



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World

2024 PA Legislative Questionnaire

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CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Sajda Blackwell

Office Sought: PA House Representative

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: _____

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in PDF format
to info@phillynn.org

and mail or fax a copy of the signature page to

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I. BACKGROUND – PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held? None
2. If you have previously held a government office(s), state: N/A

- a. the name(s) of the office(s) and dates served
 - b. the primary issue areas with which you were involved?
 - c. your main accomplishments

3. What about your background qualifies you to hold this office, including any civic activity that you may have been involved with over your adult life? I am a wife, mother, youth mentor and community organizer. I am the co-founder of Blackwell Culture Alliance Inc, a nonprofit which feeds over 3000 families a month in West Philadelphia. Through my work, I have shown my commitment to fighting for Public Safety by creating the B.C.A. Actionist, one of the only active town Watch Groups in the city of Philadelphia taking a stand against Gun Violence who's blueprint is now being used to create other safety neighborhood watch groups across the city. Also finding ways of providing opportunities for youth, paying young people \$1000 a month to make nonviolent music that creates a culture change in violent music on purpose. For years I have lived, worked, and helped to build a flourishing community in the Walnut Hill section of West Philadelphia fighting for safe, livable, and affordable housing for my neighbors Financial Literacy in Pennsylvania schools, Educational Equality, advocating for the Safety of Seniors, reducing poverty, creating safe spaces, and revitalizing our communities.

4. What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected? If elected, I want to accomplish change in gun violence, food insecurity, and promote financial literacy within our community.
 - Gun Violence: I am committed to tackling the issue of gun violence by investing in Youth and Community Programs. This involves championing increased funding for essential initiatives such as youth programs, safe spaces, mentorship programs, job training, and mental health services. By providing young individuals with viable alternatives to violence, we can create a safer and more supportive community.
 - Food Insecurity: To combat food insecurity, my focus would be on implementing Community Food Initiatives. This includes supporting community gardens, urban farming, and farmers' markets to enhance access to fresh and locally sourced food, particularly in underserved areas. This approach aims to ensure that everyone in our community has access to nutritious and affordable food.
 - Financial Literacy: Promoting financial literacy is vital for empowering individuals within our community. I will prioritize Comprehensive

Financial Education in our schools, ensuring that every student graduates with a robust understanding of budgeting, saving, investing, and managing debt. This initiative seeks to equip our community members with the essential financial skills needed for a secure and prosperous future.

5. What is your strategy to win this race, including all relevant organizational, financial and grass-roots components? Our grassroots campaign is all about connecting directly with voters in HD 10. Our team of dedicated volunteers is hitting the streets, knocking on doors, and engaging with voters throughout the 10th Legislative District. I believe in the power of personal connections, so we'll be personally visiting homes, making calls, and actively listening to the concerns of the community. Through community events, town hall meetings, and neighborhood gatherings, we'll continue building a network of passionate supporters who share our vision. This boots-on-the-ground strategy aims to mobilize voters, boost turnout, and secure victory in the crucial HD 10 election. Together, we can make a meaningful impact on the future of our state, city, and district.

II. INTRODUCTION

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, say so.

III. ISSUES

A. OVERALL

What would be your three highest priorities as a legislator? Explain. Firstly, my priority is to restore the people's voice in Harrisburg. Secondly, I am committed to supporting Philadelphia in challenging preemption gun laws, aiming to curb the epidemic of gun violence in our city. Additionally, I strive to

implement measures that make acquiring a gun and ammunition more challenging than obtaining a driver's license. Lastly, I want to tackle food insecurity within the inner city and financial education.

B. Education

1. How do you feel about the role of charter schools in Pennsylvania's educational mix? If dissatisfied, what changes in State law would you sponsor to fix the problem? I am a strong advocate for the improvement of public schools, and I also believe in providing families with diverse educational options. The matter of charter schools is intricate, and I recognize the need for a careful and considerate approach in addressing it. Charter schools, serving as a hybrid between public and private institutions, play a significant role in offering alternatives to traditional public education. However, it is crucial to establish robust oversight and regulations to ensure accountability and equity in education.

I am committed to supporting reforms that prioritize transparency, accountability, and equal access to charter schools. This involves implementing rigorous evaluation processes for charter school performance, transparent financial reporting, and adherence to educational standards. Additionally, I advocate for policies that emphasize fair funding for both charter and traditional public schools, ensuring that every student has access to a high-quality education, regardless of the educational institution they attend.

To address concerns surrounding charter school admissions and operations, I propose comprehensive reforms that promote fairness, equity, and inclusivity. This includes measures to prevent discrimination in admissions, ensure transparency in lottery systems, and strengthen oversight of charter school management.

I believe in fostering collaboration between charter and traditional public schools to share best practices and improve educational outcomes for all students. Through cooperative efforts, we can create a more inclusive and equitable education system that caters to the diverse needs of our communities.

Regarding the role of charter schools in Pennsylvania's educational mix, I believe they can contribute positively, but it is essential to continually evaluate and enhance the regulatory framework. If there is dissatisfaction with the current state of charter schools, I am open to

sponsoring changes in state law that focus on refining oversight, ensuring transparency, and promoting fairness in admissions and operations. My goal is to work towards a balanced and effective educational landscape that serves the best interests of all students in Pennsylvania.

2. What factors do you believe should be considered in determining overall levels of school funding in the Commonwealth, and funding per school district? In determining overall levels of school funding in the Commonwealth and funding per school district, it is crucial to consider several key factors. Firstly, the size of the student population in each district must be taken into account, recognizing that larger districts may require additional resources. Equally important is addressing the diverse needs of students, including language barriers for immigrant students and transportation issues. Infrastructure considerations, such as maintaining and updating school buildings, are vital to ensuring conducive learning environments.

Moreover, the funding formula should be sensitive to geographic differences, recognizing unique challenges faced by districts based on their location. Specialized services, community socioeconomic conditions, diversity in educational programs, competitive teacher salaries, technology infrastructure, and accountability measures should all be integral components of a fair and comprehensive funding approach. This approach aims to provide equitable access to quality education, considering the distinctive characteristics and challenges of each school district in the Commonwealth.

3. Do you believe public college, or community college, should be tuition free? Yes, I advocate for tuition-free community college. I believe it is essential to establish a guaranteed pathway to ensure widespread access to higher education.

4. What role do you believe standardized tests should play in evaluating teachers, schools and students, if any? Standardized testing lacks validity in the absence of educational equity. While it can serve as an assessment tool, it should not be the sole determinant.

C. Budget and Taxes

1. Do you support a Constitutional Amendment to permit progressive taxation in PA, in whole or part? While I recognize the intent behind a progressive tax system in promoting fairness and addressing income inequality, it's essential to carefully consider the potential consequences. On the positive side, such a system could contribute to a more equitable distribution of the tax burden, ensuring that those with higher incomes bear a proportionate share. However, we should also be mindful of the possible impact on economic incentives and growth, as higher tax rates might discourage investment and entrepreneurship. I believe it's crucial to strike a balance between achieving a fair and just tax structure while maintaining an environment that fosters economic dynamism. Exploring alternative solutions or refining the progressive tax model to address these concerns could be a more pragmatic approach. It's essential to weigh the potential benefits against the risks and carefully consider the broader economic implications before making significant changes to our tax system.
2. If legal, would you support raising the tax on unearned income as a way to increase State revenue without increasing burdens on working people? I would support measures that improve overall quality of life without placing undue burdens on the working population. However, my concern lies in how such measures might affect working individuals seeking financial progress through unearned income, such as investments.
3. What changes if any would you support in corporate net income tax levels? I would provide a tax incentive to corporations that invest in initiatives addressing gun violence reduction and promoting environmental justice
4. What changes, if any, would you support in the personal income tax? I would further decrease taxes for working families.
5. Do you support full elimination of the Delaware loophole? I do not endorse the preservation of tax loopholes, including the Delaware loophole. Tax evasion poses a significant issue in Pennsylvania, and I believe that closing such loopholes is essential for fostering a fair and equitable tax system. Eliminating these practices can contribute to a more transparent and responsible fiscal environment, ensuring that all entities contribute their fair share to support essential public services.

6. Do you support a tax on fracking, and at what level? **Yes. I do not endorse fracking, and I believe that if companies engage in fracking, they should incur higher taxes.**
7. Would you support abolition or reduction of the property tax for all or some payers? If so, which ones, and how would you replace the revenue? **I believe that property taxes should be reduced after a certain number of years of payment. I propose replacing the lost revenue by legalizing marijuana and utilizing the profits to supplement tax revenue.**

D. Public Banking

1. Would you support the creation of a Pennsylvania Public Bank, modeled after [the Bank of North Dakota](#)? **Yes**

E. Women's Rights

1. Do you believe there should be any restrictions on a woman's right to choose? If so, what? Is any new legislation needed in light of the Dobbs decision to overrule Roe v. Wade? **No, there shouldn't be any restrictions on a woman's right to choose. Ensuring women's access to the contraceptives and procedures they require is fundamental for their health, autonomy, and overall well-being. This necessitates the implementation of comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education in schools and community settings. Additionally, widespread public information campaigns should be conducted to educate women about their contraceptive options and available reproductive health services.**

Access to these services is paramount, requiring the provision of a diverse range of services in both urban and rural areas. Clinic hours should be expanded to accommodate varied schedules, promoting inclusivity. Affordability is another critical aspect, necessitating insurance coverage, including public health schemes, that encompasses all contraceptive methods and reproductive health procedures.

Support services should be culturally sensitive and uphold patient confidentiality to ensure that every woman, irrespective of her background or financial situation, can make informed choices about her reproductive health. This commitment to comprehensive education,

accessibility, affordability, and cultural sensitivity aligns with the belief that women should have the autonomy to make decisions about their reproductive health in a supportive and informed environment.

2. What additional protections should be enacted into law to protect women's health care? To enhance protections for women's healthcare, it is crucial to enact specific measures that address accessibility, affordability, and cultural sensitivity. The following recommendations align with my commitment to supporting women's autonomy in making informed decisions about their reproductive health:

- **Accessibility:** Enact legislation that mandates the provision of a diverse range of reproductive health services in both urban and rural areas. This includes the establishment of clinics and healthcare facilities in underserved regions, ensuring that women across diverse geographic locations have equal access to essential services.

- **Clinic Hours:** Introduce laws that require the expansion of clinic hours to accommodate varied schedules. This promotes inclusivity by enabling women with different work and personal commitments to access reproductive healthcare services at times convenient for them.

- **Affordability:** Implement legislation to ensure comprehensive insurance coverage for reproductive health services. This includes the inclusion of all contraceptive methods and reproductive health procedures in insurance plans, making these services affordable and accessible to women from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Enforce laws that mandate support services to be culturally sensitive and respectful of patient confidentiality. This ensures that healthcare providers receive training in cultural competence and that services are tailored to meet the diverse needs of women, irrespective of their cultural background.

- **Comprehensive Education:** Advocate for laws that promote comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education in schools and community settings. This ensures that women are informed about their reproductive health options and rights from an early age, empowering them to make informed decisions.

By enacting these protections into law, we can establish a legal framework that prioritizes and safeguards women's healthcare,

promoting inclusivity, affordability, cultural sensitivity, and comprehensive education. This approach is essential to upholding women's autonomy in making informed decisions about their reproductive health.

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

4. Do you support new legislation to protect individuals against sexual assault? Yes, I would also advocate for education regarding sexual assault against both women and men.

F. Children and Families

1. Should the State require businesses to provide paid family leave? Yes

2. Should the State provide universal availability of affordable child care? Yes, the existing system puts individuals just above the financial thresholds in a position where they must choose between child care and putting food on the table. This imbalance calls for reform.

G. Environment

1. What measures, if any, would you support to move PA off its reliance on fossil fuels and expand use of renewable energy sources? Yes, I am dedicated to championing government support for sustainable energy technologies, specifically through the provision of tax credits and subsidies for the wind power industry. This proactive approach is aimed at diminishing our dependence on fossil fuels and accelerating the adoption of clean energy solutions.

I will advocate for the establishment of a network of electric vehicle charging stations powered by renewable energy sources. Additionally, I will support government subsidies for individuals purchasing electric vehicles. Collaborating with unions will be a cornerstone in ensuring that job training and employment opportunities are prioritized during the development of this essential infrastructure.

Addressing urban life quality and air quality concerns, I will work towards creating more parks and green spaces in urban neighborhoods, particularly those in low-income areas with limited access to green areas. Energy efficiency will be a focal point, with subsidized energy audits and efficiency upgrades for homes and apartments, targeting low and mid-income households to reduce energy bills and encourage sustainable living practices.

I will emphasize the enhancement and expansion of public transportation options, with a particular focus on eco-friendly solutions such as electric buses. This approach not only improves accessibility but also diminishes reliance on private vehicles, reducing emissions and transportation costs for residents. Additionally, I will actively promote and incentivize local businesses committed to sustainable practices, potentially offering tax breaks or grants to cultivate a green economy within the community and create job opportunities.

Through these multifaceted policy measures, I aim to comprehensively address climate change, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for Pennsylvania. The passage of these policies will involve collaboration with stakeholders, public awareness campaigns, and strategic alliances to garner support within the legislature.

2. Do you support a ban on fracking in whole or part? **I support a ban on fracking in whole.**
3. Would you support developing the Philadelphia area as an Energy Hub? **Yes, I would also endorse and promote the training of both the current and next generations in sustainability employment.**
4. Do you think Philadelphia should be compelled or induced to sell PGW? **Yes, we need to be more proficient in decarbonization**

H. Criminal Justice

1. Should stop and frisk be limited or outlawed? **I don't think any tool in the toolbox should be outlawed. However, I do believe that investing in appropriate technology could eliminate the need for stop and frisk.**

2. How would you deal with the problem of mass incarceration of minorities, particularly minority youth? I would address the issue of mass incarceration of minorities, especially minority youth, by investing in families. This involves providing resources to enable families to be more involved in their children's lives, making a reduction in the necessity or attractiveness of crime. Additionally, I would allocate funding to crime prevention programs, wrap-around counseling, and family services. Another aspect of my approach would involve investing in financial literacy, offering education to young people and families about managing money. This aims to provide a pathway out of poverty, which is a systemic root cause of crime.
3. Should marijuana be legalized for recreational use? Yes, I firmly believe that there is an urgent need for comprehensive reform in our state's current drug laws, specifically in the context of legalizing marijuana for recreational use. The current legal framework around cannabis, which criminalizes its use and possession, has resulted in substantial social and economic costs, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities. In advocating for the legalization of marijuana, I see an opportunity to address past injustices by reevaluating and expunging prior charges related to cannabis offenses.

The push for marijuana legalization is not solely grounded in principles of justice; it also offers a promising avenue for generating significant supplemental funding for state programs and addressing various societal needs. Legalization can contribute to economic growth by regulating and taxing marijuana sales, providing a new revenue stream that can support public health, education, addiction recovery programs, and other essential services. This approach aligns with successful legalization efforts in other states, demonstrating positive outcomes in reducing illegal cannabis markets and enhancing public safety.

However, it is imperative that any move towards legalization is accompanied by robust regulations and safeguards to ensure responsible consumption and distribution. Common-sense marijuana reform should be a priority, emphasizing the importance of creating a regulatory framework that prioritizes public health and safety.

In conclusion, I support the legalization of marijuana for recreational use, recognizing its potential to correct past injustices, stimulate economic growth, and fund crucial state programs. This stance is contingent upon

implementing thoughtful regulations and safeguards to promote responsible use and distribution within our communities.

4. Should privately-owned prisons be permitted in Pennsylvania? I would advocate for prohibiting the private operation of prisons in Pennsylvania. This aligns with the principle that our incarceration system should prioritize rehabilitation and public welfare over financial gain. The privatization of prisons often results in cost-cutting measures that may compromise the quality of care and rehabilitation services for inmates, potentially worsening recidivism rates.

Moreover, private prisons operate under a business model that thrives on higher rates of incarceration, creating a perverse incentive that contradicts the objectives of criminal justice reform and societal well-being. To address this issue, implementing policies to prevent these private entities from investing in the stock market would eliminate conflicts of interest and ensure that the criminal justice system is not influenced by profit-driven motives. Such investments can lead to a misalignment of priorities, where the financial interests of private prison companies and their shareholders may take precedence over the humane treatment and rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals.

By prohibiting the private operation of prisons and restricting their financial activities, we can take substantial steps toward building a more equitable and just correctional system that genuinely serves the public interest.

5. Should we ban the box in Pennsylvania? I'm uncertain if "the box" is being referred to as solitary confinement or another concept. Therefore, I cannot provide an answer to this question without further clarification.
6. Should PA continue to build new prisons? No
7. Should PA begin to close prisons? Yes, prisons that have been proven to have inhumane and deplorable conditions should be shut down.
8. Do you support an end to the death penalty? Yes
9. When, if ever, should a juvenile be tried as an adult? A juvenile should be subject to trial as an adult depending on the specific nature and

gravity of the committed crime. However, it is imperative to emphasize the need for reform in the current system, aiming to establish a fair and equitable approach tailored to the unique circumstances of each case. The decision to try a juvenile as an adult should involve a careful assessment of factors such as the offense's nature, the juvenile's age, mental capacity, and the potential for rehabilitation.

Reform initiatives should focus on introducing a more nuanced and individualized approach within the legal system. This may encompass a thorough examination of the circumstances surrounding the crime, consideration of the juvenile's capacity for rehabilitation, and the implementation of appropriate interventions to address underlying issues. The overarching objective is to strike a balance between holding individuals accountable for their actions and acknowledging the potential for rehabilitation and personal growth in young offenders within the criminal justice system.

I. Campaign Finance Reform

1. Would you support legislation to provide public financing for State and local election campaigns? **No, I do not support legislation for public financing of State and local election campaigns. I believe that alternative measures can better address concerns about campaign finance without relying on public funds.**

J. Labor

1. Would you support legislation to strengthen protection for workers trying to form or join a union? **Yes, I am a staunch supporter of legislation aimed at strengthening protections for workers seeking to form or join a union in Pennsylvania. This involves supporting pro-union legislation at the state level, opposing anti-union measures, and ensuring the enforcement of labor laws to prevent unfair labor practices. Strengthening alliances between unions, community organizations, and social justice movements will amplify the collective voice and influence of unions, making them a more formidable force in negotiations with employers and policymakers.**
2. Should the minimum wage be increased? If so, to what level and should the increase be indexed to inflation? **Yes, the minimum wage**

should be increased. Advocating for an increase in Pennsylvania's minimum wage to \$15 an hour is more than a policy shift—it's a commitment to fairness and economic dignity for all workers. This crucial raise is imperative to lift workers out of poverty, ensure access to basic necessities, and bridge the economic divides that have deepened over time. With the minimum wage stagnant at the federal minimum of \$7.25 since 2009, it fails to reflect today's cost of living. Elevating the wage to \$15 an hour marks a significant move towards economic justice, promising not only to boost local economies through heightened consumer spending but also to slash dependence on social welfare programs by ensuring a living wage. For businesses concerned about the impact of wage increases, we propose developing incentives or reducing tax burdens to ease the transition. This approach supports businesses in adapting to the change, ensuring that the move towards fair wages strengthens, rather than strains, Pennsylvania's economy. It's time for Pennsylvania to lead with courage and compassion, ensuring that prosperity is shared by workers and businesses alike.

3. Do you believe that Philadelphia and other municipalities should continue to be preempted from increasing the minimum wage on their own? **No, Philadelphia should not continue to be subject to preemption.**
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 support privatization of PA liquor stores. Pennsylvanians should be able to purchase all their alcoholic beverages in one location if they so choose.**

K. Transportation

Currently the State constitution mandates that revenue from the State gasoline tax be spent only on roads and bridges. Would you support an amendment to the Constitution allowing gas tax revenue to be spent on public transportation? **Yes**

L. Reforming Legislative Districts

1. Do you support measures that would (a) form an independent commission, and (b) apply sound methodologies, to draw all

congressional, State House, and Senate districts fairly in Pennsylvania? **Yes**

2. Would you support the reduction in size of the current PA House from 203 seats to 151 seats, or some other number?

No