

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.

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

I would look to increase transparency in drug pricing through measures like HB 568. Several states already have legislation like this that we could learn from, such as Oregon, Maryland, and New York. I also support pending legislation that would create a Prescription Drug Advisory Board.

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

No. I support untying healthcare from employment all together. Healthcare is a human right.

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?

We should craft legislation that would expand public transportation and regional rail, enact strict anti-idling laws and end tax breaks to logistics companies, and subsidize the expansion of clean energy like wind and solar. This would create good paying union jobs and help us reach our emissions goals.

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?

I would sponsor or co-sponsor a state level ERA, and strongly urge our congressional delegation to pass this legislation in Washington.

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?

I would support legislation banning gifts to legislators, enacting campaign finance reforms that include contribution limits and eliminating dark money spending, requiring lawmakers to be transparent with their spending (and not redacting or removing information as they recently have), and creating an independent redistricting commission for drawing legislative districts.

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

As a WOMAN, I am 100% supportive of a woman's right to access abortion services without interference from the government. Women should have complete control over their own bodies and medical decisions.

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

The state legislature must return to funding public education at at least 50% and utilize the fair funding formula for all education spending. We need to make early childhood education available and affordable for all families, and make higher education free or at least debt-free to attract new teachers to the profession. We definitely need to protect public school dollars. While charter schools can be beneficial for some students, they should be held to the same standards as traditional public schools, and they should not be run by for-profit companies who overcharge our underresourced districts.

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?

I am living the student debt crisis right now because I attended a State System university (Mansfield) to become a teacher. I support the PA Promise plan that would make state schools tuition free for many families in PA. I'd like to move to tuition-free public colleges, universities, and community colleges for all in Pennsylvania.

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

Yes. As a leader with MOMS Demand Action, I would sponsor legislation for universal background checks, Extreme Risk Protection Orders, Safe Storage laws, and more. These are no-nonsense solutions to the gun violence problem in our country.

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 see highly stressed students in my classroom. We need to raise the minimum wage and make it easier to form and join unions so that working families can become financially stable. Making healthcare affordable and accessible to all Pennsylvanians would also help families escape poverty. By instituting the Fair Share Tax Plan (PA Budget and Policy Center), we would have the revenue to make significant social investment to lift thousands of families out of poverty.

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?

By fully funding our public schools, districts would have the resources to hire more counselors and social workers. We should use the current school safety grant program for therapy dog programs, mentor programs, and increasing mental health services both in and out of school. Mental health services should also be fully covered by all health insurance plans.

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?

We need bold and substantial investment in green infrastructure in this state. Road and bridge work, increasing public transportation options and bike lanes, clean water systems, and more. We can use revenues from legalizing and taxing recreational marijuana, as well as funding from implementing the fair share tax plan to cover these costs. This will get more Pennsylvanians working in good paying jobs, and keep us all safer as we move about our commonwealth.

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

1. Full and fair funding of public education, pre-k through college or trade school. We need to invest in our kids so that they can participate in our economy and our democracy.
2. Affordable and accessible healthcare for ALL Pennsylvanians, including protecting a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions, lowering the costs of prescription drugs, prohibiting surprise medical billing, and improving access for rural communities.
3. Bold legislative action on climate change, including ending our dependence on and subsidizing of fossil fuels, investing in green infrastructure and renewable energy, protecting and cleaning our air and water, and investing in sustainable agriculture.

Candidate Name *

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