

**PA STATE LEGISLATIVE 2022 QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR PHILLY NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS**

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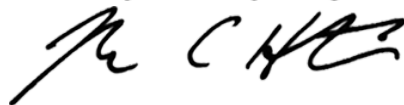
CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Joe Hohenstein

Office Sought: Representative in the General Assembly - District 177

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature:



Date: 2/7/2022

Please complete, sign and return this form via Email to:

Gloria Gilman: gmgilman@gmail.com

and

Stan Shapiro: shapsj@comcast.net

2022 PA State Legislative Questionnaire

BACKGROUND Please note: answers to questions 7-9 are optional.

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held?

I currently serve as State Representative for the 177th District in Pennsylvania's General Assembly. I was first elected in 2018 and subsequently re-elected in 2020.

2. If you have previously held a government office:

a. What are the primary issue areas in which you were involved?

My legislative priorities have remained consistent since my first campaign in 2016, through my election in 2018, and in my role as an elected official since:

- Education - Fair funding of public schools to fix crumbling school infrastructure and support essential school workers with more resources and better pay, greater accountability for charter schools and reforms to charter lottery systems, a new model for governance of the School District of Philadelphia;
- Protecting Workers - Supporting unions, raising the minimum wage to at least \$15/hour and indexing it to inflation, protecting earned pensions;
- Criminal Justice Reform & Police Accountability - Ending systemic racism and mass incarceration while building safer communities and fostering transparent and supportive relationships between communities and law enforcement;
- Ending Gun Violence - Background checks for all sales, closing loopholes, assault weapons ban, among other reforms;
- Protecting The Environment - Cleaning up the neighborhood toxic waste, holding polluters accountable, transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables & creating Green Jobs;
- Women's, LGBTQ+, & Disability Rights - Protecting reproductive health care services, gender pay equity, ending discrimination against LGBTQ+ & disabled persons;
- Addressing the Opioid Crisis - Instituting insurance reforms to provide long term recovery treatment;
- Fair Districts - I support the establishment of a nonpartisan commission to lead the redistricting process in Pennsylvania and end partisan gerrymandering.

Progress has been minimal on many of these issues due to Republican obstruction in Harrisburg, however I am determined to continue pushing to address these issues.

b. What committees, caucuses or working groups have you served on?

In my first term (2019-2020), I served on the Human Services Committee, House State Government Committee, and the Urban Affairs Committee.

In my second term (2021-2022), I am serving on the House Transportation Committee, House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee, House Game & Fisheries Committee, and House Judiciary Committee.

I am also a founding member and serve as Co-Chair of the Welcoming PA Caucus. We are a group of legislators working to develop commonwealth-specific legislative and policy solutions to issues affecting

all new Pennsylvanians. We focus on attracting, retaining, and embracing immigrants in Pennsylvania.

3. If you have not previously held a government office, what community or policy issues have you worked on, and in what capacity? (Please provide the names of two or three individuals who can provide information about your previous work.)

N/A

4. Please provide copies of all your significant campaign materials, including position papers, advertisement copy, and flyers.

I am currently in the process of updating my [campaign website](#), however you can visit it for a look into my positions on the issues from the recent past.

5. What, if any, endorsements have you received? What others are you seeking?

I have only just begun to seek (re)endorsements for the upcoming cycle. Past supporters like SEIU, UFCW Local 1776, Teamsters Council 53, IAFF Local 22, PSEA, Longshoremen Local 1291, Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses & Allied Professionals, TAUP, and many building trade unions have already indicated their support for my re-election. Other endorsements by the Working Families Party and the PFT remain pending at this time but have supported and endorsed me in the past.

I have also received invaluable support from advocacy organizations such as Planned Parenthood, Liberty City LGBT Democratic Club, Moms Demand Action, Ceasefire, Sierra Club, Human Rights Campaign, and We The People PA. None of these organizations have issued any endorsements at this time.

6. What is your plan to win this race, including your fundraising goals and strategies?

I plan to run a strong campaign that maximizes direct voter contact to win. In order to achieve the utmost effectiveness without compromising the health and safety of my staff and community, I plan to implement a strategy similar to my campaign in 2020 where I used a combination of remote phone banks and distanced lit drops to get my message out to the voters and track mail-in votes before Election Day (depending upon the final court ruling of Act 77). I will also employ a traditional door-to-door canvass, if it can be done safely. Thanks to the vaccines we can have more direct interaction with constituents, however I still want to do so with safety in mind.

I began this year with around \$65,000 cash on hand. I have raised at least \$200,000 in each of my previous campaigns, and I expect this year will be no exception.

7. What, if any, genders, do you identify with?

I identify as a cisgender male.

8. What is your sexual orientation?

I identify as heterosexual.

9. What is your racial, ethnic identity?

I am white, with Irish and German roots.

ISSUES

Please note: Although many of the following questions may be answered “yes” or “no” you should feel free to elaborate if doing so would provide a clearer statement of your position. If you believe you do not have enough information to answer a question, or have not formed an opinion, please say so.

I. OVERALL

What would be your three highest priorities as a legislator? Explain

Given the specific attributes of my district, the following are my highest priorities:

Education, in particular, the full implementation of the Fair Funding Formula — In Philadelphia, we need to address the crumbling infrastructure of our toxic schools. Our kids deserve better. They deserve safer environments to learn in. Our children deserve buildings that show them that their future is important.

Transportation Infrastructure — My district resides on the Delaware River and includes PhilaPort. I believe it is vital to utilize sustainable energy and development practices, along with providing family sustaining (usually union) jobs as we improve our infrastructure. Pursuing these aims is one of the reasons I asked to be on the Transportation Committee this term.

Good Government/Civil Engagement — While not technically a legislative priority, I believe that we have to create spaces where more complete and respectful dialogue can happen. True change only happens with broader social acceptance, and we lose opportunities to persuade people when we fail to listen to them. This country is currently buckling under the weight of extreme polarization, and it is essential that we rediscover our common ground soon if we are to reverse this alarming trend.

II. Education

1) Do you believe public college, or community college, should be tuition free?

Yes, I believe we should provide free tuition to public colleges and universities for Pennsylvania residents. The current structure of educational loans are predatory.

2) What role do you believe standardized tests should play in evaluating teachers, schools and students, if any?

While I understand the need to evaluate teachers, schools, and students in order to compare our educational institutions with one another, it can be a problematic process, especially when the results determine budgetary spending and financial investments. History has shown that this can create a feedback loop, where our poorest schools receive fewer resources than their better-funded counterparts. Given this historical precedent, I am wary of how the findings are utilized. Education funding should be fair and equitable, and using tests that are neither to evaluate people makes little sense.

3) What factors do you believe should be considered in determining *overall levels of school funding in the Commonwealth, and funding per school district?*

Pennsylvania's school funding system is inherently broken. It is among the worst in the country, and has been called "the nation's most inequitable" due to the fact that the school districts with the highest poverty rates receive one-third fewer state and local tax dollars per pupil than the wealthiest districts. This imbalance violates fundamental fairness and is harmful to our society.

We must implement a Fair Funding Formula that ensures all students in Pennsylvania have equal access to the resources they need to learn. We cannot do this until we shift the balance of power in Harrisburg.

4) Approximately 33% of Philadelphia students are enrolled in charter schools. What is your position on the expansion of charter schools? Should they be given public money via vouchers or similar programs (like ESAs)? What role do you think public schools play in our city?

I support a moratorium on the creation of new charter schools, and I do not support the use of public school vouchers on private school tuition.

I am a product of Philadelphia public schools (Masterman Junior High & Frankford High School), and I believe public schools are vital to a functioning democracy and a thriving society. Our children deserve better educational resources than they are getting now. It is simply a matter of doing the right thing.

III. Budget and Taxes

1) Do you support a Constitutional Amendment to permit progressive taxation in PA, in whole or part?

I do not generally support Constitutional amendments to achieve specific policy goals, but that is necessary in this case. Fairness and equity require a progressive taxation system.

2) What changes if any would you support in the corporate net income tax levels? See this: <https://krc-pbpc.org/issues/corporate-income-taxes/>

I agree with the sentiments and proposed solutions as identified in the link above. Pennsylvania's persistent budget problem is driven in large part by the revenue lost from corporations not paying their fair share. We need to close the tax loopholes that allow corporations to reap profits from Pennsylvanians while giving back little in return.

3) What changes, if any, would you support in the personal income tax?

To put it simply, the rich need to pay their fair share. This should not be a radical concept. We do not need to raise taxes across the board to afford the changes we seek and deserve. We just need to hold the top tax bracket accountable and ensure the wealthy elite contribute their due.

4) Do you support the [Fair Share Tax Plan](#) proposed by the PA Budget and Policy Center, with its emphasis on raising the tax rate on unearned income?

Yes.

5) Do you support full elimination of the Delaware loophole?

Yes.

6) Do you support a tax on fracking, and at what level?

Yes. The level of a fracking tax is something I have to study.

7) Do you support the Keystone Opportunity Zone program? Would you introduce legislation to eliminate it, or to limit the number of times a parcel's KOZ designation can be renewed or extended? More generally, do you support tax breaks to lure or retain businesses?

I have not yet formed an opinion on the Keystone Opportunity Zone program.

IV. Public Banking

Would you support the creation of a Pennsylvania Public Bank, modeled after the Bank of North Dakota, and/or the creation of local public banks in PA cities and counties?

Yes, I support public banking in theory, however I have some reservations about its use in practice. I would like to see a public banking model applied in Pennsylvania and/or Philadelphia, but only if it is managed responsibly.

V. Women's Rights

1) Do you believe there should be any restrictions on a woman's right to choose? If so, what?

No, I understand my role as an ally. As such, I support a woman's right to choose and will oppose any further restrictions in access to reproductive health services, including the information and education needed for a woman to make her choice.

2) What additional protections should be enacted into law to protect women's health care in light of the pending decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to override or sharply curtail Roe v. Wade?

We must enshrine the legal protections offered by Roe v. Wade in Pennsylvania law, especially since we clearly cannot trust the partisan conservative U.S. Supreme Court to uphold its own precedent on the matter.

3) Would you support proposals to ensure that women and men working in the Commonwealth receive equal pay for equal work?

Absolutely. I support legislation to allow women to close the income gap and achieve equal pay. One such avenue is to eliminate the “motherhood penalty” by providing adequate and equal leave for both parents following the birth of a child. This method was introduced by Iceland at the turn of the century, and they have seen their income gap dramatically decrease in the two decades since.

VI. Children and Families

1) Should the state require businesses to provide paid family leave?

Yes, as I mentioned in my previous response, not only do I believe Pennsylvania businesses should be required to provide paid family leave, it should be extended towards both parents.

2) Should the state provide universal availability of affordable childcare? If yes, how would you achieve this?

Yes, I support legislation to provide universal childcare in Pennsylvania.

VII. Environment

1) Do you support a ban on fracking in whole or part? Explain.

Yes, I support a ban on fracking in Pennsylvania and would like to see a complete phase-out of all gas extraction within five years. Transition away from fracking and it’s related industries needs to be done in a way that respects and takes care of the workers in those industries. Too often, we have left union workers on the sidelines as these issues are discussed. They deserve a seat at the table and we have to trust their lived experiences.

2) Would you support banning the use of single-use plastic bags?

Yes, we cannot afford to continue this wasteful practice of single-use plastic bags. Their creation is harmful to our environment, and their disposal can be even worse. Whether it ends up in a proper landfill or improperly ends up in the ocean, plastic bags can take upwards of a thousand years to decompose, and when they do, they deteriorate into microplastics that absorb toxins and cause immense damage to the environment.

3) Do you think Philadelphia should be compelled or induced to sell PGW?

No, I do not support the privatization of public utilities as a general principle. For PGW in particular, keeping it public means the ability to direct it towards a more diverse and balanced energy portfolio — especially renewables. The sustainable energy sector is hostile to organized labor and preserving union jobs at PGW while getting it to move away from solely fossil fuels makes sense.

4) What measures would you support to move PA off its reliance on fossil fuels and expand use of renewable energy sources?

Pennsylvania is the nation's leading exporter of electricity and third-largest emitter of carbon dioxide, and so we have a responsibility to lead the nation on climate.

I have been a consistent vote and voice in support of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) on the floor and in the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee — I asked for an assignment to this committee specifically to address this issue.

Assuming Democrats gain control of the legislature in Harrisburg, we must immediately begin transitioning to better and cleaner modes of electricity generation. I am supporting a large wind turbine project that is committed to utilizing organized labor. We need our transition to include labor justice alongside environmental justice. Another area is to take advantage of federal infrastructure support to expand public transit systems and incentivize the switch to electric vehicles through tax credits and buyback/credit programs.

We must ensure environmental justice for our frontline communities — those who will bear the brunt of the devastation from climate change — especially under-resourced groups, communities of color, children, and the elderly.

There are many policies and reforms that can and should be implemented, but I see these as the most crucial. See my answer on PGW above.

5) What criteria would you use in making appointments to the P.U.C.?

Among more general criteria — such as qualifications, experience, temperament, and reason — it is of the supreme importance that any candidate for appointment to the P.U.C. be supportive of Governor Wolf's move to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

6) What steps would you take to ensure environmental justice in the placement and remediation of structures that pollute?

I have been a strong advocate for the protection of our communities by holding private developers responsible, forcing governmental agencies to be accountable, and keeping the public informed of changes and developments affecting them.

One specific place where the issue of remediation is front and center right now is plugging of obsolete well that leak methane and other greenhouse gases. I will do all I can to make sure federal funds for that task are spent wisely.

7) What, if any, other measures would you support to preserve or improve our environment? (water issues, park preservation, detoxification of school buildings, etc.)

We must protect what remains of our natural resources and continue funding efforts to keep our waterways and parks clean. One such project that is underway in my district is the restoration of the Riverfront Park in Bridesburg.

Additionally, the detoxification of our school buildings is a priority of mine. We absolutely must fix our crumbling school infrastructure.

VIII. Criminal Justice

1) Should stop and frisk be limited or outlawed?

Yes, Stop-and-Frisk policies have historically been used to discriminate against BIPOC communities. It is morally-reprehensible, and we have long known this practice to be unconstitutional. They should be outlawed completely, and law enforcement officers who illegally detain and search innocent individuals should be held accountable.

2) How would you deal with the problem of mass incarceration of minorities, particularly minority youth?

The mass incarceration of minorities we see currently is a painful relic from our failed War on Drugs. A large segment of our prison population are incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses. These individuals would be better served by receiving proper treatment and better opportunities, not imprisonment.

We must acknowledge the systemic disadvantages our BIPOC communities have endured throughout American history, and recognize that far too many of us still live in that long shadow cast by generations of displacement, exclusion, and segregation. We must come to terms with the legacy of redlining, and provide more resources and opportunities to the communities affected the most.

Study after study has shown that poverty, inequality, and social alienation are the predominant causes of crime. As such, we must tackle this issue at the source by instituting solutions that address these areas.

3) Should marijuana be fully legalized?

Yes.

4) Should privately-owned prisons be permitted in Pennsylvania?

No, it is morally abhorrent and inherently problematic to profit on human incarceration.

5) Should we ban the box in Pennsylvania?

Yes. If the end goal is to reduce recidivism, which it should be, we must also remove employment barriers for returning citizens so that they can find honest and fulfilling work.

6) Should PA continue to build new prisons?

No. Rather than build more prisons, we should invest in bettering the lives of Pennsylvanians so that we can lower the incarcerated population. In many places around the country, we spend more tax dollars on the incarceration of individuals than it would cost to send them to college. We know that poverty and lack of opportunities leads to higher prison populations, and so we should spend our tax dollars wisely on increasing the quality of life of all Pennsylvanians.

To the degree we invest in prisons, it should be to create and bolster true rehabilitation programs. We all will be better off with a corrections system that believes in a person's ability to return to society as a fully

engaged citizen and operates to make that return a reality.

7) Should PA begin to close prisons? Explain.

Pennsylvania should reevaluate its priorities in regards to its use of the justice system, sentencing, and incarceration. When individuals are treated differently depending upon their class, race, or sexual orientation, we do not have a functioning system of justice. This rampant inequality is inexcusable. Additionally, a large segment of our prison population are incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses. As I mentioned above, these individuals need proper treatment, not imprisonment. As we reevaluate our justice system priorities, and call into question old policies that remain from our failed War on Drugs, I am confident that we will find that we do not have a use for so many prisons.

8) Do you support an end to the death penalty?

Yes, I am opposed to the death penalty. It is an expression of my Quaker faith.

9) When if ever, should a juvenile be tried as an adult?

Before any consideration is made about trying juveniles as adults, we must confront the fact that our current culture of incarceration is overwhelmingly punitive and not at all rehabilitative. Children are a product of their environment, and cannot be held fully responsible for their actions. Therefore, to try a juvenile as an adult is to ensure that they continue on an irredeemable path.

Only under the most extreme circumstances should a juvenile be tried as an adult, if ever. I struggle to think of a scenario in which I would find this justified.

10) As a general matter, what do you think the state can do to reduce the murder rate in Philadelphia, while maintaining respect for civil liberties and the overall need for decarceration of our city?

Philadelphia's alarming murder rate is a complex issue. No one solution is enough to curb the gun violence epidemic alone.

However, I believe the implementation of common sense gun control legislation would go a long way towards decreasing gun violence. We must pass legislation to require background checks for all sales, close loopholes, ban assault weapons; among other reforms. However any such legislation would require a Democratic majority in Harrisburg.

I also believe all of our decision makers responsible for setting policy need to have a public consensus about the solutions. No single group has the whole solution.

IX. Campaign Finance Reform

Would you support legislation to provide public financing for state and local election campaigns?

Yes, this is a common sense legislative solution to address the growing influence of special interests on our politics. Our elections should be determined through the competition of ideas, not by the size of a campaign's bank account.

X. Labor

1) Would you support legislation to strengthen protection for workers trying to form or join a union?

Absolutely. I come from a union family — my sister is a Deputy Regional Field Organizer for SEIU, my mother was a shop steward of AFSCME Local 1739, and my father was a member of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers — and so I understand the important role unions currently serve and have served throughout this country's history. I will always do everything I can to support and protect workers' rights.

The protection and expansion of the right for workers to collectively bargain is essential if we are to ever achieve true economic justice. As such, I am committed to strengthening existing unions and expanding representation for more workers by providing resources and making introductions to labor leaders that can help with the first steps towards unionization. We must also improve the enforcement of existing labor laws and do better to hold exploitative employers accountable for union-busting and wage theft.

2) Should the minimum wage be increased? If so, to what level and should the increase be indexed to inflation?

I support raising Pennsylvania's minimum wage to at least \$15/hour (if not higher) and indexing it to inflation. Raising the minimum wage has been shown to increase other wages throughout the economy and, properly implemented, will not have an adverse impact on small businesses.

3) Do you believe that Philadelphia and other municipalities should continue to be pre-empted from increasing the minimum wage on their own?

I am in favor of repealing the pre-emption law that prohibits Philadelphia from setting its own minimum wage (in addition to other crucial issues like gun-control legislation). This would provide the local government in Philadelphia more options and agency in solving some of its own issues that have long been ignored by the Republican-led legislature in Harrisburg.

4) Do you support privatization of retail liquor sales in Pennsylvania? Are there any other services that you believe should be considered for privatization?

I do not support the privatization of retail liquor sales in Pennsylvania. In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Liquor Control Board generated \$813.4 million towards contributions to state and local governments, as well as other public beneficiaries. The loss of this income from controlled liquor sales would be difficult, if not impossible to replace. Republican claims that privatization would be a boon for the state are based on short-sighted solutions (as well as personal financial incentives) that would cause great harm to state revenue in the long term.

5) Philadelphia remains the most impoverished major city and about 75% of our residents lack bachelor's degrees. What policies would you implement to ensure that decent, high-paying jobs created here are accessible to the majority of our population, not just the relatively well-educated and already well off?

First, any legislative solution must account for the root causes of our current state of systemic inequality, otherwise we will never achieve racial and gender equity.

We must ensure our public schools are fully funded and that our public colleges and universities are more affordable for our residents, if not tuition-free. Additionally, I support increasing funding for CTE programs in our schools and expanding access to trades schools and technical training. These programs can provide the skills necessary for future success, whether that be by providing a pathway to gainful employment or a foundation for further education. This year, I was able to revive a Labor Fair program to showcase trade schools after graduation to students at Lincoln High School. We will continue these efforts and establish stronger connections between our schools and good jobs in the trades.

The funds I have helped secure for the district through the RCAP program, close to \$10M from 2019-2021, are all tied to job creation because of the requirement that these projects utilize prevailing wages. I will continue to support state policies that require prevailing wages connected to projects funded by the Commonwealth.

XI. Reforming Legislative Districts

1) Do you support legislation that would (1) form an independent commission, and (2) apply sound methodologies, to draw all congressional, State House, and Senate districts fairly in Pennsylvania?

Yes. Voters should choose their representatives, not the other way around. A nonpartisan independent commission is the best way to ensure we have fair elections in Pennsylvania. It is vital to the health and survival of our democracy that our elected leaders are truly representative of the public they serve.

My current district is an example of gerrymandering. The new district lines are much more fair and balanced but we still have a way to go.

XII. Public Health

1) Would you support state legislation to create a single-payer system in PA?

Yes, of the top 50 highly developed countries around the world, America is the only one without some form of universal healthcare, and we spend more on our flawed healthcare system than any of them. We have a long way to go to improve our healthcare system, and if we have learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that we share a stake in each other's health and well-being. I hope we learn from the lessons of this public health crisis and make these necessary substantial changes.

2) How would you reduce or eliminate the racial disparities in the provision of health care, in particular the distribution of lifesaving COVID vaccines and medications?

As I stated above, when it comes to public health, we are all in this together. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the sorry state of our current healthcare system. We must identify the gaps in our current healthcare coverage and provide substantial solutions to deliver improved and comprehensive care to our communities that have historically been left behind due to racial or economic disparities.

We need to listen to the experts and expand upon the successful efforts of our local medical leaders, as exemplified by the combined efforts of the [Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium](#) to vaccinate underserved communities or the individual efforts of [Nurse Practitioner Tarik Khan to reach homebound Philadelphians](#).

XIV. Housing

1) How would you deal with the growing affordable housing gap in PA, both in the homeownership and rental markets?

As was the case in so many of the issues we face, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the housing crisis in Pennsylvania and across the country. We know that it costs more money to run temporary homeless shelters than it does to provide permanent housing solutions, and so it is simply a matter of making the humane and cost-effective choice to treat people with dignity by providing them a home, not just shelter from the storm.

Philadelphia has among the highest number of vacant properties of the big U.S. cities with an estimated 12,000 vacant properties and an additional 30,000 vacant lots. We should be constructing more affordable, low-carbon housing units here and across Pennsylvania through use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Redevelopment Assistance Capitalization Program (RACP) grants, and New Market Tax Credits, among other funding sources. Increasing the number of available homes in the city will help decrease prices and provide more affordable options for homeowners and renters.

2) Would you support a mandate requiring landlords to show good cause for evictions?

Yes, we must protect the rights of renters, especially during this unprecedented time. Landlords should be required to show good cause for evictions, and tenants should have a right to counsel when facing eviction or foreclosure.