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## 2020 Auditor General Questionnaire

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### CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Christina Hartman

Office Sought: **Auditor General**

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: 2/14/20

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to [info@phillynn.org](mailto: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:**

- 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've spent my 20-year career leading and managing primarily federally-funded non-profits, where I was responsible for the management and budgeting of large scale projects, teams and offices around the world and I had to prepare for and was subjected to US government audits to ensure that I was using your tax dollars efficiently and effectively. I'm happy to report that those audits always came back clean and clear. That work gave me the technical experience required to run this important office.

Perhaps more importantly, this is a leadership and management role in which the current Auditor General manages a \$38M budget with a large staff and multiple regional offices. I've managed large projects, including a \$44M project with multiple offices around the world and a large staff.

Finally, this is also a political role. In addition to my two degrees in politics and economics, I have experience running for Congress in the old PA-16 seat. We ran a strong campaign in a district often deemed "too red to win," earning endorsements from both the national party and EMILY's List, raising \$1.25M, and narrowing the Republican advantage by five points. Unlike the candidates from Pennsylvania's two major cities, I've run a competitive General Election and with Trump at the top of the ticket in a purple, predominately rural area and managed to move the needle.

I believe my technical, leadership, and political experience make me the best candidate both for this race in November and also to lead the Auditor General's office in 2021.

**4. What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected?**

My policy priorities will be education, healthcare, and criminal justice reform. However, this office can tackle any topic. As new topics come up based on the demand of the citizens of Pennsylvania or, for example, the Attorney General's office with whom I will work closely, we can address those issues.

Specifically, I want to look into our criminal justice system, and the inefficiencies created by a system that focuses on punishment rather than rehabilitation, leading to high recidivism rates. While the issues in our criminal justice system are a human rights violation, it is also important to show that our tax dollars are not being spent efficiently or effectively.

One aspect of education I would evaluate is the discrepancy between the standards for public schools and the standards for charter schools. While charter schools receive public funds, they are often held to lower standards, harming our students on the taxpayers' dime. We need to highlight those differences and work to ensure that students at any school receiving state funds are receiving a quality education and push for public schools to be the priority.

A cross-cutting issue that I will prioritize is how contracts to private vendors are or are not managed for cost and intended results. Across many sectors, there are example of where the state has contracted out work to the lowest bidder, only to continue to get charged for additional services along the way or from a firm that is undercutting costs by not classifying workers correctly in their tax filings. Other times, work is contracted out and not managed properly by state workers and/or the intended result is not achieved by the contractor, but the money is still spent. These practices are hurting our unions, public institutions, and benefiting companies who are not being held to account.

While policy is important, one of the most important aspects of this office will be ensuring that the office continues to be funded. Because Auditor General DePasquale has been so successful in his work, the legislature has cut his budget as punishment. I will work hard to ensure that the current budget isn't cut further, we have a positive relationship with its union members at AFSCME, and we continue to highlight the work of this office to the taxpayers of the Commonwealth so that voters understand that government is working for them.

**5. What is your evaluation of the current Auditor General in the performance of his duties?**

I believe our current Auditor General Eugene DePasquale has done a great job over his 7+ years in office. He has tackled important issues from public education to pensions to the environment and everything in between to make sure our tax dollars are being used efficiently and effectively, and, when they're not, that Pennsylvanians are alerted. I also think Auditor General DePasquale has been effective in publicizing his audits so that people across the Commonwealth are aware of his work and what is happening with their tax dollars. Republicans cutting his budget by 10% is a testament to the fact that they don't like what he is exposing and trying to change.

**6. What do you understand the powers of the Auditor General to be, and would you seek to change them in any way?**

The Auditor General serves as a watchdog, performing audits and special reports to evaluate how taxpayer dollars are being spent and highlight when there is waste, fraud, or abuse. This office can be used as a tool to advocate for change after laws have been put in place to determine if those laws have been adhered to, executed in the best way, and funded properly. Using the media, as Depaquale has done, is one way to keep the bright light shining on issues most important to Democrats in a way that is appealing to a large segment of voters from the across the political spectrum. I would seek to use the office to advocate for Democratic policies and use the media to highlight these issues. It is not within my power or legal for me to change the powers of the Auditor General, however I can push on topics seen as untouchable or controversial to make sure I am keeping government in check.

**7. What is your strategy to win this race, including all relevant organizational, financial and grass-roots components?**

We are working to build strong support across the Commonwealth, and have already visited 45 of 67 counties and earned support of more than 60 elected officials from former Governor Ed Rendell all the way to school board members spanning 15 counties. We have also earned endorsements from the Lancaster County Democratic Committee and the Chester County Democratic Committee. We have an aggressive call time program, along with fundraisers and digital fundraising to fund a \$500,000 budget

to communicate with voters everywhere. We are also building strong support among county parties, unions, and other partner organizations.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

Although many of the questions below call for a simple yes or no answer, please feel free to provide an explanation for any of your choices. If you have not yet come to a final decision, please state which way you are leaning and what additional information you would need before deciding, if any.

## **III. QUESTIONS**

- 1. The Auditor General in the past has issued a number of Special Reports (based on audits) that address economic and social issues – e.g., the high cost of prescription drugs in Pa., cost of climate change in Pa.; workforce development. What are the top three issues you would target in audits and Special Reports?**

My top three issues are the issues that are most important to Pennsylvanians: healthcare, education, and criminal justice reform. I would continue the important work on prescription drug costs, but also dig into issues related to home health care and nursing homes, particularly where unions are present. I would also conduct a performance audit at the Department of Corrections to look at funds spent on rehabilitation and, at the same time, review half-way house programs. We know that rehabilitation is minimal on the inside of the system and that generally half-way house programs do not provide the kind of support and community that is needed for those exiting the system. As such, we know that recidivism is common—this is both a human rights violation and a terrible waste of taxpayer dollars.

- 2. What power does the Auditor General have relating to the City of Philadelphia, the School District, and their related entities?**

The Auditor General can perform audits to ensure the Philadelphia School District is getting the funds committed from organizations like the Philadelphia Parking Authority and the state government itself, that the school district is spending funds appropriately, and highlight if and how charter schools are being held to different standards than our public schools. The issues that we can address across the city are as diverse as the city itself. I would work together with Philadelphia Controller Rebecca Rhynhart to make sure that the work we are doing is complementary and supporting the work of City Council members who know best what their constituents need. I have already met with many council members to discuss these issues and generally they are focused on education funding, housing, and workforce development, which I can address through my work as the Auditor General.

- 3. Would you be interested in auditing the State Revenue Dept with a focus on the extent to which it maximizes collection of corporate and other taxes that fall on high-income taxpayers?**

Yes, I would, and that is something that Auditor General DePasquale has looked into, specifically finding in 2013 that there were \$35M in owed corporate taxes. We are overdue for a revisiting of this audit and I would consider it a priority.

**4. Do you believe you would have the power to analyze whether the State, and the City of Philadelphia, maximize the return they get on funds within their control and whether they could be enhanced by moving funds into a public bank? Would you pledge to conduct such a study?**

While I would be interested to look into those issues and evaluate if our return on investment could be increased by moving funds into a public bank, I don't believe that our office would have the resources to conduct such a comprehensive study without giving up a substantial part of our other performance audits (because of time, money, and current audit targets). To my knowledge, no work on this project has started yet within PA or Philadelphia government and it requires the gathering of large amounts of data at the state level and at the city level (which I may or may not have access to, depending on privilege and funding sources). A project like this would best be undertaken in conjunction with a non-profit think tank, the Treasurer's office, the Governor's office, and the Auditor General's office, both to ensure that there would be enough time, money, resources, and buy-in for a comprehensive study and that it would have validity and be taken seriously by legislators and City Council members once finished. I would be extremely interested to see if the Public Banking Institute and Pew Research would be interested in partnering with PA Government and the City of Philadelphia to do such a study, based on what North Dakota has done and research done for cities like Los Angeles.

**5. Would you commit to doing a financial or performance audit of the new voting machines in Philadelphia and of the process used to select these machines?**

As a person who has worked to protect the vote in more than 20 countries around the world, nothing is more important to me than making sure voters have access and that machines are cost-efficient for taxpayers. Based on the information I have available, I understand that the new voting machines in Philadelphia were funded by the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, therefore, I can audit a piece of the purchase process that stems from the Commonwealth funds. However, as you are probably aware the City Controller has already conducted an audit on these machines and found that they were the most expensive machines of the ones offered with an annual maintenance cost of \$1 million, and the process for their selection was deemed less than transparent. Unfortunately, this situation is one that cannot be reversed and where a government auditing body has already pointed out the failures of the process. Beyond these findings, the next thing I would do as Auditor General would be to work with the County of Philadelphia Commissioners and City Council members is to encourage them to ensure that the process in the future is more transparent and cost-effective.

**6. Would you commit to a performance audit of the Philadelphia Pension Fund's engagement of private managers to determine if the pension investments further or detract from the City's policies on the environment, reducing poverty, public health, affordable housing, and living wage?**

Yes, I would be happy to look into that.

**7. Do you believe you have the power to audit the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation and would you do it?**

The Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation is funded by the City of Philadelphia and the Chamber of Commerce through a public-private partnership and therefore, I would have limited scope in auditing PIDC. PIDC is registered as a 501c3 through the PA Dept of State, therefore, as with all 501c3s, with relevant time and funds, I am able to audit these groups to ensure that they are using their non-profit status in line with state rules and regulations. If there were reason to audit this PIDC and I felt the limited scope I had would be useful in demonstrating misuse of non-profit status, then I would consider doing it.

**8. Would you commit to a performance audit of the Dept of Environmental Resources, specifically regarding its enforcement of fracking regulations?**

If by Dept of Environmental Resources, you mean the PA Department of Environmental Protection, yes, I would do a performance audit of the DEP in reference to enforcement of fracking regulations and work with Attorney General's office to make sure companies are held accountable. However, the likely result of such an audit would be to find that enforcement of fracking regulation is lacking because of inadequate funding to the DEP itself. The DEP is notoriously behind on all of its duties because of lack of financial and human resources to do the work. Changing the budget for this office, a critical job for legislators, is the first step in rectifying this problem and is one reason that flipping the state house and senate is so critical in 2020. In my home county of Lancaster, we are positioned to flip three seats to Democrat and with me at the top of the ticket, we will do just that.

**9. Would you commit to conducting an audit of the personnel practices of selected State offices to determine if, and the extent to which, personnel practices are conducted in a nondiscriminatory manner?**

Yes, I would audit state offices to ensure their personnel practices are conducted in a non-discriminatory manner, and work with legislators to strengthen workplace nondiscrimination legislation. However, I would consider it equally important to audit our government contractors for the same. The Commonwealth already has these personnel practices in place, but are we holding our government contractors to the same rigorous standard.

**10. What role, if any, do you see the Office of Auditor General playing on issues for economic, social and racial justice?**

The Auditor General's office plays a significant role in social and racial justice in Pennsylvania and as someone who has worked to fight for social and economic rights around the world for 20 years, it is of utmost importance to me that we highlight this work. First, this office can provide financial backup to issues that are also racial injustice and human rights violations. Last year, the Auditor General's office found that legalizing recreational marijuana could generate over \$500M annually in tax revenue, while also keeping people out of jail/prison. The Auditor General can also use this platform to shine a bright light on situations of racial and social injustice, such as the rape kit backlog, and work with legislators and local elected officials to pass legislation to address those problems.

**11. As a general matter, why should it matter to progressives, poor people, people of color and marginalized communities, who wins this office?**

The Auditor General, like all elected officials, can and should serve as an advocate for people identifying with any of those groups. The Auditor General can direct the agenda of the office, publicize problems and successes in the Commonwealth, and use their relationships to execute their office's recommendations. We have the opportunity to choose an Auditor General who we can trust to be transparent, independent, and accountable to the taxpayers, but that is never guaranteed. We know we need to work hard to engage voters across the state who value those things so we can continue to have an Auditor General who will hold our government accountable to the citizens of Pennsylvania.

**12. How would you bring more public attention to the results of your audits and reports?**

I will continue to work with the press so that findings from the Auditor General's office are public and accessible so that Pennsylvanians know what's happening with their tax dollars. I will also work to make sure we are sharing best practices and common problems across the state so our cities and counties can benefit from others' solutions and collaborate to tackle common challenges.