

Jordan Grossman is a fifth generation DC resident and former Obama Administration, Capitol Hill, DC federal district court, and DC Medicaid official.

Most recently, Jordan worked for a DC agency that's making it easier for residents to enroll in health care, nutrition, housing, and other programs. Previously, he was Deputy Legislative Director and lead health care staffer for US Senator Amy Klobuchar, where he worked to protect Obamacare and bring down prescription drug prices. During the Obama Administration, Jordan was Chief of Staff of an agency dedicated to modernizing the healthcare system for doctors, nurses, and their patients. He also helped identify billions of dollars in cost savings at the Department of Homeland Security and worked on policies that led to the Deferred Action for Childhood

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Arrivals (DACA) program. He also served as a law clerk to a judge on DC's federal trial court. In 2008, Jordan was a field organizer in Iowa for the Obama for America campaign before returning to Washington to work for the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team. Jordan graduated with honors from the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard Law School.

Jordan lives in Shaw with his wife, Julie, and their son. He and Julie, his brothers, his mom, and his grandma were all born in Ward 2. He has worked in Ward 2 and he and Julie met and got married in Ward 2. Jordan's great- great-grandparents and great-grandparents immigrated to DC. His great- grandma operated Sherman's Market on Benning Road. His grandpa graduated from Anacostia High School

and ran Standard Tire and Battery on H Street. His grandma graduated from Roosevelt High School and his mom attended Keene and LaSalle Elementary Schools.

Jordan has been endorsed by the organizations and leaders DC residents trust, including our city's labor and progressive leaders, because he's fighting for a more equitable, inclusive, and affordable Ward 2. At-Large DC Councilmember Elissa Silverman, the educators of the Washington Teachers Union, health care workers of 1199 SEIU, transit workers of ATU Local 689, hotel and hospitality workers of Unite Here Local 25, nonprofit workers of NPEU, and working families of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFO- CIO have endorsed his campaign, joining the DC Working Families Party, Jews United for Justice Campaign Fund, DC for Democracy, the DC Chapter of the National Organization for Women, Sunrise Movement DC, 350 DC, and Our Revolution DC, among others.

1. What office are you seeking, and why did you decide to run for that office? If (re) elected, what are your priority areas of focus?

My name is Jordan Grossman. I'm a Democratic candidate to represent Ward 2 on the DC Council in the June 2 Primary Election and the June 16 Special Election.

I'm a fifth generation DC resident, and I've spent my entire career in public service, working for President Obama, DC's Medicaid agency, Senator Amy Klobuchar, and a DC federal judge. I know that working in government is a privilege, not a business opportunity. Yet for far too long, Ward 2 residents have had to compete for the attention of our councilmember with paying clients who could afford his price. Enough is enough. We need a clean break from Jack Evans and his political machine.

It's time for a clean break not only because of Evans' shameless corruption – although that certainly is reason enough. It's time for a change because we need a councilmember who is truly focused on the issues that matter, not simply his personal financial interests. As Ward 2's councilmember, I'll fight to end corruption, get DC statehood across the finish line, provide equitable funding for our schools, and make it easier for residents to afford a home, find high-quality child care, walk, bike, or take public transit, and pay off student loan debt.

***Budg
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2. Do you consider the District's total current budget to be too large, too small, or about right? Please explain.

I believe we have much more work to do to have a truly

equitable and inclusive DC budget.

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In fact, as the Mayor and DC Council propose and review the budget in the coming weeks, I recently joined with DC Council At-Large candidate Ed Lazere, Ward 4 candidate Janeese Lewis George, and Ward 7 candidate Anthony Lorenzo Green to call for prioritizing the basic needs of DC residents and small businesses and protecting our most vulnerable.

I believe our leaders have a choice: they can choose to impose an austerity budget that would hurt those already suffering the most under the pandemic, or they can invest in working families and build a more equitable economy in the long run. They can choose to reject the fiction that DC can't afford programs and services, that we cannot help our neighbors in need, or that the road to recovery runs through trickle down tax breaks for those with the most well-connected lobbyists. None of that is true.

In fact, by ending ineffective corporate tax giveaways, utilizing a portion of the FY19 surplus and our rainy day reserves, and conducting vigorous oversight to pare back wasteful spending, we can close our budget shortfalls without making deep cuts to essential services and programs. I believe that what we truly can't afford at this critical moment is to forgo investments in jobs, affordable housing, schools, child care and more. As Ward 2's councilmember, those are the choices I would make when it comes to the District's budget.

3. With unemployment, homelessness, and general economic distress at high levels, do you envision increasing safety net spending in future budgets? If so, which areas would you seek to expand?

Yes. In the near term, we need to take further action to support residents experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity; frontline health care personnel; restaurant, retail, and other workers who have lost their jobs; grocery and delivery workers who have always been the backbones of our communities and have become essential personnel in this crisis; educators who are quickly becoming experts in distance learning and trying to address

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inequitable access to online tools among students; families and small businesses who will struggle to make upcoming rent and mortgage payments; and all DC residents who — as this crisis shows more than ever — deserve affordable health and child care, paid family, medical, and sick leave, and real enforcement of wage and workplace protections.

4. With the COVID-19 outbreak causing an economic downturn and stress on state and local budgets, would you support raising taxes to maintain current spending levels? If so, how should new revenue sources be targeted?

In light of COVID-19, I believe we ought to conduct a comprehensive review of all DC taxes and the urgent needs we must address to

ensure our neighbors and local businesses can survive this crisis, particularly those who have been hit the hardest or have been excluded from the response programs that have already been enacted. It is also more important than ever to implement a fairer tax structure by repealing or clawing back the corporate tax breaks that have long been championed by Jack Evans – and that cost the District tens of millions of dollars a year. We also must fight to restore full funding for DC in the federal coronavirus legislation and explore access to alternative funds available to state and local governments, such as the Federal Reserve’s emergency coronavirus initiatives.

Transportation, Housing and Infrastructure

5. More than a third of DC residents do not own cars and automobile traffic significantly contributes to climate change. If elected, how will you work to improve public transportation in the District?

I believe we must prioritize equity considerations in the design and implementation of all our transportation initiatives. Many of our neighbors live in areas that have historically been poorly served by alternatives to cars or have been displaced from more transit-friendly DC neighborhoods that they or their families have lived in for decades. These residents may be forced

to rely on cars – a means of transportation that they may not have chosen and may not be able to afford – due to the absence of frequent, reliable, sustainable, and attractive alternatives. To rectify

this, I would press the Council to use the type of racial equity tool called for in the Racial Equity Achieves Results (REAR) Amendment Act in order to ensure lower-income residents, as well as communities of color, are not unfairly or disproportionately affected by new or existing transportation programs and policies. Similarly, we must ensure that transportation equity is central to Vision Zero efforts by actively resisting transportation proposals that disproportionately burden DC's most marginalized communities, such as reductions in bus and rail service east of the River or late at night when many low-income workers need reliable transit the most.

More specifically, one of my top priorities as Ward 2's councilmember will be dramatically improving bus service to provide a frequent, reliable, and affordable alternative to car use in all parts of DC in order to build a more sustainable future. Consistent with the Washington Area Bus Transformation Project's recommendations, I believe we need to establish many more dedicated bus lanes on major arteries throughout the area, complete these projects much more quickly, give buses priority on roadways, run buses more often on as many routes as possible, set clear and specific targets for frequency, reliability, safety, and affordability, and empower local and regional officials to achieve a truly integrated regional transportation system.

In addition to improving bus service, I believe the Council should make comprehensive transportation projects and initiatives a top priority. This means pressing for processes and resources that will provide for better rail service and address Metro choke points like the Rosslyn tunnel; establishing a truly comprehensive network of protected bike/scooter lanes; and executing street and infrastructure design that elevates the safety and comfort of pedestrians, transit riders, and cyclists. Doing so will make affordable transportation alternatives a much more realistic alternative for many in the District

while also reducing the use of single-occupancy vehicles and improving air quality.

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If elected, I will also push for the Council to leverage its authority in the appointment and budget processes to achieve meaningful Metro reforms. In addition to the changes outlined above, I would fight for restoration and expansion of late night Metro hours, new initiatives to make transit more affordable and accessible, especially for marginalized communities, and reforms to achieve a truly integrated regional transportation system featuring routes and procedures that are easily understood by all residents.

6. Other global cities are working to increase nearby access to amenities for all residents. For example, Paris recently announced a plan to become a “15-minute city” with grocery stores and other destinations located within a short walk of every home. What will you do to eliminate food deserts and improve local options throughout the District?

I believe having access to fresh food and grocery stores by walking, biking, and public transit should be a realistic and reliable option for all DC residents — from Wards 2 and 3 to Wards 7 and 8. As noted above, to achieve this vision, I believe we must prioritize equity considerations in the design and implementation of all our transportation initiatives. Many of our neighbors live in areas that have historically been poorly served by alternatives to cars or have been displaced from more transit-friendly and amenity-rich DC neighborhoods that they or their families have lived in for decades. To address these challenges, I would press the Council to pass the Racial

Equity Achieves Results (REAR) Amendment Act, which would require the District to examine racial equity considerations in budgeting decisions and performance metrics, and I would collaborate closely with DC’s Food Policy Council, which works to promote a more equitable, healthy, and sustainable food system in the District.

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7. As of 2019, there were 6,500 people in the District experiencing homelessness and the economic impact of COVID-19 will place a strain on thousands more. How do you plan on decreasing homelessness in a sustainable way?

Our current public health crisis makes clearer than ever how vital it is for every single resident has a safe place to live. We must do more for residents experiencing homelessness – including treating them as our neighbors, not as a nuisance. I support a “housing first” approach with wraparound services and strengthening and expanding outreach teams and day services centers. Moreover, as the Way Home Campaign has pointed out, it “costs less money for the District to end chronic homelessness than it does to manage it.” Along these lines, I support the Fair Budget Coalition’s recommendations to increase funding for Project Reconnect and the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, programs that help residents near or newly experiencing homelessness with family reunification or financial assistance for rent

or security deposit costs.

Similarly, because the best solution to homelessness is affordable housing, the Council should aggressively use its oversight powers to prevent residents from experiencing homelessness in the first place. The District has some of the strongest housing protections in the country on the books, but they are not a reality for many tenants in their day-to-day lives. For example, despite the fact that DC law prohibits discrimination against tenants who rely on housing vouchers, enforcement has been so sporadic that some landlords literally advertise in writing that they do just that. The recent tragic deaths of two DC residents, including a child, in a fire also make the urgency of stronger oversight and accountability regarding tenant protections heartbreakingly clear. According to a Washington Post investigation “of the city’s handling of the code violations at the property . . . virtually every relevant regulatory mechanism of the city government appears to have failed” these two victims, who lived in “life-threatening housing conditions.”

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To address these issues more effectively, the Council should dramatically boost its oversight of local housing laws. Specifically, the Council should invest in additional housing inspectors and demand stronger oversight (and conduct stronger oversight itself) to ensure that landlords are maintaining safe and livable units and do not exploit or unjustly evict tenants. These efforts could be implemented fairly quickly at relatively low cost, would help identify areas where misspent tax dollars could be recovered and/or redirected, and – most

importantly – would put the day-to-day experiences and welfare of the DC residents most vulnerable to housing insecurity front and center.

8. If (re) elected, what will you do to create and protect affordable housing for both home-buyers and renters?

The District faces a housing affordability crisis. As Ed Lazere said when he led the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, housing represents just “3 percent of the city’s budget” but “it’s way more than 3 percent of the city’s problems.” While no one silver bullet will allow us to achieve all of our affordable housing goals, there are a number of ways we can make major progress—especially as we confront the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 crisis.

First, we need significant new investments in housing that low- and middle- income residents can afford. As the State of the Capital Region 2019 report noted, “the region added almost twice as many people as housing units” from 2010 to 2017, “housing values have risen faster than income” across our area, and “rising housing costs have regressive economic impacts.” To do so, the Council should press for substantially increased investments in the Local Rent Supplement Program and the Housing Production Trust Fund and enact more effective requirements for ensuring that units produced with Trust Fund dollars are affordable for low-income residents and families. Ideally, the gap financing provided by the Trust Fund will help bring the cost of a home within reach for many in Ward 2’s workforce who cannot currently afford one. This is also a prime example of an area that deserves more robust Council oversight. The DC Auditor recently found that the Department of Housing and Community Development’s failure to follow its procedures

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resulted in “a net loss of 353 affordable units, including a reduction by 95 units of those targeting the District’s most vulnerable households earning up to 30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).”

I also strongly support tenant protections to preserve DC’s existing deeply affordable housing stock. As noted above, the Council must do better to ensure that the strong tenant protection laws we have on the books are actually making a difference in tenants in their day-to-day lives. Specifically, the Council should invest in additional housing inspectors and demand stronger oversight (and conduct stronger oversight itself) to ensure tenants have safe and livable units and are not unjustly evicted. These efforts could be implemented fairly quickly at relatively low cost, would help identify areas where misspent tax dollars could be recovered and/or redirected, and – most importantly – would put the day-to-day experiences and welfare of Ward 2 residents front and center.

Moreover, I was proud to stand with the Reclaim Rent Control coalition at the rally on February 29th where Councilmember Brianne Nadeau committed to introduce the platform as a bill in the DC Council. We must enact reforms championed by Reclaim Rent Control to close loopholes that exist in the current rent control law – such as eliminating vacancy increases that provide an incentive for landlords to push tenants out of their units rather than incentivizing them to retain long-time tenants. Additionally, I believe we should implement stronger oversight of all petitions for exemptions from rent control, including through better and more frequent audits and requiring proof of general compliance with the housing code as a prerequisite; tie building eligibility for rent control to a dynamic date rather than it

staying the same for decades on end; and restrict landlords in market-rate housing to one rent increase a year to strengthen baseline protections for tenants who do not currently benefit from rent control. More broadly, preserving or rehabilitating existing housing is one of the quickest and least expensive ways we can address our housing affordability crisis. This is an especially important priority for long-time residents who are at risk of displacement from their homes and communities as housing and other costs continue to increase. I strongly support other tenant protections in addition to rent control to preserve DC's deeply affordable housing stock, including

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strengthening the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) and implementing the District Opportunity to Purchase Act (DOPA) where tenants are unable to exercise their TOPA rights.

Additionally, I believe we should explore a homebuying assistance program for lower and middle-income residents in which the District retains an ownership interest in the property – somewhat like an individualized community land trust. By doing so, we can make homeownership more accessible to Ward 2 residents who may not have sufficient resources for a down payment but who ought to be able to build wealth by buying a home, while at the same time giving the District government an important tool for maintaining and growing the supply of affordable housing over time. Enabling DC residents – especially long-time residents at risk for displacement – to buy homes and build wealth is particularly important in light of the racial wealth gap.

I also strongly support the Racial Equity Achieves Results (REAR) Act, which would require the District to examine racial equity considerations in budgeting decisions and performance metrics. The racial equity assessments required by the REAR Act could help us address racial disparities in housing locally by ensuring that we:

- Produce new housing in a way that prevents displacement of long-time residents, especially at a time when our city is experiencing “the greatest ‘intensity of gentrification’ of any in the country;”**
- Address structural racial inequities that result from housing policies that appear neutral on their face but actually disparately disadvantage people of color – especially at a time when the Supreme Court and the Trump Administration are seeking to undermine or destroy such race- conscious policy approaches at the federal level;**
- Press the Department of Housing and Community Development to prioritize compliance with the Fair Housing Act and the principles of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule—an Obama-era effort to address residential segregation that the Trump Administration has repeatedly attempted to undermine; and**

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- Provide support for achieving specific and enforceable targets for each ward for affordable housing efforts to address the**

inequitable distribution of housing across the District.

Moreover, I believe that remedying the deplorable state of our public housing that is literally making children, the elderly, and other residents sick should be our most urgent environmental justice priority in DC. For too long, our neighbors who live in public housing – and those living in other unsafe housing – have been ignored as they have endured malicious neglect and substandard living conditions like mold, pests, or lead. Rehabilitating this existing housing is one of the quickest and least expensive ways we can protect longtime residents who suffer from these unacceptable conditions, especially as they are at risk of displacement from their homes and communities as housing and other costs continue to increase. As Empower DC, Bread for the City, DC Fiscal Policy Institute, Legal Aid Society for the District of Columbia, Legal Counsel for the Elderly, Neighborhood Legal Services Program, and Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs noted in their comments on the DC Housing Authority’s (DCHA) 20-Year Transformation Plan, public housing residents (as well as other District residents struggling with unsafe housing), deserve “safe, healthy and dignified” housing that they can afford.

Where residents cannot feasibly remain in public housing in light of conditions that are beyond repair due to the federal government’s systematic disinvestment and severe lack of maintenance over time, alternative plans must directly address “the barriers and discrimination that DCHA voucher holders face when trying to rent in the District, as well as the barriers former public housing residents face when trying to return to the mixed-finance properties currently in DCHA’s portfolio,” as noted by the advocates referenced above. This includes prioritizing a “build first” approach to minimize or avoid temporary displacement and emphasizing project-based vouchers or rental assistance that guarantees long-term affordability

and stability. Moreover, such alternative plans must also recognize and accommodate not only “the years of harm endured by public housing residents who have been living in slum conditions,” but also the important

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support systems and communities that many public housing residents have developed over the years.

Finally, as discussed more fully above, we must do more for the many Ward 2 residents experiencing homelessness.

9. Revitalization in DC has created an increase in commercial and residential development. Though this revitalization is beneficial to the District, certain areas are not experiencing it at the same rate as other neighborhoods. What are your plans to ensure that all of DC benefits from periods of economic growth?

I believe one key tool the Council should use to ensure development is better meeting the immediate needs of communities is the Comprehensive Plan, the “framework that guides future growth and development” in DC. I strongly support the amendment proposed by Councilmember Brianne Nadeau to make affordable housing, prevention of displacement, and the right of existing residents to return to new on-site units the explicit top priority in the Plan. Current regulations do not set priorities with respect to the list of potential public benefits for development projects, which range from affordable

housing to “superior landscaping,” and do not include prevention of displacement whatsoever. As Ward 2’s councilmember, I would fight for this amendment to send an explicit and enforceable message to developers, courts, and agencies like the Zoning Commission that affordable housing and preventing displacement should be the most important objective in guiding development decisions and priorities in DC in the years to come.

10. Which recently revitalized DC neighborhood would you suggest as the best model for the city as a whole, and why?

As noted above, the District is experiencing a housing crisis in which “the region added almost twice as many people as housing units” from 2010 to 2017, and DC experienced “the greatest ‘intensity of gentrification’ of any in the country.” In that context, no neighborhood can truly be a model for the city as whole. Instead, I believe we ought to pursue the strategies outlined in

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the previous answers in order to achieve more equitable development in neighborhoods throughout the District.

***Educatio
n***

11. Do you think reform in the DC public schools is headed in the right direction? Explain your answer.

I believe in a DC public education system where every student has equal access to a high-quality and well-resourced school in their neighborhood. Achieving this vision requires a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability, including changes to the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERRA) of 2007 and other local education laws. For example, I believe the use of public dollars should be accompanied by public accountability. This includes applying the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) equally to charter schools, which educate nearly half of DC students.

Additionally, I strongly believe that DC should establish a unified, city-wide education plan that requires cooperation and planning across sectors and brings all District education bodies together to forge agreement on the shared, high-level objectives and outcomes that the Mayor, Council, teachers, parents, and students should focus on and evaluate over the long term. With each sector educating nearly half of DC students, doing so is essential for creating a cohesive public education system in the District. This process should involve enforceable cooperation on at least an annual basis with regard to the opening and siting of new schools. This will ensure that existing schools, some of which have received significant recent investments in the form of modernization, are not undercut by new schools opening nearby—particularly since proximity is such a significant driver of attendance and our current funding formulas can unfairly punish schools that experience decreased enrollment.

More broadly, I believe the most important issue affecting public education in DC today is inequity – financial and otherwise. As the DC Fiscal Policy

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Institute and others have made clear, funding for DC Public Schools is inadequate and inequitable. In violation of DC law, several schools have faced budget cuts of 5 percent or more, and schools in low-income, primarily black neighborhoods have been disproportionately affected. Moreover, these schools are far less likely to benefit from sources of funding that other schools receive. At the same time, the DC Auditor and others have found that funds intended for at-risk students are being inappropriately redirected to plug unrelated budget shortfalls. Moreover, many students suffer from an inadequate and inequitable transportation system. If elected, I will fight for equity for our schools – including through rigorous oversight and equitable reforms to funding formulas.

12. How do you suggest that we repurpose school properties that have been closed over the past few years?

I believe that public school buildings should first and foremost be used for public schools. Over the past several years, a number of public schools that were saved from closure – such as Garrison Elementary School here in Ward 2 – are now thriving and experiencing increasing enrollment. Additionally, our local community has also been fighting for the District to build Shaw Middle School as promised, but securing a nearby site has been a significant challenge. We must ensure that needs like these are addressed before public school buildings are put to other uses.

13. How will you ensure equitable Special Education allocations across

the city?

Specialty funds for special needs, ELL, and at-risk students are designed to support those who need the most help and should be used for the purposes for which they are intended. Yet, these funds are being inappropriately redirected to plug unrelated budget shortfalls. I support strengthened oversight by the Council, such as enhanced partnerships with the DC Auditor to track how funding is used in closer to real-time, so the Council can take action more

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quickly when funds are not being used as intended. Moreover, the Council must enact budgets that ensure schools are not forced into the position of using specialty funds for basic needs. I also agree with the DC Fiscal Policy Institute that “DCPS should reform their school allocation method to ensure schools with higher percentages of at-risk students are not losing base funding they are entitled to under the [Comprehensive Staffing Model].” The same should apply for schools with higher percentages of special needs or ELL students.

14. What accountability measures can you put into place to ensure that schools are staffed appropriately? What significant, unique policies would you put into place that would drastically increase the support and retention of teachers and administrators in DCPS?

I am very proud to have the endorsement of the Washington Teachers Union (WTU). As Ward 2’s councilmember, I will champion DC Public Schools’ extraordinary teachers, one of our most important resources.

DCPS teachers are regularly required to go above and beyond their core duties to address challenges that extend far beyond the classroom – including gun violence and trauma, an inadequate and inequitable transportation system, and stark income inequality. We must provide our teachers with adequate resources and do more to retain them.

Specifically, I will listen closely to and work collaboratively with our experienced teachers to ensure they can advance their practice. We must provide DCPS teachers with adequate resources and meaningful professional development opportunities. The Council should support professional development courses that are “research-based, peer-to-peer taught and solution-driven” as well as teacher leader programs that provide opportunities to “connect policy alternatives to practice and engage in advocacy for measures needed to assure that each and every student receives a world-class education.” If elected, I hope to build on these kinds of programs and approaches, which are already being employed by WTU.

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Moreover, teacher turnover is a significant problem. Average annual attrition for DC teachers has consistently been approximately 25 percent, notably higher than other similar jurisdictions. The State Board of Education has also found that turnover rates rise with the proportion of students considered at- risk and 2,000 teachers rated Effective or Highly Effective have left DCPS in just six years. To address this problem, first and foremost, I will listen to teachers themselves to better understand root causes. I also support

enhancing opportunities for teachers to make their voices heard in DCPS policies, providing more support to special education students and teachers, reducing unnecessary or overly burdensome requirements, and funding for social-emotional programming and trauma informed practices and screening. We also must support teachers outside the classroom through investments in affordable housing, quality health care, and violence prevention.

Criminal Justice

15. Describe one aspect of an effective safety plan that would lower crime rates in DC without infringing on the constitutional rights of DC residents.

As Ward 2's councilmember, I would support policies to prevent violence and incarceration in the first place. I believe we should expand the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and the Attorney General's Cure the Streets program, which use "proven, public-health strategies that treat violence like a disease that can be interrupted, treated, and stopped from spreading." This includes recruiting "violence interrupters" who have deep roots in their neighborhoods to intervene before disputes escalate into violence – and before law enforcement needs to get involved.

I also strongly support the full and transparent implementation of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results (NEAR) Act. As a member of the Council, I will push for regular, transparent, and proactive NEAR Act oversight. The Council's efforts here should involve a continuous process of

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examination, progress reporting, and improvement rather than seeking simple yes-or-no answers about the implementation of individual provisions. This kind of approach is particularly important for achieving the law's overarching objectives of meaningfully shifting our criminal justice system to focus on violence prevention and addressing troubling racial disparities in policing. Such disparities have been confirmed as a result of the District finally beginning to comply with the NEAR Act's data requirements. We should use this data to help guide reform efforts to prevent many of the unjust arrests and convictions that lead to incarceration. The NEAR Act also includes important provisions to divert those with mental health needs who encounter law enforcement to treatment rather than incarceration.

I also support the Second Chance Amendment Act, which would allow those convicted of a crime committed at a young age to have a judge review their sentence after they have already served 15 years. More and more research has shown and the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized that many young people do not fully develop their judgment and decision-making capacities until their 20s. As Attorney General Racine and Councilmember Charles Allen have said, "it's vital to our health and public safety that we foster and reward those who rehabilitate from a serious offense" by "following the science, research and data" embodied by this legislation.

Additionally, one of the many reasons I strongly support DC statehood is that the District deserves the right to guide our own criminal justice system in a more progressive direction. In the interim, I support efforts like those of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes

Norton to regain control of elements of the local criminal justice system incrementally, such as the organization of the District's court system and the selection of judges. The District should also pursue federal legislation to shift our parole system back to local control from the U.S. Parole Commission. According to the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, the U.S. Parole Commission "helps drive mass incarceration in DC" by "not releasing people on parole who arguably should be released from prison" and "revoking parole or

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supervised release (and re-incarcerating returning citizens) for minor technical violations." What's more, the sentences for these minor technical violations "are much harsher than the sentences issued by the former D.C. Board of Parole." Additionally, keeping DC inmates in federal custody often means they are hundreds of miles from home, straining family and community ties that are essential to avoiding recidivism. Further, federal authorities often fail to coordinate with the DC government when releasing those in its custody. None of this federal involvement in our local affairs actually helps reduce violence in DC.

16. How would improve reentry programs for returning citizens to ensure they are connected to gainful employment, education, and their families?

We must improve the systems and processes for connecting returning citizens to the DC services for which they qualify, from enrolling in housing assistance and Medicaid to receiving job training

and other supports. As I saw when I worked for a DC agency that is making it easier for all residents to enroll in these kind of benefits, returning citizens can face particularly difficult challenges navigating the bureaucracy. As a member of the DC Council, I would focus on ensuring that efforts like the recently established READY Center, which is intended to serve as a “one-stop shop” for these services and supports, are making a meaningful difference for returning citizens. Ultimately, reconnecting returning citizens with family and friends, seamlessly enrolling them in the services they need to get back on their feet, and facilitating smooth re-entry into the community and the workforce is the best way to reduce recidivism.

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***Wages and
Labor***

17. What initiatives would you propose to ensure that minority- and woman-owned business enterprises are able to compete for projects, particularly District construction and development?

I believe we should make navigating DC’s contracting and

procurement system easier to navigate for small, minority- and women-owned businesses to help them become more competitive. Particularly in my service on ANC 2F's Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration Policy Committee, I frequently hear from local businesses that navigating DC Government is confusing and difficult – especially for those who can't afford to hire an expensive lobbyist. To address these challenges, I would propose a new program that provides "DC Government Ambassadors" to each qualifying business. These officials – essentially publicly funded advocates that provide individualized service for small local businesses – could help facilitate and expedite the process of submitting proposals or trouble-shooting challenges that arise, particularly when issues involve multiple agencies or regulatory systems. Our government should work for everyone – not just the biggest or best-connected businesses.

Government Accountability

18. Do you believe that the current DC Council represents the interests of the broad public? If not, what segments of the public are underrepresented?

I do not. I believe corporate special interests, well-connected lobbyists, and those that can cut the biggest checks to corrupt politicians like Jack Evans have disproportionate influence.

Right now, many segments of the public are underrepresented, including those who – due to financial, family, or other obligations – can't come to the Wilson Building on a regular basis or buy their way into expensive political

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fundraisers. If elected, I will ensure that key communities and stakeholders throughout the District – including those who are underrepresented – are involved in policymaking. That means being intentional about including those most affected by our city’s stark health, economic, and racial disparities that have existed since long before COVID-19 shined an even brighter light on them. That means ensuring unions and working families have a prominent voice in decisions about establishing a fair minimum wage, tax policy, and paid family leave. That means restoring voting rights to residents who have been involved in the criminal justice system and lowering the voting age to 16. That means signing the No Pepco Pledge – refusing contributions from fossil fuel corporations or their lobbyists and being open and transparent about meetings with them. And that means robust implementation of campaign finance reforms like Fair Elections and the District’s new clean elections law to ban pay-to-play campaign contributions from those seeking large government contracts.

19. How will you demonstrate accessibility and responsiveness to your constituents?

I believe everyone should have a seat at the table and decisions should be made in transparent processes with clear rules, not in secretive backroom meetings with just a few wealthy corporations and well-connected insiders.

To make that vision a reality, I would establish office policies to ensure that we hear from every constituent who wishes to share their

thoughts and concerns; convene regular working sessions for all Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners in Ward 2 to collaborate on issues and hear feedback; and conduct active and persistent outreach to involve Ward 2 residents who work nontraditional hours or to populations whose voices often go unheard – like those experiencing homelessness. Campaign tactics to meet residents where they are should not stop on Election Day. As a councilmember, I will continue to have meet and greets (virtually if necessary) and—once the stay-at-home orders are lifted—knock on residents’ doors, and ask for constituent feedback

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at Metro stations, farmers markets, and other community events. I will also host “office hours” in every neighborhood in the ward. I believe that it’s on us as public servants to find a way to reach as many residents as possible, including those who feel disconnected from the political process or who – due to financial, family, or other obligations – can’t come to the Wilson Building on a regular basis.

At the end of the day, I believe that being an effective councilmember means fighting for inclusion so that we have a government where decisions are based on the policy merits and the lived experiences of all our constituents, not the narrow preferences of those who can cut the biggest checks.

20. This is the first campaign cycle conducted with the Fair Elections Program, which provides public financing for candidates who adhere to small-dollar contribution limits. Do you believe that a candidate who is not

participating in this program can adequately represent the views of all residents of the District?

I'm participating in the Fair Elections program to shift power from the wealthy corporations and well-connected insiders that traditionally supported Jack Evans to individual, grassroots members of our community. Ward 2 needs a councilmember who doesn't work as a lobbyist and sell his services to influence our government at the same time that he is serving as our elected representative. Evans literally promised in writing to leverage his "network of business relationships developed as an elected official" for paying clients. The independent report commissioned by the DC Council confirmed that he did exactly that, including taking hundreds of thousands of dollars from undisclosed private clients who had business before the city. It's long past time for a change. We need elected officials who make decisions based on the merits, not based on money from corporations or their lobbyists.

Fair Elections is a major step toward that type of representation, but it is not enough. We must also ban councilmembers from outside employment, fully fund and implement the District's new clean elections law to ban pay-to-play

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campaign contributions, refuse contributions from and disclose meetings with fossil fuel corporations or their lobbyists as part of the No Pepco Pledge, and prohibit councilmembers from ever lobbying the DC Council on behalf of for-profit entities, even after they leave office. In short, we need to stop the revolving door culture at the

Wilson Building, where special interests and backroom deals too often trump the needs of families and small businesses. These kinds of reforms will not only help restore public trust, they will also begin to address structural issues that disproportionately disadvantage low- income residents and communities of color.

21. Other suggested campaign reforms include ranked-choice voting and lowering the voting age to 16. What changes would you support to ensure that our elections truly represent the will of the people?

I support ranked-choice voting, lowering the voting age to 16, prohibiting councilmembers from ever becoming lobbyists for for-profit entities—even after they leave office, and fully funding and implementing the District’s new clean elections law to ban pay-to-play campaign contributions from those seeking large government contracts.

*Ward-Specific
Questions*

22. (Ward 2 Candidates Only) Will you commit to supporting the winner of the Democratic primary in the June 16 special election and/or the general election in November? Why or why not?

I am a proud Democrat and will support the Democratic nominee in November.

23. (Ward 4 Candidates Only) Councilmembers often have to strike a balance between supporting the mayor’s priorities and providing independent

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representation for their constituents. How does your vision for Ward 4 differ from Mayor Bowser?

24. (Ward 7 Candidates Only) Do you support extending the streetcar on H Street east to Benning Road Metro? How would you work to ensure that projects like this provide connections with the rest of the city while limiting displacement among current Ward 7 residents?

25. (Ward 8 Candidates Only) Given Ward 8 still exists within a food desert, with a lack of healthcare facilities, what are your plans to bring sustainable services and retail partners to the community moving forward?

