



Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia
2023 Primary Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Q: The path towards a prosperous future for every Philadelphian requires renewed energy and fresh approaches to how we collaborate and invest in the future growth of our remarkable city. It will take intentional, thoughtful, and engaged leadership to enact changes beneficial to all Philadelphians, and effective policies that will result in citywide economic growth. If elected Mayor, what will be your vision for the City of Philadelphia?

A: I am running for mayor because Philadelphia is in crisis. We have a community safety crisis, a poverty and jobs crisis, an education crisis and a crisis of affordable housing. The city is losing population and while the number of jobs in the city is up, it's still below what it was pre-pandemic. Our budget is temporarily flush with COVID related revenues but remains unstable over the long-term with significant underfunded liabilities. We need someone who has the right skill set, vision and commitment to working collaboratively if we are going to address Philadelphia's biggest challenges.

As mayor, I will first fight to reduce the violence too many communities are facing by focusing on the most violent and taking illegal guns off the street. I know that there isn't a way to "solve" crime -- it's usually a symptom of underlying problems like poverty, a lack of opportunity and housing and food insecurity. We have to create real opportunity for today's workers and tomorrow's. I want to lift people out of poverty, not make it more comfortable. While others talk about helping create jobs, I will be focused on creating more entrepreneurs, which is the best way to create opportunity and generational wealth. I want to become a city of homeowners once again,

which will require increased development and more people working at higher wages. And I want to refocus our school system around students and parents.

Q: How would you describe your leadership style if elected? How would you work with the business and civic community in executing it?

A: I have different experience than other candidates for mayor. I grew up modestly, learning the value of hard work at an early age. I shined shoes and delivered newspapers as a kid. I mopped floors after wrestling practice in high school. I worked full time and took night classes at American University. I came to Philadelphia, built a successful business from the ground up. I ran for Council because I wanted to give back to a city which has given so much to me. In Council, I helped lead the charge to support small businesses and workers by reducing the city's too high BIRT and wage tax. I demanded the city focus on and fund only programs that work. I supported more funding for schools and donated my entire salary to education programs to help students and returning citizens build strong, productive lives. There is no other candidate who has the same private sector and government experience I do.

My experience working in the private sector and government means I will be a different kind of mayor. I didn't grow up in politics, where what matters most is who "wins" and who "loses". I believe that we are better by working together and, as I did in my business and on City Council, I will be focused on results, not ideology. I have repeatedly shown, in both my business and on Council, that I am willing to work with anyone and forgo credit, as I did while working with the Chamber to pass cuts to the BIRT and our wage taxes, to make progress. I hope to work closely with anyone and everyone as committed to addressing our two biggest issues: community safety and poverty. I will run the most transparent administration in America because I want people to hold me accountable for results.

Q: Philadelphia's designation as the "poorest" of the largest U.S. cities is

well documented. With 23.3% of residents living in poverty, over 350,000 of our fellow citizens are in need of resources to make a better life for themselves and their families. The effects of poverty extend beyond the individual with lost tax revenue, increased fiscal burdens, and a deterrent to the location of new businesses, jobs and income earners. As Mayor, what would you do to reduce Philadelphia's poverty rate?

A: I have a different view than some of the other candidates, who seem more focused on making poverty more comfortable than helping lift people out of poverty. I have set an ambitious goal of lifting 100,000 city residents out of poverty by 2030. I believe the only way to do that is to work with existing businesses to create new jobs that pay good wages and to foster the development of a new generation of entrepreneurs.

As mayor, I will focus on inclusive growth policies designed to create jobs in every neighborhood. To do this, I will move to update our outdated tax system, stop double taxing job creators, make government easier to deal with and focus on creating more entrepreneurs, which I believe is the best way to create generational wealth.

To help create the next generation of entrepreneurs and train workers needed to fill new jobs, I will move to have our schools begin to teach financial literacy, tech and entrepreneurship in every grade and offer high school students the opportunity to work one day a week for credit, teaching them important life skills.

Of course, businesses need access to capital to invest and grow and as mayor, I will work with banks and CDFIs to increase the access to capital for new, small and minority entrepreneurs. It is unacceptable that Philadelphia has one of the lowest rates of Black and Brown owned businesses.

The benefits of a growing economy that creates good paying jobs goes beyond work itself because it helps workers afford to become homeowners and build wealth.

As the only candidate for mayor who has successfully built a business from the ground up, I believe I am uniquely qualified to help Philadelphia support job creators.

Q: Further, what actions have you taken to help reduce Philadelphia's poverty rate?

A: In addition to helping create jobs in my private sector career, there are three specific things I did as a member of City Council I want to highlight:

- Pushed for greater use of Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): To ensure Philadelphians reap the benefits they are entitled to receive, he proposed and passed legislation requiring local employers to notify employees of their EITC eligibility so they may access monies they are entitled to receive and eventually reinvest those dollars back into the local economy. The EITC is a federal tax refund credit that far too many Philadelphians do not take advantage of due to lack of knowledge.
- Led the charge to reduce taxes for low-income wage earners: Historically, Philadelphia has taxed lower-income earners the highest in the nation. I believe this is fundamentally unacceptable and that's why I led the charge in passing legislation to expand the tax refund reimbursement rate for low-wage earners putting hundreds of thousands of dollars back into the pockets of hardworking Philadelphians. Reports suggest 60,000 households and 200,000 people in Philadelphia would qualify to receive these funds.
- Helped pass wage tax and business tax relief: I have repeatedly pushed to overhaul the City's tax structure because it is a primary barrier to growing the local economy. Philadelphia is the only big city in the country to double-tax businesses and has some of the highest wage taxes in the nation. In June 2022, I successfully fought to deliver historic tax reform, working with my colleagues, the Chamber of Commerce and the minority Chambers. My original legislation was the impetus to the eventual final package which led to the City reducing the wage tax and the business income and receipts tax to the lowest rate in decades. These changes will not only give workers a pay raise

and help stimulate the economy, but also signal to prospective employers and workers that Philadelphia is a great place to work and do business.

Q: Philadelphia consistently ranks above the national average in terms of crime, especially violent offenses. In 2022 the city's gun violence statistics reached record levels for the third straight year with over 500 homicides and nearly 1,800 gunshot survivors. If elected Mayor, what would you do to reduce crime, gun violence in Philadelphia?

A: I have proposed a comprehensive plan to improve community safety, rebuild our broken safety infrastructure and provide opportunity and education to reduce the lure of crime in the future. In my plan, which begins with 10 action steps I will take in my first 100 days, I detail how I will declare a crime emergency on my first day in office, build a public safety cabinet that includes state and federal authorities, and crack down on illegal guns by targeting the most violent. Because I know that there isn't a way to "solve" crime -- it's usually a symptom of underlying problems like poverty, a lack of opportunity and housing and food insecurity -- we have to create real opportunity for today's workers and tomorrow's. For more information please visit my website at www.votedomb.com/crimeplan.

Q: What actions have you taken to date to help reduce crime and gun violence in the city?

A: Separate and apart from my efforts to create jobs, which I believe is a pillar of any community safety programs, as a member of City Council, I supported increased funding for programs and policies designed to reduce violence in our communities. And when I learned that the city couldn't tell whether the increased spending was effective, I called for a full audit. The recent news that some funds may have been misappropriated is enraging. As mayor, I will take quick action to account for all funds that have been appropriated and only fund programs that will work going forward.

Q: Is there a specific role that you envision businesses playing in helping to create a safe and clean environment?

A: I believe there are five (5) things businesses can do to help improve safety everywhere in the city.

- Bring people back to the office. While I understand the allure for workers of being able to work from home, workers who no longer work in the city are reducing needed tax revenues. Additionally, more workers in the city not only generates additional tax revenues and supports local businesses, it helps create a vitality that benefits the entire city.
- Commit to “Philadelphia First” job growth. I recognize that Philadelphia does not make it easy to add jobs, but if companies would look to locate new hires in the city first, before looking elsewhere, that will undoubtedly help us grow jobs, increase our population, and add to our tax rolls.
- Hire students while in high school. I worked after high school, and have had Cristo Rey students in my office. I believe working provides young people with an opportunity to learn important skills as well as something to do after school. To make the most of the program I hope to enact as mayor, there have to be employers willing to have these students work for them at least one-day a week.
- Support changes to education. To help create the next generation of entrepreneurs and train workers needed to fill new jobs, I will move to have our schools begin to teach financial literacy, tech and entrepreneurship in every grade and offer high school students the opportunity to work one day a week for credit, teaching them important life skills. I hope that the business community would publicly support these changes.
- Source locally. Every business buys things – from paper goods to office supplies to electronics and furnishings. Having businesses of every size purchase its goods from a local firm would create jobs and keep tax revenues in the city.

Q: Philadelphia's unemployment rate of 10.6% is well above the U.S. average of 6.0%. Since 1970 Philadelphia jobs have decreased approximately 22% while regional competitors have realized double-digit gains. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia has fewer business establishments per capita than comparable cities which diminishes opportunities for local employment, business to business contracting, lending and investment. Further, it severely limits the city's tax base for education, public safety, blight removal and other quality of life improvements. If elected Mayor, what actions would you take to improve our economy, incentivize new and existing businesses to grow citywide and create more jobs? How will you make this a priority? Please be specific.

A: As mayor, I will focus on inclusive growth policies designed to create jobs in every neighborhood. To do this, I will move to update our outdated tax system, stop double taxing job creators, make government easier to deal with and focus on creating more entrepreneurs, which I believe is the best way to create generational wealth. I will also move to change curriculum in our schools and create new high schools to train today's students to be tomorrow's workers in growing industries. I will work with banks and CDFIs to increase the access to capital for new, small and minority entrepreneurs. It is unacceptable that Philadelphia has one of the lowest rates of Black and Brown owned businesses. I believe that a growing, vibrant and inclusive jobs base is the foundation to making Philadelphia the city we know it can and should be.

Q: What do you see as the industry or industries best positioned to create inclusive economic growth for Philadelphia? If elected, how would you support their growth? Please be specific.

A: Although I believe that any industry can thrive under the right leadership and it is important to focus on four key growth areas:

- Biotech and life sciences: Philadelphia is already a national leader in the biotech and life sciences realm, and we need to make sure that these growing firms have access to the skilled workforce they need to continue to grow.

- “Eds and Meds”: The “eds and meds” sector has long been a bright spot in Philadelphia’s economy. In addition to the good jobs these industries create – everything from PhDs to data entry and coding experts, as the demand for lab space continues to grow dramatically, we need to ensure that a) those facilities have access to space b) we have a tax system that does not penalize unprofitable firms as they are investing in growth, and c) there is a well-educated and trained workforce.
- Tech generally: There is arguably no broad industry that has created more opportunity, jobs and wealth in the last half a century than tech. That is especially impressive when considering the large percentage of workers who do not have and do not need advanced degrees, but rather specialized learning. One of the pillars of my economic agenda is teaching tech in every grade, from K-12. We know that tech companies need employees and if Philadelphia, given our relatively low cost of living, has highly skilled employees we will be able to compete for any growing firms and grow our own here.
- Construction and manufacturing: I believe that Philadelphia could have one of the biggest building booms in its history in the coming years – everything from badly needed affordable housing to new labs and offices for our growing life sciences industry. We need to ensure that Philadelphians have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in that boom.

Q: What specific actions have you taken in this regard?

A: I have been a proud supporter of education efforts, including donating my entire Council salary to our schools and education programs. I am a longtime and proud supporter of Coded by Kids and teaching coding, financial literacy and tech skills in our prisons to support returning citizens. I also sponsored 187 teachers to take financial literacy courses at the Federal Reserve.

Q: Philadelphia’s tax rates are substantially higher than those of other major cities and nearby suburban municipalities. The City’s Wage Tax and Business Privilege Tax rates are well above typical rates in other

cities and local suburbs. Since the mid-1990s, the City's Five-Year Financial Plan has acknowledged that Philadelphia's unusually high tax rates make it difficult for the city to compete with other jurisdictions in attracting and retaining businesses and residents. If elected Mayor, what regulations would you seek to reform in Philadelphia? What will you do to make it easier for businesses to register and operate within the city?

A: I have long said that government services should be 51% hospitality and 49% technical know-how. We have to change how Philadelphia interacts with job creators to make it easier for them to grow and thrive.

As mayor, I will push to put time frames in legislation so that there is some certainty around when decisions will be made. I learned this from my experience during the pandemic when I required the Administration to respond to applications for streeteries within three (3) days. More than 800 applications were approved quickly, saving a critical industry. I will also make Philadelphia the most transparent city in the country so my administration can be held responsible for results.

I believe that Philadelphia's long-standing practice of allowing Councilmanic prerogative to dictate important development, zoning, and other land-use decisions is arcane and out of step with modern principles of good governance. At a basic level, it is anti-democratic. As mayor, I will begin the process of reforming Councilmanic prerogative by issuing an Executive Order directing city agencies to cease any deference to councilmanic prerogative in decision-making unless required by law. I will also work with city departments and the Council itself to codify common guidelines and timelines for zoning reviews that will mitigate the risk of backroom deal-making, and to define rules for routine, non-discretionary matters, such as approving signage and parking permits, to obviate the need for councilmanic approval and promote efficiency.

Relatedly, as mayor, I will limit any efforts to propose and enact "block by block" legislation. Legislation that can treat a business or homeowner

differently on one block than another should be unacceptable except in certain situations (e.g. keeping certain businesses away from schools). If presented with a bill that changes requirements with no justification, I will veto it.

Q: Specifically, do you support the continued or accelerated reductions of the city Wage Tax and Business Income and Receipts Tax?

A: I support continued and accelerated reductions of the city's Wage Tax and BIRT. I have repeatedly pushed to overhaul the City's tax structure because it is a primary barrier to growing the local economy. Philadelphia is the only big city in the country to double-tax businesses and has some of the highest wage taxes in the nation. In June 2022, I successfully fought to deliver historic tax reform, working with my colleagues, the Chamber of Commerce and the minority Chambers. My original legislation was the impetus to the eventual final package which led to the City reducing the wage tax and the business income and receipts tax to the lowest rate in decades. These changes will not only give workers a pay raise and help stimulate the economy, but also signal to prospective employers and workers that Philadelphia is a great place to work and do business.

Q: The mismatch between the educational qualifications of the population and the educational requirements of current and future jobs is dramatic in many of our nation's metropolitan areas, including Philadelphia. All too often employers struggle to fill skilled and professional jobs and employees are disadvantaged by the delta between educational skills and workforce needs. What should Philadelphia's education and workforce development priorities be? Please be specific.

A: I believe Philadelphia's education and workforce development priorities be focused on a) reducing poverty through job creation and b) providing qualified workers for growing, labor intensive work. I believe three of the four (4) broad categories of workers I identified above – biotech and life sciences, "Eds and Meds", and construction and manufacturing – should be the highest

priority for specific education and training, while financial literacy, tech and entrepreneurship should be taught to all students.

Q: As Mayor how will you work with stakeholders to build a unified strategy to ensure Philadelphia's workforce needs are met?

A: My career in the private sector taught me how important it is to work with stakeholders and experts to achieve our shared goals. I believe that we are better by working together and, as I did in my business and on City Council, I will be focused on results, not ideology. I have repeatedly shown, in both my business and on Council, that I am willing to work with anyone and forgo credit, to make progress.

Q: Philadelphia is home to 55 colleges and universities and some of the nation's best medical service providers that play a critical role in addressing important policy issues like violence, education, and poverty. How do you envision working with them to help address these issues?

A: The city's colleges and universities and medical service providers play an invaluable role in making Philadelphia what it is and as mayor, I will continue to support and partner with them to improve Philadelphia. I will support specific programs and policies that enhance their ability to thrive and create new opportunity and include their leaders, who help employ literally hundreds of thousands of workers and generate hundreds of millions of taxes for the city, in the city's planning process. I am opposed to PILOTS.