



**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: 8

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Candidate for: Ward 8 City Council

Campaign Committee Name and Address: Elect Yaida Ford

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Washington, DC 20032

Campaign Website: [www.yaidaford.com](http://www.yaidaford.com)

Campaign Manager: Alfreda V. Davis

Campaign Treasurer: Wilson Reynolds

Does your campaign accept PAC contributions? Yes.

Previously elected / appointed office: N/A

Office: N/A

Term:

Have you ever received labor's endorsement? /No

SIGNATURE: *Yaida O. Ford* DATE: 3/3/20

**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 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:**

**We need a City that provides opportunities for all residents.** I represent federal and private employees in discrimination cases. These cases make up 80% of my trial caseload. I am very familiar with the issues facing employees in the workplace who simply have no voice because of poor management practices and unlawful discrimination and retaliation. But there is more. Historically in our city, labor has played a key role in advocating and creating pathways to the middle class for working men and women. Nowhere is the need for living wage jobs, job security, and job readiness, placement and advancement opportunities greater than in Ward 8.

Some of the young women whom I mentor come from strong union families. These young women benefitted from the advocacy of their parents and family members who were active in their local unions. That had a lasting impact on these young women, some of whom I employ today. I am seeking labor’s endorsement because as the Ward 8 Councilmember, I understand that there must be a partnership and collaboration with labor to advance priorities and projects that will be of the greatest benefit to our residents and ensure that our residents enjoy fair and equitable opportunities.

**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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**I often represent blue collar workers in private sector cases. They have the highest hurdles to climb at work and in litigation (e.g. mandatory arbitration clauses, inability to afford legal counsel, fear of retaliation if they speak out against unfair workplace practices). I have seen all of this first hand. That is why I believe in the power of collective action and respect for the dignity of work. Collective Bargaining is our conscience. It provides for essential worker and workplace protections that otherwise would likely be ignored.**



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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:

**I would vigorously oppose any attempts to introduce “Right to Work” legislation in DC. “Right to Work” laws are sold as “protections for individual American freedoms”. However, in reality “Right to Work” laws empower employers to undermine workers’ right to organize and to roll back the gains in wages, healthcare, workplace safety other benefits that unions fought to secure through fairly negotiated contracts. “Right to Work” weakens the rights of working people.**

### 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:

***Janus* overturned *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* which since 1977 had held that the use union fair-share fees for political causes like lobbying, was prohibited, but that unions could use those fees to cover the cost of collective bargaining, which produced economic gains for union members.**

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**I concur with the dissenting opinion in *Janus* written by Justice Elena Kagan. She argued that the *Abod* decision already ensured that the fees collected by unions only cover collective bargaining, and not political and ideological activities. Justice Kagan cited that it was intended to incapacitate unions and that the impact of the ruling weaponized the First Amendment in a way that would unleash judges, now and in the future, to intervene in economic and regulatory policy.**

**As a lawyer, I concur. I would work with labor to find a legal remedy to collect service fees from nonmembers.**

### 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

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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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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.
- 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:

The lack of a full-service hospital is disheartening for me as it is for all Black women in Ward 8, We are the largest demographic in the Ward yet we suffer from the most health disparities city-wide. From infant-mortality rates to incidents of cancer, we suffer more. As a result, I plan to advocate aggressively on this issue until the hospital is realized.

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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.

**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.

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 strongly consider legislation that provided for a change in the status quo. A duly elected school board with education policy making responsibility is an important first step. Our current landscape of poor graduation rates, low attendance rates, inequitable allocation of resources is unacceptable . We must find governance solutions that will be effective and close the every-widening achievement gap; that will equitably serve every child, and that will provide accountability and transparency in decision making. I will listen to all relevant**

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**stakeholders—teachers, principals, workers, parents, advocates and other experts in fashioning needed reforms.**

### **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:

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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 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:



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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?

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:

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

SIGNATURE: Gaida O. Ford                                      DATE: 3/3/20

Candidate (Please Print Legibly):

Thank you.