (interim contact)
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Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking? * City Council At-Large

If you are running for a district seat, in which district are you running? *

Are you the incumbent? * Yes No If yes, year first elected: 2019

With which party are you registered? Working Families Party

Please list union leaders you seek input from when developing your legislative agenda:

In addition to DC47, I am in regular communication with: AFSCME DC 33 (Ernest Garrett), UNITE HERE (Rosslyn Wuchinich, Emiliano Rodriguez), SEIU 32 BJ (Gabe Morgan, Andi Perez), SEIU Healthcare PA (Matt Yarnell, Jarrett Smith), Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (Jerry Jordan), CASA (Robin Cooper), AFT Local 2026 (Junior Brainard), Teamsters 623 (Richard Hooker), National Domestic Workers Alliance – PA Chapter (Nicole Kligerman),

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Coalition of Labor Union Women (Koren Parker, Kathy Black), Philly Jobs with Justice (Devan Spear) and El Comité de Trabajadorxs (Carly Pourzand).

Who are your opponents?

Because I am running for one of the 2 minority At-Large seats, my opponents will be whoever emerges from the Republican primary for At-Large in the November 2023 elections.

If there is not sufficient space to respond to the following questions, please attach additional sheets to the questionnaire.

CAMPAIGN

1. Briefly describe your campaign's path to victory. What issues will you be emphasizing throughout your campaign and why?

I ran for office in 2019 in order to bring the issues that matter to working class people into City Hall. When I won, I made history as Philadelphia's first Working Families Party City Council At-Large member. Many people said it was an impossible race to win, but my victory was proof that every single vote matters, and that you don't have to come from a powerful political family or cater to the corporate elite in order to win -- all you need is a clear vision for change and people power. Since winning I've delivered real, material victories for working Philadelphians, including passing robust COVID-19 paid sick leave for workers, expanding renters' rights, resisting austerity and advocating for deep investments in City services, and protecting our reproductive freedoms.

I plan to win re-election by continuing to bring in people who are disillusioned by politics as usual because they don't see themselves represented in halls of power. I will do this by intentionally reaching out to voters who are often overlooked in electoral maps and emphasize the same issues that I fought for throughout my first term: housing accessibility and affordability for renters and low-income homeowners; workers' rights and an economy that works for all of us; fully-funded public education and robust opportunities for our young people; and healthy, safe, and clean neighborhoods in every zip code. As an organizer, I know how to assemble winning coalitions to make seismic change. I will continue to fight alongside union members, social movements, and working people to deliver real, tangible results and make Philadelphia the city of our dreams.

PHILADELPHIA ECONOMY

2. Do you support raising the Living Wage requirement of employers that do business with the city from its current rate? What would your approach be to promoting a Living Wage requirement for employers not covered by the Living Wage Ordinance?

I am absolutely in support of raising the Living Wage requirement of employers that do business with the City. Our minimum wage should be in line with cost of living – and it's clear to anyone

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who has tried to raise a family on \$15/an hour that it is now far too low. A just Living Wage in Philadelphia would enable single parents working one full-time job to be able to afford rent, healthcare, childcare, food, transportation, and other expenses — and right now that is far from the case. According to a self-sufficiency calculator from Pathways PA, a single adult with one infant requires \$25.16 per hour to survive. In order to attract and retain workers, the City should raise its minimum Living Wage and leverage its power to demand that anyone who conducts business with the City is held to the same standards. We should also explore policies like a low-wage impact fee on corporations not paying a minimum wage.

However, it's clear that in order to effectively raise the City's Living Wage requirement, we will need the state to raise its minimum wage as well. We cannot allow corporations to continue exploiting workers in the form of poverty wages, and that will require action from Harrisburg. Fortunately, Governor Shapiro is supportive of increasing the minimum wage, so we have a real opportunity for leadership changes in Harrisburg to capitalize on this moment. Pennsylvania must raise its minimum wage statewide, and that's why I will continue playing an active role in supporting progressive champions at the state level and leveraging my relationships to push for action.

3. The City requires companies with 10 or more employees to provide paid sick leave. Many states and cities have similar laws with no exemptions. Would you support updating the legislation to put it in line with what other states and cities have passed?

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, I passed COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave in Philadelphia because low-wage workers, union members, and their families needed more than just good intentions from their employers -- they needed a guarantee that if they fell ill, they could recover without missing a day's pay. I'm proud to have led efforts to extend this legislation now three times, so that we can protect as many workers as we can. My office has worked closely with the Office of Workplace Protections to ensure Philadelphians know their rights and Philadelphia employers are aware of the law so that implementation of this bill is done right.

I am absolutely in favor of no exemptions for paid sick leave – and fought time and time again to make sure that the legislation I passed covered the most people possible, while still passing. I would love to help lead efforts to make universal paid sick leave a reality. In order to do that, we need City Council and local leaders to show real courage and stand up to corporate interests, lobbyists, and the Chamber of Commerce and choose people over profit.

PENSION/RETIREMENT SYSTEM

4. What is your position on the current cap on annual contribution in the defined benefit plan by employees in the stacked hybrid plan of the Municipal Employee Pension system? Should the cap be indexed to include automatic increases tied to salary increases?

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Winning fair pensions is a pillar of the labor movement. All working people should be able to retire, yet over decades, austerity budgets pushed by Wall Street corporations have chipped away at traditional pensions. Retirement packages are vital not only in providing for those who have worked for our city but also for attracting and retaining city workers. I support indexing the pension cap to both salary increases, as well as inflation and cost of living increases.

EDUCATION/SCHOOL BOARD

5. What qualities and experience would you look for in appointees to the School Board? What standards should School Board appointees use to evaluate current or proposed privatization measures (e.g., charter schools)?

As someone who led efforts to abolish the undemocratic School Reform Commission and was named to the School Board nominating panel by Mayor Kenney Kenney, I am intimately familiar with this process. I firmly believe that lived experience should be a deciding factor in who is appointed to the School Board. We need to have more teachers, parents, and community members who are from the communities that have been the most impacted by privatization, school closures, and disinvestment represented. I also believe that transparency, accountability, and a commitment to amplifying the voices of school communities are all character traits that we should look for when evaluating potential School Board members. Lastly, we need to talk about moving toward an elected School Board where Board Members are paid for their labor if we want to have a truly representative, democratic Board that represents working families in Philadelphia.

My path into politics began when my daughter's school, Edward T. Steel Elementary was threatened with closure and slated to be taken over by one of the largest charter school operators in the city. Through organizing our community, we won our fight and Steel remains open as a public school to this day, but that doesn't mean the fight against privatization and school closures is over. For too long, the School Board and before them the School Reform Commission did not allow our school communities to have a voice in the decisions that impacted our students' education. This resulted in dozens of schools being closed in Black and Brown neighborhoods, the failed Renaissance Charter model, and an utter lack of accountability from charter school operators in the city. We must fight for deep investments in our existing public schools, resist school closures, rigorously scrutinize new school privatization efforts, elevate the needs and voices of school communities, and hold existing charter school operators to high standards.

6. How would you work to support acquiring fair State funding for the Philadelphia School District? What experience and relationships do you have working with entities in Harrisburg that would help accomplish that?

For decades, Pennsylvania has maintained a racist and inequitable education funding formula that short-changes poor districts like Philadelphia, fails our kids, and then uses the struggles of

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our underfunded Philadelphia schools as fodder for privatization efforts. Republicans and their corporate allies in the state legislature have short-changed our young people for years, and it's essential that we take every opportunity to expose them and hold them to account. That's why I was proud to support the 2022 PA school funding trial that sought to transform our broken funding formula that has resulted in some of the largest gaps in revenue between rich and poor districts in the nation, and instead use an equitable formula that gives poor districts like Philadelphia the same chance at a quality education as their wealthier, whiter counterparts.

As an organizer, I know that we can only win this fight if we build power from the ground up and leverage the voices of parents, students, school staff, and community members who are tired of being treated as an afterthought by the General Assembly. I will continue to fight alongside advocates with whom I have close relationships, including Children First, One Pennsylvania, the Public Interest Law Center, the PA Working Families Party, Education Voters of PA, the Urban League of Philadelphia, Philly Student Union, and the Education Law Center to win victories for our public schools in Harrisburg, and alongside groups like the Our City Our Schools coalition to build power here in Philadelphia. I will also continue fighting alongside our union brothers and sisters, including the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, the American Federation of Teachers, and others, to move the needle on school funding.

CITY SERVICES

7. What are your priorities for funding City and Court services? How would you ensure that these services are provided equitably throughout the city?

For too long our public services have been a tale of two cities, in which wealthier, often whiter neighborhoods are significantly more well-resourced and receive higher quality City services and less poorer communities of color receive City services that clearly do not meet their needs. We must use an equity-lens when looking at how we fund our City services to ensure that the communities that are most impacted by trash dumping, abandoned cars, streetlight outages, and other quality of life issues are prioritized. And then we need to put our money where our mouth is and make deep investments in these services to address this disparity. That's why I was an outspoken champion of Councilmember Jamie Gauthier's "Just Services" campaign and why I will continue to fight for deep investments in neighborhood services that improve people's lives, like fully-funded Parks and Recreation Centers, public libraries that open on nights and weekends, public pools in every neighborhood, and emergency mental health services for individuals in crisis.

As for our courts, it's clear that when we don't invest in adequate infrastructure for our judicial system to do what it's intended to do, it's low-income communities of color that bear the brunt of our neglect. I believe in fairly and equitably investing in our Court system to ensure fair representation and efficient court operations. I've helped win significant increases in funding for the Defender Association of Philadelphia, because I know that well-resourced public defense is essential to upholding justice in our city. I also strongly support the expansion of Right to Counsel, so that we can continue to reduce evictions and ensure every Philadelphia renter has access to fair representation. Lastly, Philadelphia needs to push for the state to pay its fair share for our courts, which it is currently failing to do. In order to maintain adequate staffing levels and instill public trust in the neutrality and effectiveness of our judicial system, Harrisburg must increase funding for our courts, and Philadelphia must do the same.

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8. What level of services should the city support to fully fund and fully staff our Library and Parks and Recreation systems? Please explain your position and how you believe those systems can be funded.

I believe that making deep investments in our public libraries and Parks and Recreation centers is paramount to strengthening our communities, preventing violence, empowering youth, and transforming Philadelphia into a city where working families thrive. On City Council, I've been a fierce advocate for increasing funding in these areas, which has resulted in restoring funding for libraries and Parks and Recreation to pre-pandemic levels. But if we want to see real change, we need more than just incremental improvements, we need to make significant increases in funding levels. We need all libraries and recreation centers to be open seven-days a week, with evening and weekend service. And we need targeted investments in the handful of zip codes most impacted by gun violence.

That's why a central part of my Philly Wealth Tax proposal, which would raise nearly \$260M in annual City funding, is investing in our public libraries and recreation centers so that we could have facilities available and accessible to our communities and provide robust services to our neighborhoods. Making the ultra-rich pay their fair share for the fully-funded City services that our communities deserve will continue to be a top priority of mine.

9. How would you address staffing shortages throughout departments, including those that are a result of unfilled positions? What initiatives would you put in place to help hire and retain current City / Court workers?

It's no secret what makes people want to take a job and encourages them to stay: competitive pay, regular pay increases, access to a union, safe working conditions, and good benefits. Many of our departments are understaffed because the jobs present undesirable conditions or compensation, and we must address that by ensuring our workplaces are world-class, our pay is comparable with other sectors, and our departments are well-resourced.

We must also address the lack of job training and apprenticeship pipelines in our city. Young people and adults looking to start a new career must have access to a wide range of options including free community college, free vocational training opportunities, on-the-job paid training opportunities, and paid internships if they are going to be eligible for good union jobs. And these opportunities must be built into our City services and public schools so they are accessible to all. We must aggressively expand job programs for young people and build out career training programs that equip our residents with the skills necessary for all career paths. To achieve this, I will advocate for expanded funding in the annual City budget for job training programs and workforce development, funding which has in the past been significantly reduced to the detriment of our residents.

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10. What is your position on the privatization of City services?

Austerity, trickle-down economics, and the privatization of City services is what got us to where we are now: We have chronically underfunded our public sector and drained our City of the resources it needs to effectively provide for its residents. This dynamic contributes to the growing disparity in neighborhood services between wealthier, whiter zip codes and poorer and more working class zip codes. Privatizing City services weakens our public sector unions, costs the City significantly more money in the long run, weakens accountability, and fractures the landscape of services. We must stop this disastrous cycle of contracting out every City service and relying on public-private partnerships and instead return jobs to the public sector so that we can streamline City services, create more good-paying union jobs, and adequately fund our City departments. By doing so, we have the opportunity to streamline access to services for City residents, expand programming, and re-instill faith in local government.

ENVIRONMENT

11. What steps do you want the city to take to address climate change and to shift away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy sources? Do you support the City amending its investment portfolio to divest from fossil fuel companies?

It is our collective responsibility to fight for a healthy, livable city now so that current and future generations can live full, healthy lives. That means not only addressing the climate crisis through bold transitions to green energy, but also protecting communities most harmed by extreme weather events and toxins in our built environment.

We must rid our public schools of the lead and asbestos that poisons our children and address the air and water pollution that plagues working class Black and Brown communities like the one I live in – where one in three children has asthma. And as the climate crisis makes our summers hotter and extreme weather events more common, we must improve our heating, cooling, and ventilation systems in schools or risk our young people missing out on large portions of the school year. I will continue pushing for local action to address these issues, and continue putting pressure on our wealthiest institutions like Penn, Drexel, and Jefferson to do their part by making Payments in Lieu of Taxes to fund these and other needed renovations.

Addressing the climate crisis also means expanding green forms of transit and protecting existing green spaces, especially in working class communities of color. I passed legislation to expand bike share services citywide and I will keep fighting for fully-funded public transit and safe streets. I've also revived efforts to protect dozens of community gardens in working class neighborhoods from being sold off at sheriff sale to the highest bidder. We are on the cusp of an unprecedented victory to return nearly 90 community gardens on the cusp of being lost back to community control, so they can continue to operate as urban farms, rain gardens, and safety hubs in working class neighborhoods. Lastly, I've worked closely with my Council colleagues and legislators in Harrisburg to demand an aggressive transition to green energy that creates good, union jobs.

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I fully support the City amending its investment portfolio to divest from fossil fuel companies. I know we can't wait for action from the federal government on the climate crisis – Philadelphia must take measures into our own hands.

TAXES

12. What measures would you support to make sure that wealthy non-profits pay their fair share to support City and Court services?

I have been a vocal and outspoken proponent of mandating that our wealthiest institutions and mega-nonprofits like Penn, Drexel, and Jefferson make Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) for years. I passed a resolution calling for hearings on using PILOTs to fund our public schools, and I then partnered with local organizations, school communities, and policy experts to outline the case for PILOTs. Public pressure like this was a key reason why Penn then made a one-time, \$100 million donation to support the remediation of lead and asbestos in our schools. While we are making progress, we know that we cannot stop here. Our City must follow the lead of other municipalities and demand that all mega-nonprofits contribute to the futures of our young people by paying their fair share and making annual PILOTs.

13. Would you support any changes to the city's property tax abatement program? If not, please explain why. If so, please explain how?

For years, our city has catered to the profits of developers and wealthy newcomers instead of working class residents, and there is no clearer example of that than the ten-year tax abatement in its current form. Our current tax abatement robs our School District of revenue that it desperately needs, lines the pockets of the ultra-wealthy, and accelerates the gentrification and displacement of communities of color. That is why I introduced a bill to fully repeal the ten-year tax abatement and why I actively oppose tax cuts for the rich. I support a full repeal of our city's current tax abatement, and propose that it be replaced with an abatement that exclusively supports the development of affordable housing, which was recently made possible by legislation passed at the state level by Rep. Solomon. We need to support the expansion of low-income housing in our city, but it doesn't need to come at the cost of robbing our schools of needed resources and destabilizing our communities.

14. How would you reform city taxes to increase revenue? What is your position on the Net Income and Gross Receipts Tax and on the Wealth Tax legislation? If you have other ideas to increase revenue, please explain them.

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For years, Philadelphia's leaders have chosen to give hand-outs to big corporations and tax cuts to the ultra-rich, hoping that would spur economic growth. But our communities know from lived experience and decades of research that trickle-down economics and austerity budgets causes the rich to grow richer while working families are forced to make do with less and less. It's time that we stopped relying on working class people to shoulder the entirety of our city's tax burden, stopped carving out cuts for the rich, and instead advanced policies that demanded everyone pay their fair share so that we could invest in our communities and build the city we all deserve.

I led the writing and introduction of the Philly Wealth Tax so that we can begin to address the racial wealth gap, bring equity into our tax system and raise necessary revenue to invest in public workers and services for our city. I am thankful for DC47's leadership on this issue and have been proud to work alongside many of you in continuing to push for the Wealth Tax legislation.

The conversation around taxes and revenue must be tied to delivering the highest-quality public services and employment for all Philadelphians. We cannot have conversations about cuts to the wage tax or the Business Income and Receipts Tax without discussing how that translates to cuts in benefits for workers or for our vital City services. That's why I have opposed cuts to these taxes – which have amounted to pennies in savings for working families while resulting in huge windfalls for Philadelphia's wealthiest earners and significant decreases in City revenue. I am open to any discussion to making our tax code less onerous on small businesses and working people, while centering the vital revenue that our city needs to provide for all Philadelphians.

PHILADELPHIA HOUSING

15. Do you support increasing revenue for the Housing Trust Fund to help residents avoid displacement in communities currently facing development pressure?

Housing is a human right, and we as a city must fight to make long-term, affordable housing accessible to all. I am a strong supporter of the Housing Trust Fund and have been an outspoken advocate for increasing its funding to ensure that our communities have the right to remain in their homes and in their communities. Our City is facing a dire housing crisis due to the shortage of housing for low-income and extremely low-income families, stagnant wages, a broken social safety net, and rising market-rate housing costs. The Housing Trust Fund has an important role to play in counteracting these forces and moving the needle on affordable housing in Philadelphia.

16. As a city elected official, what steps will you take to ensure local government plays a proactive role in expanding permanent affordable and workforce housing in Philadelphia?

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In my work as an elected official, I have consistently shown up for the expansion of affordable and workplace housing and I don't plan on stopping any time soon. I support repealing our current tax abatement and replacing it with a tax abatement that incentivizes the development of affordable housing. I have supported efforts like the Turn the Key program that City Council has championed, which will help facilitate the sale of 1,000 new, energy-efficient, 3 bedroom, 1½ bath homes on publicly-owned city land. I have led efforts for the City to buy back lots encumbered by U.S. Bank liens that are at risk of being sold off at Sheriff Sale to protect community-ownership of land and also supported legislation that creates pathways for community-controlled, permanently affordable housing and urban gardens on City-owned land. In my second term, I plan to support and introduce more legislation of this kind that expands affordable and low-income housing while also holding developers accountable to the community and ensuring that long-term residents can afford to stay in their homes.

17. Do you support extending good cause eviction protections to all residential leases? Do you support rent control measures to protect Philadelphia tenants?

In order to strengthen Philadelphia's neighborhoods and tackle poverty, we must aggressively fight evictions, protect renters, and expand access to quality, affordable housing. That's why on City Council, I have led efforts to reduce evictions in Philadelphia by nearly 70% through the Emergency Housing Protection Act, which instituted the Eviction Diversion Program and has been held up as a national model by the White House. I also passed the Renters' Access Act, which regulated the rental application and screening process for tenants to ensure that low-income renters were not being discriminated against in the private rental housing market. I am also a strong supporter of expanding Good Cause eviction protections because I believe that evictions traumatize children, destabilize families, and disproportionately harm low-income communities of color.

But I know that we can't stop there. Low-income renters across the city, especially our seniors who live on fixed incomes, simply cannot keep pace with skyrocketing housing costs. My first action as a City Councilmember was to introduce a resolution to hold hearings on rent control in Philadelphia. While this work got delayed due to the pandemic and my focus shifted to eviction prevention, I am currently planning a public committee hearing for February 2023 in tandem with the Rent Control Coalition. As I look toward re-election and my second term in office, winning rent stabilization for Philadelphia will remain a top priority.

PHILADELPHIA RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

18. Do you support revising the Memo of Understanding between the Philadelphia Police Department and Philadelphia School District to close the school to prison pipeline? If yes, explain how you would accomplish this. If no, please explain why?

I believe that what our young people need to thrive is investment and resources: full-time school counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, and librarians at the recommended ratios; trauma-informed training for staff and conflict mediation; and robust afterschool programs and

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job training to keep young people engaged. That's why as an active member of the Our City Our Schools coalition I have fought against the over-policing of our schools and for the community-based and school-based resources that young people really need to feel safe and supported. To that end, I absolutely support a revision of the MOU between the PPD and SDP that directly addresses closing the school to prison pipeline. To accomplish this, I would rely on my strong relationships with the new School Board President, Reginald Streater, and the new District Superintendent, Dr. Watlington, as well as my relationships with education advocacy organizations to align our interests and ensure this is a top priority. As an organizer and coalition builder, I believe that creating mutual investment in a shared goal is the first step to winning campaigns, and I would employ that strategy here to win the resources and supports that our students deserve.

19. Do you support additional funding for programs that are alternatives to incarceration for drug addiction, mental health treatment, and other issues? If yes, how would you measure the effectiveness of those programs? If no, please explain.

I am a strong proponent of harm reduction approaches to substance use disorder, mental health issues, and other related struggles impacting our most vulnerable community members. I believe that incarceration and abstinence-based approaches to addiction often do more harm than good and contribute to the staggering rate at which people in Philadelphia are dying from overdoses and other deaths of despair. We need to recognize that the opioid crisis is a public health crisis, and that community members who are struggling with a disease deserve compassion, treatment, and care — not punishment.

That's why I have been leading efforts in the City to open an overdose prevention center like the ones that OnPoint operates in New York City, and I why I believe in offering people in crisis a number of pathways to stability that meet them where they are instead of forcing them into hiding. When doing this work, I believe we need to measure efficacy by the lives we touch and the communities we stabilize. How many overdose deaths are we preventing? How many community members experiencing life-threatening mental health crises are we able to connect to treatment and support on the path to stability? How many needles and syringes are we able to remove from our sidewalks and dispose of safely and properly? How many people experiencing homelessness have we gotten into permanent, long-term housing? I believe that every overdose death is a policy failure, and the City needs to act with urgency and courage to take responsibility for the way this crisis has gotten out of hand and start saving lives.

20. What community policing initiatives do you support or propose? Please explain.

On City Council, I have led the charge to win millions of dollars in funding for mobile crisis units, which ensure that mental health first-responders are the ones trusted to help community members in crisis. As the tragic killing of Walter Wallace Jr. illustrated, armed officers are not the people best-equipped to assist someone in the midst of a serious mental health episode. We need to fully-fund and scale up mobile crisis units to prevent unnecessary, dangerous interactions with law enforcement and ensure our residents get the assistance they need.

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I have also been an active partner on the 57 Blocks project, led by the District Attorney's Office, Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, and Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson. This work uses data and research to target the areas where the majority of gun-related incidents take place and funnel resources, supports, and programming to prevent crime and empower communities. I believe that real community safety comes from neighbors, community-based organizations, and City departments coming together around a shared vision for prevention, healing, and stability. I will continue advocating for the City to use a restorative justice lens to address the gun violence crisis, reduce recidivism, get young people into jobs and afterschool programs, and restore peace and safety to our neighborhoods.

21. What funding and staffing proposals would you support to enhance probation and parole services for Philadelphians under supervised release?

Our probation and parole system in Philadelphia is broken. It serves to keep people in cycles of poverty and incarceration and fails to help community members who are attempting to pick up the pieces of their lives after serving time. If we really want to help our community members who have been incarcerated re-enter society, we should be setting them up for success by offering them resources, job training, and robust re-entry services — not setting up impossible hoops for them to jump through and putting them back behind bars when they fail. For example, marijuana use, which is decriminalized in Philadelphia, is a violation of parole and often results in our community members returning to incarceration after release. Instead of spending time, money, resources, and manpower on our broken probation and parole system, we should reform the system and instead invest in re-entry and job services for people involved with the criminal justice system.

Living in Nicetown, I know the people on my block who are involved in the drug trade, I know the people who are at the center of violent incidents, and I know that when those people come back from incarceration they usually go right back to the kind of activities that landed them there in the first place because of the structural barriers and discrimination that make them ineligible for public benefits and traditional employment opportunities. Our systems make it nearly impossible for people coming out of prison *not* to relapse into illegal activity. What if we instead invested in these people and empowered them to lead the charge for community safety in our neighborhoods? What if we expanded re-entry services to provide good, unionized, City jobs to justice-impacted people instead of surveilling them, fining them, and punishing them? It's time our City transformed its probation and parole system to be a tool of community stabilization instead of a tool of mass incarceration.

22. What funding and staffing proposals would you support for the Department of Prisons to ensure incarcerated citizens are best prepared for return to the community from incarceration or from alternative detention programs?

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Right now, our staffing levels in the Department of Prisons pose a serious threat to the wellness and safety of prison staff and incarcerated people alike. The staffing crisis has resulted in harrowing, unsafe, deplorable conditions, which I have seen firsthand in my regular trips to these facilities. I support measures to swiftly and safely decarcerate our prisons and jails to maintain safer population levels and I support investing in re-entry services to equip returning citizens with the skills and resources they need to reintegrate back into society. We must not only focus our efforts on job training, life skills, and access to transitional housing, but also decrease the structural barriers and discrimination that keep formerly incarcerated people on the margins of society when it comes to access to public benefits, housing subsidies, employment, and educational opportunities.

23. What steps do you believe the City can take to reduce the availability of guns in Philadelphia?

The best pathway for Philadelphia to reduce the availability of guns on our streets is to demand action from legislators in Harrisburg. Local gun buybacks can only go so far in a city that is saturated with firearms, and punitive measures to target illegal gun ownership often criminalize Black and Brown Philadelphians without addressing the root of the problem.

Instead of targeting individuals who often own guns for self-defense, we need to focus on the illegal pipelines that bring these guns into our city. Recent efforts at the state level to close the gun show loophole and reduce the availability of “ghost gun” kits are important measures to address the widespread availability of illegal guns, but our work cannot stop there. Pennsylvania must continue to pursue strict gun laws to address the widespread proliferation of guns on our street and hold underground, illegal gun suppliers accountable. I also support legislation at the state level that would outlaw military-grade weapons and expand background check requirements to ensure that people with histories of violence and serious mental health issues cannot gain legal access to firearms.

Additionally, as City Council’s 100 Shooter Report showed, many of the shootings in our city arise from interpersonal disputes that quickly escalate because of widespread access to guns. We need to teach conflict resolution in schools and expand mental health services for students so that our young people do not turn to guns as the first way to resolve arguments. We must build community safety from the ground up, which means giving our residents the resources and tools they need to maintain healthy relationships and resolve conflict without picking up a gun.

24. Do you have any plans regarding programs that support and protect victims of crime and other affected members of the community?

I believe that we need to adequately fund the Victim/Witness Services Unit in the District Attorney’s Office as well as the Office of the Victim Advocate in Philadelphia to ensure that those who have been harmed by crime and their families are able to fully recover from the trauma that has occurred. I also strongly support the expansion of restorative justice programs, also led by the DAO, which allow for a holistic process that takes into account those who were harmed and allows for redress, accountability, and community healing. Lastly, we need to

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remember that gun violence traumatizes entire communities, not just those directly involved. The City must take an active role in providing targeted investments and robust supports to the handful of public schools and blocks impacted by gun violence.

PHILADELPHIA CORPORATE POWER

25. Do you support publicly financed campaigns for all City elected offices? If no, please explain.

I ran for public office through an untraditional path – as an activist and organizer, a single Black mom, and someone who was ready to see change happen. In my first campaign, I broke the record on fundraising for an independent candidate through focusing on grassroots fundraising. Since becoming elected, I continue to see just how unique that path was.

If we're ever going to have more people like me – people who do not come from economic privilege, people who run for office because they want to change the status quo, people who know what it's like to work multiple jobs – we must have publicly financed campaigns.

26. Do you support legislation that enables the City to recover subsidies from corporations or other businesses that fail to provide jobs or other benefits to city residents as a condition of the subsidies? Please explain.

If we want to balance the scales of justice between workers and employers in Philadelphia, it is essential that we hold corporations accountable for not delivering on their promises. For too long, Philadelphia has given tax cuts to corporations who promise that communities will benefit from their presence, only to see those community benefit agreements fall flat. Promises mean nothing without accountability, and I strongly support measures to penalize corporations who fail to live up to their words.

RESIDENCY ISSUE

27. What is your position on City and Court employees having the option to live outside the city? Please explain.

I believe that in order to lift our residents out of poverty we need to prioritize training, hiring, and compensating Philadelphians for good, union City jobs. The City's current staffing crisis has called into question the stringency of this requirement, and I am open to adjusting the requirements to meet the hiring needs of our departments, but ultimately I think it's important that some form of residency requirement remains in place.

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28. Are there any other issues you'd like to mention about which we have not asked you in this questionnaire?

Thank you for your time!

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