



**Metropolitan Washington
Council AFL-CIO
Committee on Political
Education (COPE)**

**2020 District of Columbia
Primary Election
Candidate Questionnaire**

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GENERAL INFORMATION:

Name: Yilin Zhang

Ward: Ward 2

Address: P.O. Box 53082

City / County: Washington, DC Zip: 20009-3082

Phone: 202-524-0536 Email: yilin@yilinform2.com

Candidate for: DC Council Ward 2

Campaign Committee Name and Address: Yilin Zhang for Ward 2, P.O. Box 53082, Washington, DC 20009-3082

Campaign Website: www.yilinform2.com

Campaign Manager: Nicole Davies

Campaign Treasurer: Jess Bailey

Does your campaign accept PAC contributions? Yes/**No**

Previously elected / appointed office: N/A

Office: N/A

Term: N/A

Have you ever received labor's endorsement? Yes/**No** If Yes, When?

SIGNATURE: Yilin Zhang

DATE: 3/3/2020

Please return your signed questionnaire by Tuesday, March 3, 2020 to:

David Stephen, MWC Political and Legislative Director, dstephen@dclabor.org

For questions, please email or call: 202-974-8222

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Overview:

As the voice of working people across the United States, the Washington Metropolitan Council (MWC), is the heart of the American labor movement.

By uniting labor unions from across the region and mobilizing the local community, the MWC plays a critical role in local, state, and national issues.

The Council's affiliated unions represent over 150,000 area union members across the labor spectrum, from service and hospitality industries, retail sales, and communications to transportation, manufacturing, construction and building trades, and, of course, the public sector at all levels, including DC government.

Our priorities include:

- Creating family-sustaining jobs for all
- Investing in education, infrastructure, healthcare, and transportation
- Improving the lives of workers through education, quality job training, career advancement and livable wages with good benefits
- Ensuring fair, progressive tax policies
- Making high quality, affordable healthcare available to everyone
- Holding corporations and government accountable to ensure that taxpayer dollars serve the public good; and
- Ensuring that workers universal right to organize and to bargain collectively for wages, hours, and conditions of work are maintained and enforced.

CORNERSTONE ISSUES OF LABOR

ALL WORKING PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- **A Good Job with Fair Wages**
- **Quality Health Care**
- **A Safe Job**
- **Paid Time Off and Flexible, Predictable Scheduling**
- **Freedom from Discrimination**
- **Retire with Dignity**
- **Fully-Funded Public Education**
- **Freedom to Join Together**
- **A Voice in Democracy**

Better Wages and Benefits

When people negotiate through collective bargaining, they gain better wages and benefits. Decent raises, predictable schedules, and family-friendly policies do not just happen without working people coming together and advocating for better workplaces.

Workplace Safety

The labor movement has led the charge to protect working people from workplace injury, illness, and death. Working with allies, labor has won strong protections against hazards and stronger rights for workers. Through organizing and collective bargaining, unions have gained robust protections and a real voice in safety and health at the workplace.

Pay equity

In 2016, women in unions made 23 percent higher wages than those not in a union. Moreover, unions have narrowed the gender wage gap to just 6 percent (compared to 16 percent for non-union). In addition, unions are also more likely to have various types of paid leave to balance work and family.¹

Building Power for Working People

Union members work together to negotiate and enforce a contract with management that guarantees things like decent raises, affordable health care, safer workplaces, job security, and a stable schedule.

¹ Economic Policy Institute “Unions help narrow the gender wage gap,” Gould, McNicholas April 3, 2017

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2020 Candidate Questionnaire

PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN WHY YOU SEEK LABOR’S ENDORSEMENT:

The Yilin Zhang for Ward 2 Campaign believes that everyone deserves the right to work with dignity, and in a safe and inclusive environment.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining is the process in which working people, through unions, negotiate contracts with their employers to determine the terms of employment, including pay, benefits, hours, leave, job health and safety policies, ways to balance work and family, and more. Collective bargaining is the heart and soul of the Labor Movement. Collective bargaining is a way to solve workplace problems, and is also the best means for raising wages in America. Indeed, through collective bargaining, working people in unions have higher wages, better benefits and safer workplaces.

Do you support for the District of Columbia (please respond Yes or No):

- Yes ___ The rights of public and private sector workers to organize and have union representation.
- Yes ___ The right to freely exercise workplace rights free from harassment, intimidation and/or delays.
- Yes ___ The right to bargain collectively with a legal obligation on both sides to negotiate in good faith.
- Yes ___ The right to resolve differences in a fair, impartial and timely manner, including a timely resolution to binding arbitration.

Additional Comments or clarification:

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RIGHT TO WORK

“Right to Work” laws prohibit workers from negotiating a “union shop” or “union security” clause in their contracts. Such a clause obligates those in the bargaining unit to pay their fair share of the collective bargaining representation costs. By wiping out that protection, “Right to Work” legislation, actually weakens the rights of working people and dismantles unions. Would you commit to:

Opposing legislation to bring “Right to Work” in DC?

Yes

No

Other (explain below)

Additional Comments or clarification:

“Right to Work” also states that employees would be able to join or refrain from joining unions (and, consequently, pay or not pay fees as a condition of employment). I need to discuss and learn more about both sides of the issue before a yes/no.

UNION DUES AND JANUS V. AFSCME DECISION

In 2018, the Supreme Court issued what is probably its single most consequential ruling in *Janus v. AFSCME*. The ruling was a devastating blow against public-sector unions barring them from applying “agency fees” to the public employees for whom they negotiate pay increases and benefits if those employees decline to join the union as full members. Would you commit to:

Working with labor to find a legal remedy to allowing unions to collect a service fee from nonmembers for the cost of union representation as long as there are protections for those who object on religious grounds.

Yes

No

Other (explain below)

Additional Comments or clarification:

Public employees have the right to decline union representation, and thus a right to decline paying agency fees. However, if they benefit from the negotiation, and accept the benefit, then they should be liable for helping to pay the fees.

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HEALTHCARE WORKERS & ACCESS

Universal Health Services Inc. (UHS) hospital (background):

Mayor Muriel Bowser's administration has been negotiating with UHS to be the operator of the new hospital in Ward 8. The deal with UHS is expected to be announced to the public early this year.

Community groups, labor groups, and residents of Wards 7 and 8 have serious concerns about UHS as a bad actor because the company puts profits over patients.

- George Washington University Hospital has just sued UHS because ["Instead of investing" in GWU's mission, "UHS has paid itself" with "outsized dividends from artificially inflated, excess profits."](#)²
- UHS was found to violate labor law by the National Labor Relations Board in 2019. The Court found they attempted to illegally bust the union at George Washington University Hospital.
- A \$127 million judgment was levied against UHS by the Department of Justice after being sued for defrauding Medicare and Medicaid services.
- UHS understaffs its facilities across multiple states, putting patients and workers at risk.
- UHS refuses to create an independent committee to protect rights and health of patients and workers. This secrecy threatens patients' health and workers' jobs.
- UHS does not have plans to build a level-1 trauma center nor a high-risk obstetrics unit or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), despite great need East of the River.
- UHS and Mayor Bowser's office will not give any guarantees that staff from UMC will have jobs at the new hospital. The deal has no plan for these devoted caregivers, some of whom have worked at the hospital and lived in the community for decades.

Community and labor groups have been left out of this process and the deal has been secretive and rushed, thus leading to a lack of critical services and labor protections. This lack of services and protections will affect the whole city. The labor community believes that DC residents deserve a world-class hospital East of the River. Will you support efforts to:

_____ Require the new hospital to hire the workers from UMC in their current position with their current benefits and union representation.

_____ Guarantee neutrality for workers at the new medical facility to organize.

Yes _____ Ensure high level quality of services needed for the Ward 7 and 8 communities including high-risk obstetrics and a minimum Level 2 trauma unit.

² GWU sues corporate hospital partner, leaving fate of Southeast project uncertain, Washington Post, Peter Jamison, Dec. 10, 2019

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Additional Comments or clarification:

With respect to the first line item, I believe we should do as much as possible to ensure as many individuals who worked with UMC is placed in a similar role at the new hospital. However, it cannot be guaranteed that everyone receives the same job, especially where there were performance issues – this is also most importantly for the safety of patients and ensuring the delivery of high quality, appropriate, and efficient care.

With respect to the second line item, please clarify what “guarantee neutrality” means.

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EDUCATION:

Affiliates of the MWC represent teachers, bus drivers and other school related personnel in DCPS. Despite an increase in Mayor Bowser’s education budget for FY2020, 20 public schools, including 17 schools in Wards 7 and 8, saw significant budget cuts for the current school year.

Overall funding for DCPS has not kept up with rising costs, leading to cuts in many schools. Additionally, the Labor Movement believes that regardless of where a student attends school, they are entitled to the same rights as a student, including transparency and adherence to local laws. To serve the best interest of education in the District, will you commit to:

 Yes _____ Proving school that receive a net flow of students throughout the school year additional resources.

 _____ Working with teachers through their union to implement methods to close the opportunity gap of schools in lower-income communities.

(Additional comment: I commit to working with teachers and teacher organizations, including through their unions, to close the opportunity gap of schools in lower-income communities.)

 Yes _____ Working with the community and labor union representatives to address gun violence and student safety including enforcing trauma informed practices and screening.

 Yes _____ Supporting the right of all public sector unions and DCPS to collectively bargain on teacher evaluation standards and procedures?

 Yes _____ Ensuring that all Local Education Agencies (LEA) are subject to FOIA, Open Meetings and transparency laws.

Would you support ending Mayoral control of schools and educational policies and placing them in the purview of an elected School Board?

Yes

No

Other (explain below)

Additional Comments or clarification:

I would need to discuss how an elected School Board would function and the parameters, before we end the status quo.

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ACCOUNTABILITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Entertainment

Accidents in the event/entertainment industry are far too common. Thankfully you would have to go back in time over 20 years to the last fatal accident in Washington DC when a lighting supervisor working for upstaging fell 90 feet from the catwalk of the DC Armory and died the night before a Marilyn Manson concert, but it has happened, and without regulation it could happen again. Look at what happened to the deputy Mayor this past March, a speaker falling on a person attending a rally should never happen. Unfortunately, accidents like that go un-reported far too often. This is a public safety issue that needs to be taken seriously.

Would you be willing to support DC legislation that would amend [Title 47, Chapter 18 of the District of Columbia Official Code](#) to ensure:

- 1) that a person or party responsible for the staging and operation of a special event in the District holds a basic business license and an Entertainment endorsement to such license and
- 2) to establish a safety qualification program for technicians employed in the staging of special events by requiring that at least one member of the staging crew hold a rigger's certification issued by the Entertainment Technician Certification Program, and that all persons employed in such operations complete a minimum safety training course (OSHA-10) prior to working on the event?

Yes

No

Additional Comments or clarification:

I agree with the need to tighten the legislation and fill gaps. However, I need to learn more about the issue to understand if the two items listed above are the most appropriate in the long-term, without unintended consequences.

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Wage Theft

While wage theft is pervasive and highly damaging, there is some good news: the problem is not unassailable. To be most effective, anti-wage theft laws must be meaningfully and effectively enforced, and must be accompanied by other legal provisions that empower victims to speak up against their abuse, such as strong anti-retaliation laws.

Will you work with community groups, city administration and other advocates to support proven programs that combat wage theft??

Yes

No

Will you commit to supporting an increase in funding in the departments and programs that work to ensure that workers are paid correctly, including the Department of Employee Services (DOES), as well as securing funding for community members who are third party enforcers, and a robust public awareness and accountability program?

Yes

No

Additional Comments or clarification:

I support ways to ensure that workers are paid correctly. However, I would like to better understand the status quo before increasing funding. Sometimes it is not (just) funding that should be increased to deliver an improved outcome.

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Transportation: (Please provide your response on a separate sheet).

Transit Worker Assaults

There are dozens of incidents where bus and train operators, as well as station managers, have been spat on, slapped, tased, stabbed, and even doused with urine. Transit worker assaults are not only a danger to the workers, but also to the riding public, who are also placed in harm's way when these incidents occur.

Following the urine-dousing incident on a Metro bus operator in 2018, unions began calling on the respective legislatures of District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia to increase the penalties for transit assaults. Will you work to ensure the District of Columbia raises the penalty of assaults on transit employees?

Yes

No

Privatization

Will you support efforts by transit workers in preventing privatization of future services at WMATA?

Yes

No

Likewise, will you support efforts by to prevent privatization of future services by the District government at the DC Streetcar and DC Circulator?

Yes

No

Uber and Lyft represent one of the largest threats to public transit in the country. Do you support laws, similar to AB5 in California or New York City's 2019 Rideshare Law, to clarify the rights of rideshare workers?

Yes

No

Additional Comments or clarification:

I believe that there should be fundamental protections for workers, such as a minimum wage.

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Freight Crew Size Legislation

The District of Columbia is a major gateway for north/south and east/west freight railroad traffic. By 2040, freight railroad traffic is projected to triple from 15 to 48 daily freight trains.

Today, the average freight train is 1.5 – 2 miles long and three (3) stories tall. The size, length, and commodities, including hazardous material transported by these freight trains, pose significant public safety risks for the communities adjacent to the rail corridors.

Currently, freight trains in the United States are operated with a minimum of two crew members: locomotive engineer and conductor. The coordinated efforts of the crew ensure the safe movement of the freight train. In the event of an accident or incident, the crew coordinates immediate assistance and provide critical information to fire and emergency responders.

The freight railroad industry based on new technology and operating paradigm are seeking to reduce the crew size to just the locomotive engineer.

A reduction of the crew to only a locomotive engineer would create a major public safety risk for the District of Columbia. Locomotive engineers and conductors each have different specific responsibilities they perform to ensure the safe movement of a freight train.

More importantly, the major functions for safely moving a freight train can't be performed by a single crew member.

Single-man railroad operations have been proven unsafe and directly contribute to several horrific accidents, including the 2013 disaster in Lac Megantic, Quebec - Canada.

Seven (7) states: California, Illinois, Colorado, Nevada, Wisconsin, Arizona, and West Virginia, have enacted legislation requiring a minimum two-persons crew on all freight railroad trains.

QUESTION:

To protect the communities adjacent to our rail corridors, would you support legislation requiring a minimum two-person crew on all freight rail trains operated in the District of Columbia?

Yes NO OTHER

Additional Comments or clarification:

The technology is heading toward virtual management. In the future, without legislative requirements, some railroads may have no one on the train. I believe that technology cannot completely replace people. We need legislation stating a minimum requirement. The exact number I'd like to discuss. This number needs to be inclusive of future needs; other roles

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may become necessary as a result of automation. In this case, we should provide the skills training for individuals already in roles to help them transition to another role, if appropriate and if they are interested.

Rail Safety Inspections and Oversight

In 2016, D.C. Law 21-254 authorized the creation of the Emergency Response and Rail Safety Division (ERRSD) within the Department of Energy and Environment. ERRSD is the State Rail Safety Office responsible for monitoring and overseeing all railroad activity in the District of Columbia. ERRSD is comprised of an Associate Director and Rail Safety Inspectors trained in specific railroad disciplines. Unfortunately, ERRSD has been underfunded each fiscal year since it's creation.

QUESTION 1.

Would you support full funding for ERRSD in the FY 2021 and future budgets?

Yes NO OTHER

QUESTION 2.

Would you support an amendment to D.C. Law 21-254: "Rail Safety and Security Amendment Act" authorizing the District of Columbia to assess penalties and fines for safety and security violations on the railroads operating in the District of Columbia.

Yes NO OTHER

Additional Comments or clarification:

With respect to Question 1, is the funding needed for staff, resources, other, or all? We first need to ensure that everyone is in the right role and responsible for the necessary tasks. We need to assess what amount is full funding, and develop a long-term plan for meeting this amount.

I certify that the responses in this questionnaire are mine and reflect my political positions for consideration by the MWC.

SIGNATURE: Yilin Zhang DATE: 3/3/2020

Candidate (Please Print Legibly): Yilin Zhang
Thank you.