



**Metropolitan  
Washington**

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

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

**Metropolitan Washington Council AFL-CIO • 2020 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

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**GENERAL INFORMATION:**

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Ward: 7

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Zip: 20020

Phone: (202) 503 -4224

Email: KelvinBrown4dc@gmail.com

Candidate for: DC Council - Ward 7

Campaign Committee Name and Address: 3645 Austin Street SE, Washington, DC 20020

Campaign Website: www.votekelvinbrown.com

Campaign Manager: Derrell Simpson

Campaign Treasurer: Ariel Henry

Does your campaign accept PAC contributions? No, I'm participating in the DC Fair Elections Program.

Previously elected / appointed office: **None**

Office: N/A

Term: N/A

Have you ever received labor's endorsement? No, never applied for endorsement. If Yes, When?

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ Electronic Signature Provided

DATE: March 3, 2020 \_\_\_\_\_

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

**David Stephen, MWC Political and Legislative Director, [dstephen@dclabor.org](mailto:dstephen@dclabor.org)**

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

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## Metropolitan Washington Council AFL-CIO • 2020 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

### 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 have a 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.<sup>1</sup>

## **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.

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

**2020 Candidate Questionnaire**

**PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN WHY YOU SEEK LABOR’S ENDORSEMENT:**

**I seek this endorsement to partner with labor in support of workers rights all across Ward 7 and the District of Columbia. Labor stands with workers and workers represents the best and brightest members of our communities - therefore, I seek to develop a strong unassailable relationship with labor.**

**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?

**X Yes**

**No**

**Other (explain below)**

Additional Comments or clarification:

I strongly oppose any legislation that directly or indirectly hurts workers rights, seeks to weaken our ability to organize, or suppress our right to fight for fair wages and good working conditions. Safeguarding workers rights sustains the labor movement. On the Council, I will stand-up against any attempt to bring Right-to-Work to the District of Columbia.



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**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.

**XYes**

**No**

**Other (explain below)**

Additional Comments or clarification:

1. I will lobby for a seat on the Labor and Workforce Development Committee to be a moderating voice that stands-up for worker’s rights during important conversations that affect labor, helping to organize various factions toward supporting a feasible legal remedy that offsets the impact of *Janus v. AFSCME*.
2. I support the idea of introducing legislation to provide all DC residents with an opportunity to make a voluntary donation to labor as part of their state income tax. While bold and innovative, it would provide key support for labor and open dialogue for a serious discussion around this issue.

## 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."](#)<sup>2</sup>
- 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:

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

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

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- YES 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.

### Additional Comments or clarification:

With gun violence and chronic health disparities dominating Ward 7 communities, this deal deserves close attention as we seek to provide residents with access to high quality medical care East of the River. Making sure there is a quality service provider in place is a critical component in our response to these issues. This project will have major implications for the entire region and we must get it right. I look forward to working with the labor community to take necessary legislative action to protect the jobs of UMC workers, their ability to organize and our collective determination to produce a world-class hospital.

### 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 Providing schools that receive a net flow of students throughout the school year additional resources.
- YES Working with teachers through their union to implement methods 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.

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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:

In order to meet students at their places of need there must be a true system of checks and balances, which is why I support ending mayoral control of schools. This is the only way we will be able to finally fully fund our schools, offer robust vocational education programming, revamp our school lottery system and end the star rating. While the Mayor should maintain the authority to appoint some members to the board, overall control should be restored to the District's oldest elected body - The DC Board of Education.

### **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

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in such operations complete a minimum safety training course (OSHA-10) prior to working on the event?

**X Yes**

**No**

Additional Comments or clarification:

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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:

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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:

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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 provides 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?

X Yes

NO

OTHER

Additional Comments or clarification:



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**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?

X 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.

X Yes                                       NO                                       OTHER

Additional Comments or clarification:

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

SIGNATURE: Electronic Signature Provided \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: March 3, 2020 \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate (Please Print Legibly):

Thank you.

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