



Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO
2023 Primary Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Q. Please list all membership organizations including professional associations, civic, community, charitable, religious, social, fraternal/sororal, or education organizations to which you belong or are affiliated. Please indicate if you serve on the board or as an officer of any of these organizations.

A: Former member of Philadelphia City Council
Greater Philadelphia Association of Realtors (GPAR)
Universal Health Realty Trust
Friends of Rittenhouse Square
Member of five (5) synagogues
Member of the Board at the Wanamaker House, Parc, the Warwick, Lanesborough, Barclay and Independence place

Q: What are the areas in your platform that are focused on the needs of working people?

A: My entire platform is focused on supporting Philadelphia's workers, residents and job creators. I do not think of these groups as separate, siloed policy areas, because that too often creates conflicting promises. One of the key reasons why I have promised to release all of the candidate questionnaires I will complete in this campaign is to ensure that organizations like the AFL-CIO never have to wonder what commitments I made to other business and trade organizations and whether they are in conflict with the commitments I am making here.

I am focusing my platform on what I believe are the biggest crises facing Philadelphia: a public safety crisis, a jobs crisis, an education crisis and a crisis of affordable housing. Of course, our biggest challenge is leadership in the Mayor's office.

I believe we must, as a first and immediate step, reduce the crime and sense of lawlessness that we see in too many neighborhoods today. It is unacceptable that some are afraid to leave their house, go to their jobs, shop at a corner store, or even go to school. Few, if any, residents will want to stay or businesses will want to invest if we don't improve community safety across the city. I am proud to be the only candidate for mayor who has introduced a comprehensive community safety plan, with 10 action steps I will take in my first 100 days. Among the steps I will take are increasing penalties for violence against any city employee. For more information please visit my website at www.votedomb.com/crimeplan.

But I recognize that improving community safety is just the first step of making Philadelphia the city we know it can be. We have the highest-among big-cities-poverty rate, one of the highest child poverty rates, and one of the deepest poverty rates in the country. Unless and until we get more city residents working for good wages at good jobs, our city will continue to struggle. That is why I believe we must have a commitment to add 100,000 jobs and 100,000 residents to the city and lift 100,000 people out of poverty within 10 years. Like the AFL-CIO, I believe that hard work and opportunity makes a difference in people's lives. But we all know that Philadelphia too often is not a partner in creating good jobs, but rather an impediment. As the only candidate for mayor who built a business from the ground up and created jobs, I believe I am uniquely qualified to help Philadelphia residents and workers build an economy that works for us all.

As mayor I will focus on creating good paying jobs for working people and their families; working with labor to expand access to employment pipelines with an emphasis on increasing workforce diversity; building more quality, affordable housing; and improving our public education system beyond just

classroom performance but also building infrastructure and institutional support systems that aim to improve the overall well-being of Philadelphia youth.

Of course, campaign rhetoric is not enough. That's why I hope voters will look at my record on City Council and in the private sector. To help reduce Philadelphia's highest-among-big-cities poverty, I led the effort to refund City wage tax dollars to lower-income workers, a measure estimated to benefit half of the households in poverty. As mayor, I will continue to prioritize efforts that lift people, particularly children, out of poverty. I helped fund training efforts for returning citizens to help them find employment when they returned to our community.

To ensure that limited taxpayer dollars are being used effectively and efficiently, I fought to bring financial oversight, accountability, and transparency to City Hall. The common-sense reforms included requiring the City to acquire an appraisal for property transactions, requiring businesses to pay their taxes before being allowed to continue doing business in Philadelphia, and increasing oversight of and transparency around City finances. I also challenged Councilmanic prerogative, which can too often be used to promote favored development and restrict debate on all other. Many of these actions angered or upset politically connected insiders, but they were the right thing to do for Philadelphia and I will always stand for the best interests of the city, its workers, residents and job creators.

Additionally, I worked with the City's Revenue Department to increase collection efforts from 89 percent in 2015 to 96 percent in 2019, resulting in over \$100 million of delinquent taxes the City collected every year. I also called for the use of commercial real estate appraisers to help us correct our inaccurate valuation on commercial property, bringing in over \$120 million per year in additional real estate collection once we accurately assessed commercial properties. Together, those two actions bring in roughly \$220 million per year to fund our schools and city services.

The hardworking people of Philadelphia deserve a mayor who spends every minute of every day working to improve their lives and our communities.

Q: Have you ever assisted a labor organization to achieve any of its goals? If yes, please explain.

A: Yes. As a member of City Council I was proud to support legislation that created a fair Workweek as well as repeatedly supporting higher minimum wages and living wages.

Perhaps most importantly, some of the businesses with which I am involved are represented by unions, including SEIU.

Q: Can you provide some examples of how you've recently helped workers organize and/or get a fair contract from their employers?

A: Yes. As a member of City Council I was proud to support legislation that created a fair Workweek as well as repeatedly supporting higher minimum wages and living wages.

Q: Have you ever been endorsed by the Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO in the past? If yes, when and for what office?

A: No.

Q: Are you currently or have you ever been a dues-paying member of a union? Which union? From date to date?

A: No.

Q: Do you believe that all workers guaranteed the right to collective bargaining? Why?

A: Yes. Collective bargaining protects and maintains the balance of power between employers and employees. It elevates the voices and interests of workers, helping to sustain a strong middle-class that is integral to our local and the regional economy. I will oppose any and all efforts to unfairly or illegally restrict workers' rights to collective bargaining.

Q: Currently, the minimum wage in Pennsylvania is \$7.25 and municipalities like Philadelphia are prohibited by state law to raise our wage above the state's current minimum. The new leadership of the state House will be examining the minimum wage this upcoming session. If the house is able to remove the current statute, would you support a minimum wage increase?

A: Although as Mayor, I would not have a vote on whether to increase the commonwealth's minimum wage, I do support increasing the base wage to at least \$15 an hour. I was proud to support an increase when Council approved a minimum wage hike on the ballot in 2019 and in support of a higher minimum wage for all municipal workers.

But I do not believe that there is nothing that can or should be done to increase the minimum wage if Republicans in Harrisburg block Philadelphia's ability to raise it. One thing the pandemic has taught us in no uncertain terms is that a demand for workers increases workers' ability to negotiate how they work, what they are paid, and what benefits they should receive. Is it simply a fact that retail jobs which pay \$20 an hour would not do so without a demand for workers.

That is why I believe the next mayor must be focused on expanding the number of jobs that need workers. The city must, of course, do more to prepare workers for those jobs through new training and education programs and support entrepreneurs who will hire from their neighborhoods.

Q: Over the last decade, many municipalities have sold off core public assets to private companies. There are some deep-pocketed special interests loudly advocating the privatization of public services, which nearly always leads to skyrocketing rates for consumers. If elected, what would you do to oppose skyrocketing rates for consumers? If elected, what would you do to oppose privatization and protect the middle-class jobs in Philadelphia?

A: I generally do not support the sale or privatization of public assets, although I

recognize the allure of a massive influx of badly needed cash to shore up our pension plan or fix our crumbling schools. I believe and the record has shown, that with strong leadership and accountable management, public assets like our utilities can and do provide real value to the city, ratepayers and workers.

Given the extreme need for additional funding, one area I would be open to further discussion about are public-private partnerships like the one supported by former AFL-CIO head Richard Trumka when there was a move to transform PGW. That plan would protect workers, protect ratepayers, and allow for the necessary cash influx to support our pension. I would, of course, want to partner with the AFL-CIO and other organizations from the earliest discussions.

Q: Unscrupulous developers are engaged in dangerous building projects in every neighborhood in the city. Between their exploitative labor practices, complete lack of job safety and skirting local tax requirements, these bad actors are left unchecked. If elected, what will you do to strengthen the Department of Licenses and Inspections so that these types of unsafe projects are prevented before they cause harm?

A: This comes down to leadership and accountability. Safety is the primary responsibility of city government. As mayor, I will direct all department and agency leaders, including the Commissioner of Licenses and Inspections, to prioritize safety with any and all City services or operations.

The first legislation I passed in City Council was to strengthen compliance requirements for businesses to receive City licenses or permits. The intent of this measure was not only to ensure businesses, including developers, were paying their taxes but also to help the City expel any bad actors. As mayor, I will direct additional resources to support these efforts, particularly in the Department of License and Inspections.

<https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia-building-safety-staffing-shortages-inspections-20220526.html>

The Department of Licenses and Inspections also has an alarming staff shortage that is a leading cause of unsafe worksites. As mayor, I will improve the City efforts to hire and retain a highly qualified workforce that will improve enforcement of building codes.

Q: Philadelphia has the highest rate of deep poverty of any of our nation's 10 largest cities. Our high poverty rate damages the lives of the hundreds of thousands of Philadelphians, 23 percent of whom live in poverty. What policies do you support to address the problem of poverty in Philadelphia? How would you seek to empower and improve the lives of Philadelphians living in poverty, and to reduce Philadelphia's poverty rate?

A: We must address our highest-among-big-cities poverty rate and it is unacceptable that so many of our neighbors face food and housing insecurity. As mayor, I will move aggressively to support small and neighborhood businesses, expand school curriculums to teach students financial literacy, technology and entrepreneurship so they can build their own businesses and futures, and expand job training. Creating entrepreneurs and supporting their new businesses is the only way to create generational wealth that has too often skipped communities. I believe we must aim high by setting a goal of 100,000 new jobs in the city within 10 years.

I also was proud to support a requirement that all city government job openings be available to those who have resided in the city for at least one calendar year. I believe that we must first look within, provide proper outreach, training and support, to help reduce our poverty and build stronger neighborhoods. I was disappointed legislation was introduced in Council to rescind this requirement, with its sponsor declaring it a failure even though the current administration appears to have done nothing to actually implement it.

Q: Stable income is vital for security during retirement. Will you support the continuation of a defined benefit pension plan option for municipal employees? Do you support maintaining the DROP program for municipal employees?

A: I believe DROP should continue to be a negotiated benefit, as it always has been, for covered employees. I do not believe non-career executive branch employees should be eligible for the DROP program. Any change would apply only for future hires to ensure that the city can live up to the promises made to all current employees.

Q: Philadelphia's public schools are facing an ongoing crisis. Underfunding, school closures, layoffs, and mismanagement have hurt students, teachers, staff, and the entire community. In addition, it has been estimated that it would take a minimum of \$200 million, on top of what has been outlined in the budget, to remediate only the most serious environmental concerns in the district's over 200 buildings which have an average age of 70 years. What is your vision for the Philadelphia School District? How do you intend to achieve your vision for the Philadelphia School District.

A: First, we must address the ongoing violence and crime in our city. If we don't get that under control, Philadelphia will not be considered a viable option for growth and job creation.

But for the City to really have a strong future, we must make generational change to our broken education system. I will put education at the center of how the City makes decisions because a quality education system is vital to a thriving Philadelphia.

I have proudly voted for increasing investments in our schools. I led the charge to both collect delinquent taxes and to correct our assessment system to ensure that schools were getting the funding they needed and were owed.

And I support increased funding for our schools. But we all know money alone can not fix the schools.

We need to create safer communities. Too many children are coming to schools every day in trauma. They live in communities with violence. They face both food and housing insecurity. Children can't learn and teachers can't teach when dealing with trauma each day.

In addition to focusing on how students live outside of schools, I want to rethink education to include financial literacy; technology training; entrepreneurship courses; and provide opportunities for high school students to work for credit so they can learn the skills -- including soft skills -- they'll need to be successful. I know from experience that working as I did in high school -- I was a janitor after wrestling practice every day at a rate of \$1.60 an hour -- helped me to become a better student and employee.

Lastly, we need to improve our school infrastructure. It was a mistake the City did not refinance as much of its debt as possible while rates were low. But until low rates return, I would use the federal funds we have received to make rebuilding our schools a priority -- or, at a minimum, have property heating and air conditioning. It's unacceptable we have to close schools because it's too hot and that all schools won't have HVAC until 2027.