

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

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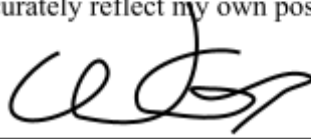
CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Will Gross

Office Sought: PA State Representative, 182nd District

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:

2/17/22

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 was elected as a Democratic Committee Person in the 26th Division of the 2nd Ward here in Philadelphia in May of 2018.

2. If you have previously held a government office:

- a. What are the primary issue areas in which you were involved?
- b. What committees, caucuses or working groups have you served on?

a. As an open and democratic Ward, the primary issues faced in the 2nd Ward have been endorsing progressive legislation and progressive candidates at all levels of government, registering and educating our voters on candidates, voting procedure and election day procedure, crafting bylaws for our Ward, crafting a robust GOTV program and forming working committees. I'm proud to say that I have been involved in all aspects of our critical work.

b. I have chaired the Fundraising Committee, raising thousands of dollars for our Ward, directly helping in all of our efforts, most notably our GOTV program. I have also been a member of the Bylaws committee, the communications committee, the GOTV committee and the E-Day committee. I was elected by my fellow committee people to serve as the 3rd Vice Chair on the leadership team in early 2020.

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.)

At OX Coffee we have worked to build community over the period of the last 10 years. We have worked with local artists and musicians, raised considerable funds to aid critical social justice efforts, hosted early meetings for the Philadelphia Museum of Art Union and most recently have partnered with Philabundance to help those in our communities that struggle with food insecurity.

I have worked with local elected officials and local progressive residents and small business owners who want to better their communities. These elected officials include: Congressman Dwight Evans, Council Member Mark Squilla, State Representative Mary Isaacson and State Senator Nikil Saval. Our most recent standing meetings have been with State Senator Nikil Saval which have been directly focused on helping small businesses survive during the worst of the pandemic. We have worked together on charting a course

for sidewalk seating legislation, to-go cocktails legislation, dealing with the issue of long-term empty storefronts and the portfolio sales of buildings which have the potential to drive out small businesses that add a great deal to the community. I am a stakeholder in a standing quarterly meeting with Congressman Dwight Evans who is a member of the SBA Committee in Washington. This working group's aim is to improve the lives of small business owners and working people in our city.

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

Inquirer Article on A Living Wage for PA:

<https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/15-dollar-minimum-wage-pennsylvania-20210323.html>

Philadelphia Gay News Article from this month:

<https://epgn.com/2022/02/17/democratic-candidates-vie-to-represent-the-gayborhood-in-pa-house-race/>

*I will attach all other appropriate documents to this email

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

I am currently in the process of earning endorsements and will report back as endorsements emerge. I am currently seeking endorsements from:

- Make the Road
- One PA
- PASNAP
- PFT
- Philadelphia 2nd Ward
- Philadelphia 5th Ward
- Philadelphia 8th Ward
- Philadelphia 30th Ward
- Philly DSA
- SEIU
- Working Families Party

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

Since launching in Mid-December, we have raised nearly \$40k and will be moving to public in-person fundraising events in the next few weeks. I'm proud to say that the vast majority of donations were from right here in Philadelphia and that nearly half of the 250 individual donations so far are of \$25 or below.

Our first in person fundraising event will be at K'Far just off Rittenhouse Square on the 3rd of March at 6pm. To stay competitive, we will be raising between 150–200k for this campaign.

Our petition program is locked in place and will be both volunteer and paid. We WILL be on the ballot. We have nearly 50 local volunteers already accounted for to lead the charge on petitions and our field program with a mail and digital program currently being planned as well. Our field operation and Election Day program will be aggressive and wide in scope.

Using the last three election cycles as criteria, we will need between 5,000 and 6,000 votes to win this primary election.

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

He/Him

8. What is your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual

9. What is your racial, ethnic identity?

I am a member of the AAPI community, my mother is Chinese and immigrated from Taiwan. My father is a Jewish American from Philadelphia.

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.

1. A Living Wage for PA
2. Housing as a human right
3. Healthcare as a human right
4. Healthy schools that inspire our children
5. A Green New Deal for PA

To me these 5 areas represent the building blocks for a sustainable and successful future for all. Without these pieces assured for all, we can only expect things to descend and get worse over time. We happen to live in the richest country in the history of the world and yet, so many suffer everyday from hunger and food insecurity, from lack of a safe home, from lack of being able to see a doctor, from going to a school filled with poison and from

lack of a safe and healthy environment. No one is truly free until these issues are confronted and addressed. No one is free, really, until we guarantee a decent life for everyone in our society.

II. Education

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

Yes I absolutely do. As I believe that access to a safe home and health care are human rights, so is an education, and that includes a higher education.

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

I do not believe in the standardized testing program. I believe they come between a teacher and their students. I believe that standardized testing is a program to diminish the public school system and lead our society toward a privatized future. I do not believe that standardized testing should hold any power over evaluating teachers, their students or their schools. I believe in fully funded schools that do not have asbestos, mold and crumbling walls that inspire all of our children rather than tests that evaluate students as if all schools existed on a level playing field.

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

I support fair funding in schools and believe that those schools that need the most attention, deserve the most attention. Our schools should not only be free of asbestos, lead, mold and crumbling walls, but should be places of inspiration for our children. Unfortunately, in too many of our communities, particularly in communities of color, this simply is not the case. The fair funding formula as it stands is not doing enough because it is not being used the way it was designed to. If we do not process all funds through the formula it will not function as it should and right now that's exactly what's happening. Without using the formula for 100% of the funds distributed, we will continue to face the inequalities that harm far too many of our children, their teachers, school staff and the larger community.

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?

My view on charter schools is that we need to have a statewide moratorium on new charter schools moving forward (as other states, like California have moved to do) and that those charter schools that are currently leaching off the public school system must be removed from that system of funding. Private companies that use public money to create private style enrollment systems do not serve the public interest.

Similarly, tax credits, or what I see as public dollars not collected, should not aid or give comfort to the private school system.

I am a product of the public school system and I believe in the public school system. My father taught in public schools as does my wife. Education is a human right and the education of all of our children must be seen as necessary in a free, equitable and decent society.

III. Budget and Taxes

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

Yes I do. I believe that the wealthy ought to pay their fair share in taxes and believe that the current tax code is based on an outdated, absurd line of thinking from the Reagan era. Trickle down economics does not work, when wealthy individuals or corporations are given tax breaks they too often keep everything for themselves. We need progressive taxation in PA in full.

- 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/>

Any loopholes that exist that assist large corporations like Target or Walmart from paying their fair share of taxes must be closed immediately. It is criminal that money that could be going toward schools, teachers and critical infrastructure is instead being used to line the pockets of wealthy corporations and those who profit from them.

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

As I believe in a progressive income Tax, that would be the one area I would focus on as a legislator. It is shameful that Pennsylvania is one of only 9 states in our country to not have a progressive income tax. We must change that now.

- 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?

I believe that any income, earned or “unearned” ought to be subject to being taxed equally. Without this type of income being taxed equally we risk furthering the divide between those who have much and those who have little in our society.

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

I support eliminating any loophole, like the Delaware loophole, that exists simply to assist large corporations from paying their fair share of taxes. Again, when large corporations like Target and Walmart do not pay their fair share of taxes, the community at large suffers. Schools suffer, infrastructure suffers, and ultimately, the working people in our society suffer.

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

Yes I do and at the highest level possible. I believe that we need to ban fracking in this state as it furthers our dependence on fossil fuels and also deeply endangers the drinking water in the areas in this state where it is taking place. We need A Green New Deal for PA immediately and we need to lead all players in the fossil fuel industry toward a green future now.

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 do not believe in any tax break or incentive to lure or retain business and that includes the Keystone Opportunity Zone program. I would work to introduce legislation to eliminate the program. Any tax break that hurts our working people by taking tax dollars out of the equation must be undone.

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?

I would absolutely approve of and would support the creation of a Pennsylvania Public Bank modeled after the Bank of North Dakota. True equality means that all of our people have access to the same benefits and accommodations and a public bank here in Pennsylvania would not only guarantee that, it'd assist in building and sustaining our communities across the Commonwealth.

V. Women's Rights

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

There should be absolutely no restrictions on a woman's right to choose.

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?

Roe v Wade needs to become the “law of the land”. States must not be able to regulate procedure with the decades old landmark Supreme Court decision.

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

Yes I would, immediately. One of the driving forces behind my wife Lindsey working with others to organize and form the Philadelphia Museum of Art Union came from a spreadsheet that listed all employees salary, sexual orientation, educational background and length of time at the Museum. What people saw via that spreadsheet was shocking in regard to the difference in pay between men and women working the same exact job for the same amount of time with the same qualifications.

VI. Children and Families

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

Yes the state should and they should also assist small businesses who with to do the right thing but cannot at the present time afford to.

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

The simple fact is, here in Philadelphia and across the Commonwealth, we are losing millions of dollars each year because parents are unable to find care for their children. This is unacceptable and immoral, particularly for those in our society who are already living lives of struggle. Our children represent the future and we must, as a state, provide universal childcare for them. We must learn from the examples of others across this country who are pushing to do exactly that. In Massachusetts, for example, the Common Start Bill would provide universal childcare for children from birth until 5 years old, after school time for children 5–12 and for children with special needs until the age of 15. We can do this and we must.

VII. Environment

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

I believe, as most do, that we are almost out of time on this issue. If we do not act immediately on climate change we will not only endanger future generations but this planet as well and it will be no one's fault but our own. We **MUST NOT** give shelter or tax relief to the fossil fuel industry or those who profit from the fossil fuel industry. Fracking **MUST** be banned from this and every other state. In exchange, we **MUST** promote green jobs and green industry in this state. Pennsylvania must be a state that welcomes

innovation in these areas. On the local and community level, we must help those most deeply impacted by climate change. Those in communities of struggle where the vast majority of buildings are not energy efficient. This means retrofitting homes and re-insulating homes and rooftops. Again, like so many other issues, this IS NOT a Philadelphia problem alone, this is a Pennsylvania issue and we must act accordingly to that fact as a legislature.

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

Yes I would, absolutely. Because single use plastics and plastics in general never fully break down, they pose an incredible threat to pollution and the environment.

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

Yes I do. I believe continuing our reliance on fossil fuels must be concluded. Beyond this, in our own city, 25% of low income households pay 19% percent more in energy bills than the national average across the country. We have to move away from fossil fuels now for the sake of the planet and for equality sake in our own communities.

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

It may sound simple and rudimentary, but I believe we need to create green jobs that pay more than their current fossil fuel jobs. These jobs need to be secure and need to have an outlook of having a real future. We are fortunate in the state of Pennsylvania to live in a state with an incredible amount of wind power potential. This would be the most sensible solution. Then jobs created by wind power could in fact become a pathway to lead folks currently working in the fossil fuel industry. I am of the thinking that although these people are currently working in an industry which is quite literally destroying our planet, by making green renewable energy more desirable from a paycheck standpoint. I am also of the belief that we should take all tax breaks away and all benefits away from the fossil fuel industry and impose taxes and impose a moratorium on any potential projects. Essentially pulling the plug on the industry here in Pennsylvania and by doing so making it obvious that green-renewable energy is the only path forward.

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

I believe that if you are appointed to be a member of the P.U.C. you must be someone who accepts the realities of climate change. I believe that they also ought to want to fight for climate justice and ending environmental racism.

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

We must first ensure that there is equality in this process. Far too often communities that struggle socioeconomically carry the majority of these sites in their communities and we must see to it that remediation in these communities is done properly. We must ensure that chemicals are disposed of properly in these communities and that the health of the people living in these communities is not further put at risk.

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

Adding protected bike lanes across the city and limiting cars by way of more closed walking streets is key. Adding mass transit, more subways, expanding current lines and adding new lines along with adding more fully electric buses to current routes is also key. We need to fully protect our parks and fully fund ALL of our schools so that we may remove the dangerous toxins that exist in far too many of our public schools. We must also ensure that all homes in our city are fully insulated from roof to the ground to guarantee energy efficiency. We must tax those who pollute our environment and make sure those funds directly address and support those who have been hardest hit by the effects of climate change.

VIII. Criminal Justice

- 1) Should stop and frisk be limited or outlawed?

Yes it should, absolutely. Stop and frisk is a racist policy that encourages racist police officers to act on their unfortunate feelings without penalty, further widening the divide between the public and law enforcement.

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

There are many things to be done in order to lower the mass incarceration problem we are facing in this city, this Commonwealth and this country. 1. The police must arrest fewer people. Far too many are arrested for low level infractions, such as traffic violations. In far too many cases the police are called in to intervene with situations they are simply not qualified to oversee. 2. We have to eliminate cash bail which is inherently racist. This one is simple, folks with money can get out of jail on bail while folks who can't, cannot. The domino effect on this is real. Being kept in jail means missing work, missing work means not being there for your family, this leads to a cycle of loss and hopelessness. We cannot have that and we cannot have folks stuck in jail on low level offenses. 3. DA's ought not to prosecute low level, non-violent offenses. This again goes back to the idea of a negative

domino effect. Court cases take time, time away from work, etc. 4. We have to invest in communities and not in law enforcement. We also need to decriminalize marijuana. The fact that cigarettes, which kill nearly 500k people each year in this country, are legal and pervasive in our society, yet marijuana is not, makes little to no sense on the surface. Our racist laws are keeping people in prison that ought to be out and contributing to society.

3) Should marijuana be fully legalized?

Yes it should. Hundreds of thousands of Americans die each year from cigarette and alcohol related causes and yet these drugs are legal. Marijuana is absolutely safe comparatively. Beyond this, this is a racial justice and mass incarceration issue. Black and brown people in our communities are far too often targeted and arrested for marijuana possession. Not only should individuals not be arrested for possession of marijuana, but those who have been arrested should have their records expunged.

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

No, absolutely not.

5) Should we ban the box in Pennsylvania?

Yes, we absolutely should. It has been proven that doing so significantly helps those with previous convictions transition back into society with dignity and success.

6) Should PA continue to build new prisons?

No we should not, we should be investing in our communities most harmed by law enforcement, over policing and underfunding from the city, state and federal levels.

7) Should PA begin to close prisons? Explain.

I do believe we should. As more investment into communities harmed by over policing and underfunding continues, as more laws are passed to push back against racism, segregation and inequality, we should be charting a course for a city, state and country without these facilities.

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

Yes I do, absolutely. I believe also that we need to move toward a nationwide ban on it as well.

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

They should not. Research clearly shows that doing so only leads to re-offenses in the future. We should be investing in all of our children, something we are not doing at the present time. Our schools, our neighborhoods struggling with poverty, those who suffer from drug addiction and those who live in an overwhelming state of hopelessness; we need to be investing more in people and less in punishing those who live lives of absolute struggle.

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?

I think we need to pass swift common sense gun laws now and I think we need to invest in communities that have historically suffered from over policing and underfunded schools. We need to invest in these communities by retrofitting homes to be energy efficient, we need a deep investment in mental health, we need to focus on infrastructure in these areas and we need to work directly with local leadership and community leaders to work on all of these issues as well. In short, we need to show that the legislature gives a damn about these communities and we need to do it now.

IX. Campaign Finance Reform

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

Yes I would. I would also support legislation to push for real campaign finance reform. It is absolutely unacceptable that for state-wide campaigns like mine, there is no cap on funds raised. The system as it stands leads to corruption and manipulation. Those who struggle most in our society suffer further because of it.

X. Labor

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

Unions are what bring some semblance of democracy to the workplace and wherever they exist there is hope for fairness, communication, decent workplace conditions and a salary that takes into account the reality of the job. My wife is the Vice President of the Philadelphia Museum of Art Union and has also worked directly for AFSCME to organize other similar unions across the country. What I have seen her deal with in terms of union busting tactics is intolerable. The endless delay strategies by management lawyers, the coercion strategies against unionizing, the threats and the manipulation strategies to take power away from organizing must be stopped. Pushing for legislation that pushes back on negotiation delays, that pushes back on coercion strategies, threats and manipulation

must be seen as our only route to protecting democracy, safety and humanity in the workplace. Too many people for far too long have dealt with what I have seen first hand. The idea that asking for a decent workplace environment, for appropriate pay for work, for having a say in the standards of a workplace, for having a say in the equity of a workplace, the idea that that is met with resistance of any kind is completely unacceptable.

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

We must raise the state's minimum wage to become a living wage of at least \$15/hr. Regardless of where you live in the state of PA, you cannot make ends meet on \$7.25/hr, which is what our current minimum wage has been locked in at for well over a decade. As states that border PA move into a future where they deliver a decent wage for all of their people, PA remains in the past.

[I wrote an article for the Philadelphia Inquirer last year](#) about how we can move forward as a state to secure a living wage and help those small businesses that may find it difficult to afford paying their workers this amount at the present time. In short, I believe that the state needs to bridge the gap until a small business can afford to make it happen.

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

No I do not, but I do believe that every Pennsylvanian deserves a living wage of at least \$15/hr.

- 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, and do not believe any other service ought to be privatized either. We need the funds generated from our liquor stores for crucial elements in our communities.

- 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 of all we need to address the Living Wage. This has to happen immediately and not incrementally which could take years. The person making \$9, \$10, \$11 dollars per hour can't afford to wait around while things slowly tick up, they need help now. We CAN make it happen. The idea that only Philadelphia struggles with folks not making enough to make

ends meet is a myth. Folks across this state, no matter where they are, cannot live on \$7.25/hr, period. In addition, we need to have more better paying jobs (above the \$15 minimum) available in areas that have historically only had a majority of “minimum” wage jobs. Incentivizing small businesses (NOT at the expense of working folks or folks who are struggling) to create jobs in these areas by working with local community groups could be part of the solution. Next is moving to guarantee higher education for all. The fact that this is not a right in the richest country in the history of the world, is completely unacceptable. No matter where someone is from, no matter their background, no matter their wealth, everyone must have the opportunity to attend a college or university. We must also guarantee housing and health care as human rights in this state. No one should feel the crippling weight of not being able to visit a doctor when they’re sick or not have a home to go to at night.

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 I would support legislation in this area. Our system of redrawing district lines is corrupt, biased and racist to an incredible degree. Only by way of a truly independent commission can we achieve just districts.

XII. Public Health

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

Yes I would, I believe that healthcare is a human right.

- 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?
I believe that healthcare is a fundamental human right, this includes access for all communities to lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines. I believe that the ultimate goal for the Commonwealth and this country is to move to a single payer healthcare system. No one is truly safe or cared for until everyone is safe and cared for. I believe that the state must take responsibility for the health and safety of its people.

In the case of jobs, I believe that we can begin down this path by establishing that health care comes with any job within the Commonwealth for the worker and their family. For larger businesses or organizations that can afford to pay, they must pay immediately. For those smaller businesses that cannot afford it at the present time, the state must come in and bridge the gap until they can.

The health and safety of all of our people will lead to a stronger and more productive Commonwealth which is always needed, but particularly so in this moment as we emerge from a once in a century pandemic.

XIV. Housing

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

Affordable and safe housing must be accessible to all Pennsylvanians. I believe that new housing development should not occur that doesn't include affordable and safe options for tenants. In areas that are in times of particular struggle, development on housing should not occur that doesn't have a majority of affordable, safe options for tenants. I believe that wealthy landowners and landlords that do not rent their properties for an extended period of time ought to pay a vacancy tax implemented by the state. I believe the revenue from this state tax ought to go toward building affordable housing so everyone in this city and the Commonwealth has access to a safe and affordable home. A similar state tax on landlords and property owners who do not rent their storefronts ought to pay a tax which would build a small business fund for PA. This fund would directly assist small businesses hoping to provide their workers with a living wage and health care.

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

Yes I would support a mandate requiring landlords to show good cause for an eviction.