

Capital Region Stands Up State House and Senate Candidate Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions by midnight on Monday, March 16th. Capital Region Stands Up will post the answers from all candidates on our website and share with our members and mailing list through email and Facebook.

Email address *

lindsay@drewforstaterep.com

1. As a member of the PA General Assembly, what would you do to lower drug prices for Pennsylvanians?

As an individual, I have already been involved in advocacy for a package of bills (HB941-945) that promote transparency in drug pricing by PBM's, removal of gag clause, etc and would continue that fight as a member of General Assembly. We need complete reform around PBM's to ensure they are being held accountable with use of taxpayer Medicaid dollars.

2. Do you support work requirements for Medicaid recipients? Why or why not?

I do not support work requirements for Medicaid recipients. They are an unnecessary and detrimental barrier to accessibility of healthcare. Research shows that most people with Medicaid who can work do so, and for people who face major obstacles to employment, harsh requirements such as limiting their eligibility will not help overcome them. Furthermore, work requirements increase administrative costs and limiting eligibility to recipients based on employment as well as cause individuals to lose access to necessary or lifesaving medical care as a result of red tape.

3. As a member of the PA General Assembly, how would you balance the critical importance of meeting PA's goal for carbon reduction (26% by 2025 and 80% by 2050 as measured against 2005 levels) with the creation of good paying jobs that are claimed by the energy sector?

Pennsylvanians do not need to choose between a healthy economy and a safe, low-carbon future. We can balance by setting limits and pricing on carbon emissions, and then invest those funds in energy efficiency and renewable energy which would spur job creation. Ultimately, the General Assembly and the Executive Branch need to work together as the common goals of protecting the environment and creating jobs should be a shared one.

4. The first bill amending the State's Human Relations Act barring discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on gender identity and sexual orientation was introduced in 1976. PA still does not have a law on the books that accomplishes this. What action would you support to ensure protection of our LGBTQ community?

We absolutely need to pass an anti-discrimination law that includes and protects the LGBTQ community. Once elected, I would be involved in supporting any legislation that advances this.

5. When you become a state legislator, what specific steps would you take to attempt to improve the ethical rules in the PA General Assembly?

We need campaign finance reform to remove the influence of money in elections and policy making.

6. In recent years, the General Assembly has attempted to constrict women's reproductive rights. What is your position on this important issue?

I am an unapologetically firm believer that the government and law should never interfere with a woman's right to choose or access to reproductive healthcare.

7. What are your plans for improving basic education in this state? Should the rules for funding charter schools be changed?

We need comprehensive reform to the funding formula for education where local municipalities are not the primary driver of education funding through local property tax, which has created massive inequities in funding. We should also change the rules for funding of charter schools and ensure that any taxpayer dollars that are directed to them are proportionate to the cost of education and that schools are held accountable and audited for use of them.

8. State government support for tuition at state-supported and state-related institutions ranks among the lowest in the nation, helping to push the cost of attending public colleges up 66% in the last 15 years, after adjusting for inflation. Indeed, PA ranks number 1 in the nation for highest student debt. High tuition costs have also resulted in a decline in attendance of low and middle income students. How would you address this conundrum?

We need to expand and restore funding to public colleges so costs of tuition do not continue to be driven higher to make up the difference and expand need-based aid programs over merit based to ensure opportunity for low and middle income students is available.

9. Should this state have stronger gun safety laws? If you agree what would you do?

Yes - we can absolutely improve gun safety by expanding and improving on background checks, requiring proper safety and storage, implementing red flag laws and requiring gun safety education.

10. Children who grow up in high-poverty neighborhoods where 30% or more of the households have income below the poverty level live with toxic stress caused by financial hardship and fear of violence. Chronic stress in children has been linked with diabetes, heart disease and stroke later in life, as well as depression, suicide and teen pregnancy. An Annie E Casey Foundation study found that 323,000 children in PA live in high poverty neighborhoods – 12% of our children. If elected, what legislation would you promote that could begin to address these issues?

I would promote any legislation that addresses helping to break the cycle of poverty and protect children and ensure their opportunity and access to equal education, healthcare, and programs that support their overall well-being are not restricted.

11. The PA County Commissioners Association has repeatedly called for restoration of an \$84 million cut to mental health funding made in 2012-13 by then Governor Tom Corbett. Indeed, funding for mental health services has been virtually flat-lined since 2007-08. Meanwhile, more than 21% of those who need mental health services in PA can't get them. There are long waits for visits to psychiatrists and therapists. Few schools have social workers on staff that can address the significant mental health needs of children. What would you do to improve access to mental health services in the Commonwealth?

Mental health services need to be covered and funded by insurance, implemented with priority to school programs and curriculums, and barriers to access for professionals should be removed.

12. Despite boasting the highest gas tax in the country, and highways that are perpetually under construction, Pennsylvania still finishes 35th in the nation for the overall cost-effectiveness and condition of its highway system, according to a report by the Reason Foundation. Researchers found that overall, the state finished 25th for its overall fatality rate; 46th in structurally deficient bridges; 35th in traffic congestion; 32nd in urban Interstate pavement condition, and 32nd in rural Interstate pavement condition. What would you do to address these pressing infrastructure needs?

Ensure that the state budget is appropriated to provide for investment in infrastructure upgrades and that revenue from taxes are reinvested appropriately.

13. What do you see as the 3 most important issues for your district?

1. Property Tax Reform/Education Funding
2. Prescription drug pricing/healthcare affordability
3. Ensuring Pennsylvanians earn a living wage.

Candidate Name *

Lindsay Drew

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