

2010 City Council Candidate Questionnaire Response for Mary M. Cheh

Sometimes people thank me for my vote on gay marriage. But I tell them I am the one who is thankful--thankful that fate, which can land us in unexpected places, put me in a position to cast that vote. As a constitutional law professor and one who has worked all of my life to advance civil rights and civil liberties, it was a profoundly moving moment. It must have felt that way for those voting for the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Human Rights

1. As a Councilmember, what will you do to help ensure that the marriage rights secured for DC's LGBT Community remain intact?

Of course I will fiercely oppose any attempt to change or weaken our action. Just as I was vigilant through the Committee process to fend off unwarranted amendments, I will use all levers to keep this law intact.

2. Would you be supportive of the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs having grant making authority and an increased budget to provide grants to 501c3 organizations in the District providing services to the LGBT community?

Yes. As for precise funding, however, we cannot make commitments beyond our means and all funding will have to reflect our budget condition.

3. As a legislator, what can and/or will you do to support increased funding or assist in securing additional funding for LGBT social service organizations such as the DC Center, the Mautner Project, SMYAL, Metro Teen AIDS, and Transgender Health Empowerment?

All of these organizations do critically important work and deserve funding--I will assist in efforts to obtain funding from our government and be available to promote these groups to private funders as well.

4. As a legislator, what can and/or will you do to advocate for increased education, job training, and hiring of transgendered people?

As you know, we have a significant disconnect between jobs that are available in the District and the ability of our residents to get these jobs. We need adult job training, vocational education, and better education overall. And the training should align with opportunities--whether it be in the field of nursing, or the hospitality industry, or technology. And all of these efforts, in coordination with UDC and our District universities, must be fully open to everyone, including transgendered people. I have consistently supported programs to include resident preferences and training opportunities.

5. Do you support mandatory sensitivity training in workplaces that have transgender employees or new hires who may be transgender?

We need sensitivity training across all of our offices and workplaces and such training should include sensitivity training concerning transgendered people.

6. In the past, what LGBT related events, activities, or organizations have you participated in or been a member of or are currently a member of?

I believe I am a Stein Club member, though I often have to check my dues payment. I am a long-time member of PFLAG. At GW Law I participate in special programs (e.g., welcoming

the new admittees) aimed at our LGBT students. Also, at GW, I led the effort--quite some years ago--to amend the University's anti-discrimination policy to include sexual orientation. And, as a faculty, we joined the suit to challenge loss of federal funds for removing military recruiters from campus.

7. Do you have any self identified LGBT staff or campaign volunteers, and if so, how many? How racially and ethnically diverse is your office?

Identified LGBT staff include my former Chief of Staff and a new hire who will be joining the office in June. I have LGBT volunteers in my campaign. On my staff there are 6 men and 5 women, including 3 staffers who are African-American.

Public Safety

8. Given that the GLLU is one of the only LGBT related units in the country, will you support and advocate for the Metropolitan Police Department to increase the current staffing, as well as support the hiring of a full time sergeant who understands the LGBT community and LGBT policing?

Yes. I was very disappointed when the Office lost Sergeant Brett Parson, whom I have come to know dating back well before becoming a Councilmember. He spoke of his activities in the Unit with my Criminal Procedure classes over the years. There should be a full time sergeant who understands LGBT policing and the LGBT community.

9. Will you advocate for the executive office of the mayor to establish policy requiring agency directors to implement mandatory training for all members of DCPS, Fire and EMS workers regarding LGBT people (including LGBT people of color, those that are limited English proficient, and those that are disabled)?

We should have sensitivity training across the full spectrum of government services and offices, but it is especially crucial with MPD and FEMS.

10. As a legislator, what can and/or will you do to insure that the District is aggressively responding to the increase in incidents of hate crimes against the LGBT community that have been occurring over the last two years, aside from holding yearly hearings on the issue?

I co-sponsored the "Hate Crimes Training for Law Enforcement Amendment Act of 2007," specifically directing that MPD officers be trained in investigating, identifying, and reporting crimes based on hate. And I co-introduced the "Sense of the Council in Opposition to Acts of Hate Resolution of 2008." Moreover, I introduced a bill to increase the punishment of hate crimes which was folded into Councilmember Mendelson's comprehensive crime bill last year. But yearly (or more frequent) hearings and public events remain very important to increase tolerance and sensitivity.

11. As a legislator, will you be committed to working to stop the DC Department of Corrections policy of relying on genitalia as a basis for gender identification rather than an individual's gender identity or expression?
Education and Youth

Yes. And in that regard, please see the appended letter I sent in 2008 to oppose a rulemaking that would have removed the protections of the Human Rights Act to persons in custody. A person's gender identification is a matter of that individual's expression.

12. Do you support the current DC Board of Education's Health Standards that include discussions of sexual orientation in learning about sex education in public schools?

Yes. It is very important to include this as part of sex education and health.

13. Do you support DCPS leadership in advocating for additional mandatory teacher and faculty training in all DC public schools regarding LGBT student safety?

Yes.

14. As a legislator, what can and/or will you do to hold DCPS, OSSE, and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education accountable for making sure that all LGBT students can learn in a safe and supportive environment?

These agencies all fall under the purview of the Committee of the Whole on which all the members sit, and we can use our oversight authority to make inquiries and address any problems in this area.

15. As a legislator, what can and/or will you do to support afterschool activities and initiatives that specifically include the needs of LGBT youth?

Yes. Everything we do for our school children must be fully inclusive of the needs of LGBT young people. Again, through our oversight, we can ask questions and address concerns.

Health/HIV/AIDS

16. As a legislator, what can and/or will you do to hold the HIV/AIDS Administration and the Department of Health accountable for aggressively working to develop and implement a strategy to reduce the unacceptably high HIV/AIDS rate among the District's LGBT community, specifically LGBT communities of color and the transgender community?

Recently, I became a member of the Committee on Health and have used this position to question the Department of Health on its programs. For instance, I was particularly disturbed to find out that insurance companies are not covering routine screening for HIV/AIDS when persons come into emergency rooms. DOH has promised to pursue this and insist on enforcement of the law I passed. Also I support efforts to make free condoms and condom kits in at-the-door baskets in nightclubs and restaurants.

DC Taxi Cab Meters

As a councilmember, will you hold the District government accountable for conducting the impact study of DC taxi cab meter rates every two years as the law requires?

Yes.