

# 2011 Mayoral Candidate LGBT Questionnaire

## General

DATE: January 21, 2011

NAME: Patricia Van Pelt-Watkins

HOME PHONE: 312-291-9727

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS: 2312 W. Harrison, Chicago, IL 60612

CAMPAIGN PHONE: 312-291-9727 FAX: 312-291-9727

CAMPAIGNWEBSITE: [www.patriciaforchicago.com](http://www.patriciaforchicago.com) EMAIL: [patricia@patriciaforchicago.com](mailto:patricia@patriciaforchicago.com)

CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Mansoor Khadir

1. Briefly list your involvement with LGBT issues and organizations over the last ten years.

Over time, I have become a supporter of LGBT rights. Growing up, I was not exposed to or educated about the issues of LGBT individuals. As the CEO of Target Area Development Corporation, we worked across communities on issues from public safety and education to affordable housing and health care. It has been through this work that I have gotten to know LGBT individuals and gained a better understanding and appreciation for the issues of the LGBT community. I am now a proud supporter of LGBT rights, and human rights for all people.

## LGBT City of Chicago Employee Benefits

1. Which additional benefits would you seek to extend to LGBT employees that are not currently being offered by the City?

I supported the Illinois General Assembly's civil unions legislation. I believe that same-sex couples should have access to the same benefits and resources as married couples. As mayor, I will work with the LGBT community to make this a reality.

2. Would you actively advocate for ensuring that LGBT employees are afforded the same partnership benefits as those individuals who are able to marry? Please be specific.

Yes. As mayor, I will be a national leader on this issue. I will continue to work with the General Assembly and Congress to advance these rights for people across the country. And locally, I will work with the city council to pass legislation to ensure LGBT employees are afforded equal benefits and rights.

## Education

1. What are your criteria for hiring and evaluating the CEO of Chicago Public Schools (CPS)? What aspects of diversity are important to you for this role and how, if at all, would the CEO be evaluated for creating a system where all students feel safe and respected within the Chicago Public Schools' system?

As mayor, I will work with communities to select a new CEO of Chicago Public Schools who is an educator who has worked in the classroom, and possesses innovative ideas, managerial experience, and strong interpersonal skills. This person must have demonstrated experience and a strong track record in improving struggling urban schools, and a genuine commitment to working with unions, teachers, parents, students and diverse communities in this process. This person must be dedicated to addressing the complex and diverse needs of students and providing the comprehensive social and emotional supports needed to ensure students feel safe and respected in all of our schools.

2. Will you commit to the inclusion of LGBT families and students in CPS policy formation and in plans/programs/activities of CPS?

Yes. I believe that all communities must be included in an effective and comprehensive process to improving our schools. LGBT families and students must be included to ensure programs and policies are relevant and responsive to their needs. All communities must be at the table to improve our schools and ensure all students are safe and supported and are able to develop their full human potential.

3. How would you support system-wide inclusion of LGBTQ topics in curricula in age appropriate ways? Would you support system-wide sex-education that includes HIV and STI prevention in age appropriate ways?

I believe that culturally relevant and accurate curriculum is important for student learning and development. It is important that students can relate to what they're learning, and that curriculum helps students develop an appreciation and understanding of the history and struggles of the diverse groups that built this city, and built this country.

I support system-wide sex-education and HIV and STI prevention. I think it is important for youth to be able to make informed decisions about their personal lives and personal health. I believe that these programs must be age-appropriate and culturally sensitive, but that they play important role for all students.

4. Would you institute a CPS-wide online occurrence reporting system that includes reports of bullying and discrimination filed by students, staff and families that also tracks the category of protected class against which the incident was directed? If so, would you give students staff and families an oversight role in tracking complaints and their resolutions in order to identify potential issues for schools, school leadership, school security, etc.?

I would support an online reporting system that respects the anonymity of individuals and families. I believe that including bias-based incident reporting and the involvement of students, staff and families will be important in developing proactive and responsive policies and programs throughout CPS.

5. How will you fight to end anti-gay and other forms of bullying in schools (K-12)? Will you ensure that appropriate policies are written and implemented in schools to prevent or respond appropriately to bullying?

I believe we must cultivate a culture, supported by policy, that ensures all students are safe in and around school. I believe that providing anti-bullying and anti-bias trainings for principals, teachers and students are important in increasing tolerance and understanding. I also believe that the appropriate social and emotional supports need to be provided in schools so that students feel safe to report and address issues that arise.

## **Aging**

1. Would you support an assessment of the capacity of the city of Chicago to provide culturally competent and welcoming programming for LGBT seniors?

Yes.

2. How will you work with LGBT community agencies in Chicago to increase their capacity to service LGBT seniors?

I believe that community based organizations play a crucial role in providing services and support, as well as being an effective advocate, for communities and seniors. I would work with LGBT community agencies to develop and evaluate policies, programs and services for LGBT seniors. I would also commit to directing funding through these agencies that provide safe and accessible spaces to serve these communities.

3. Will you recognize LGBT seniors as a vulnerable population with unique and specific needs and designated as a target population under the criteria of the Area Plan for the Chicago Department on Senior Services?

Yes

## **Youth Homelessness**

1. What needs to be done to make Chicago a safer, more open community to LGBT youth to prevent homelessness?

I believe that providing social and emotional support services through schools, community-based organizations and public health organizations are important ways of ensuring LGBT youth are supported and do not become homeless. I believe that some of the same support structures that serve women and girls, from 24-hour hotlines to safe-space shelters, should be utilized in supporting the needs of LGBT youth. I would also support after-school and youth employment programs developed specifically for LGBT youth.

2. How will you work to improve LGBT competency in city departments and among organizations that receive city funds?

I support the implementation of sensitivity trainings across city departments and agencies that receive city funding. I believe that agencies like the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations' Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues and departments such as the Office of LGBT Health can play a leadership role in educating and advocating for LGBT issues within city government and city supported institutions.

## **Transgender Rights**

1. Homelessness is a constant problem in the transgender community and is greatly linked to lack of employment opportunities for transgendered people. What will you do as mayor to address the problem of homelessness and employment among transgender individuals?

I believe the transgender community, like so many communities, is often best served by organizations within their own community that they trust and that provide responsive and sensitive services. I would support programs—including employment, counseling and social services—through these organizations to ensure they receive the services and supports they need.

2. How will you investigate and remedy the persistent instances of discrimination against transgender people that go unreported?

I believe that the city must take a leadership role in cultivating a culture of acceptance and appreciation of the transgender community. I believe that specific programs and training should be provided to ensure that this community is protected from violence and discrimination, and that they have a voice in city government.

3. Can you commit to inclusion more transgender people to work in municipal government, including managerial and directorial positions?

Yes.

## **Marriage Equality**

1. Will you support equal marriage rights for same sex couples? Will you advocate for marriage equality on the state and federal level?

I am a strong supporter of civil unions. I believe that same sex couples, and others who create their own supportive family structures, should have the same legal rights as married couples.

Marriage is something governed by the church, not the state. The state grants civil unions, not marriage, even to straight couples. While I strongly support same sex couples being granted all of the rights and respect as straight couples, from the state and society, I do believe the separation of church and state must remain intact.

## **HIV/AIDS & Health**

1. How will you acknowledge the urgent need for HIV prevention and continue to devote city resources toward programs and initiatives that counter the spread of HIV?

The growing rate of HIV/AIDS across communities—especially among youth—is of deep concern to me. HIV/AIDS is a preventable disease. With education and a deeper commitment of energy and resources, I believe Chicago can be a leader among major cities to bring the HIV/AIDS rate down. As mayor, I will invest in HIV/AIDS treatment and education programs. I will prioritize expanding quality and relevant HIV/AIDS education programs for youth in schools and community organizations.

2. Do you support continued City corporate funding for the Chicago Department of Public Health Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Health?

Yes.

3. How will you address HIV prevention in communities of color?

HIV/AIDS is a growing problem in communities of color - especially the African-American community. As a leader in the African-American community, I have worked across communities and sectors, to pass legislation to address this issue. I helped pass the African-American HIV/AIDS Response Act and the Reduction and Racial Disparities Acts in the General Assembly. I believe similar legislative actions along with dedicated funding and programs are needed at the city level.

4. How will you work to improve LGBT competency in city health departments and among organizations that receive city funds?

I believe that training and education programs across city health departments and organizations that receive city funds will be crucial in increasing LGBT competency. As mayor, I will support these programs.

5. What criteria would you use to determine a more equitable way to distribute funding for HIV prevention and services?

I will utilize an equitable approach to all city funding programs. I believe that allocating services based on need is fundamental to ensuring fairness in this city. I will focus funding in areas with the highest increases and highest needs.

## **Public Safety**

1. Will you promote the active recruitment of LGBT individuals for the Police and Fire Departments?

Yes.

2. How will you strengthen current LGBT sensitivity training programs in both Departments?

I believe that training and education programs across city public safety programs and funds will be crucial in increasing LGBT competency. As much as possible, I believe these efforts must be supported and implemented with and among the rank-and-file leadership within the police and fire departments. As mayor, I will cultivate this leadership and support these programs.

3. Will you commit to placing an LGBT liaison in each police district? Or each of the 5 police areas?

I support the goal of placing an LGBT liaison in each police district. I hope to be able to implement this within my first term.

4. Would you support the creation and implementation of standardized guidelines for humane treatment of transgendered individuals while in the custody of the Chicago Police Department – guidelines that would be created by transgendered community members in collaboration with the Chicago Police Department?

Yes.

## **Advisory Council**

1. What role will the Advisory Council on LGBT Issues have in your Administration? Additionally, what role will the Director of the Advisory Council have in your Administration?

I believe the Advisory Councils have not been empowered to affect change in city government in the past. As mayor, I will change this. I believe these Councils should be engaged in ensuring the needs and priorities of communities are implemented across departments. I will ensure that the Councils have direct relationships, communication and accountability with relevant department directors and the mayor's office.