



## 2020 Legislative Questionnaire

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### CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name:

Office Sought: **State Legislator**

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:  Bernard A.

**Williams**\_\_\_\_\_

Date: 2/22/2020

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:

**Gloria Gilman**  
**121 S Broad St, Suite 1720**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19107**

215-568-4990  
(fax) 215-925-3748

**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, including the one you're seeking?  
Never held a government position.

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?

None

2. What community or policy issues have you worked on, and in what capacity, outside of government? (Please provide the names of two or three individuals who can provide information about your previous work.)

- Gun violence/ Community Safety: 39<sup>th</sup> Police Advisory Committee- Ellen Douglas (President)
- Criminal Justice: District Attorney's Youth Aid Panel- Faith Harris (Executive Director)
- Environment: Friends of Fern Hill- Teresa Duncan (Secretary)

4. Please provide copies of all your significant campaign materials, including position papers, and information on your campaign strategy, expected funding sources, and endorsements.

[www.bernardwilliams4pa.com](http://www.bernardwilliams4pa.com)

[www.facebook.com/bernardwilliams4pa](https://www.facebook.com/bernardwilliams4pa)

[www.instagram.com/bernardawilliams](https://www.instagram.com/bernardawilliams)

5. What is your plan to win this race.

I ran in 2018 and received 32% of the vote. My goal is to go in the same wards and divisions where I received the most votes and ask those voters to vote for me again. The key to this election is door knocking. We are unfortunately not the democratic nominee, however with volunteers and a door knocking goals, I know we will be successful.

**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.

Education is the foundation of who an individual is, and education starts at home.

However, many of our adults in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania do not know how to read or write. So, how can a parent help their children develop and learn if they themselves cannot comprehend or understand what their children are learning in school. I propose we create more adult literacy programs in the commonwealth to decrease the rate of adult illiteracy. We must partner with community organizations, recreation centers, and schools to create a program that both the parent and child can go to, to get the services they need to develop fundamentally. I believe the money used to increase school choice tax credit programs should be used to ensure that our children receive a valuable education in their own neighborhood. We shouldn't have to send our children to a school across the city just to receive an education. Our children are victims of self-gain: the educational system is not structured with their needs in mind. Racial discrimination plays a huge role in funding for our schools, but no one wants to address the issue. Why should suburban, private, and predominantly white schools receive a better education than our children living in an urbanized community? We want a hopeful and bright future. If we do not start putting our children's education as priority, our communities will never see that future.

Social Justice is another important issue to me because we must work towards justice in the areas of police reform, equal pay, and equal rights, we will restore hope for our future. As I ride through the district, I see innocent people victimized by stop and frisk policies simply because they are men and women of color. I hear stories of ghost taxes: a new scam robbing our senior citizens of their 401k funds, retirement funds and homes. I have watched as our special needs' children miss out on vital services because of our current president and GOP-majority Congress. They have decreased funds to vital local organizations like Resources for Human Development, privatized our public education, and have threatened arts programs on TV and radio stations.

Economic development is a major concern in the 198th because for decades our neighborhoods have suffer economic wealth due to our current State Rep and other elected officials not advocating for funding to be brought back to the district to redevelop and preserve our business corridors. We need to revitalize our dilapidated properties with businesses and housing for low income families, ensure business tax credit for business owners that live and hire in the district, and create more jobs and opportunities for a quality of life. We need more diverse businesses in our district as well as programs to help startup businesses stay open and thrive.

Too many local businesses in our district are being shut down because we as a community are not supporting them. At the same time, we have too many businesses coming into our communities taking our hard-earned money, and not giving back to the same people that support them every day. I propose we create legislation that will give tax credit to business owners that live and hire employees in their district. This legislation will ensure that business owners in the district will be able to stay open and operate in their neighborhood without relocating outside the district.

## II. Education

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

Yes, however we need to find a way to fund our colleges without increasing taxes on the middle class and low income.

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

I do not believe the standardize test is a qualifying test for altitude. I think the teacher's evaluation on the student's abilities and inabilities are way more important than a test. Standardize test is only a test that can be a factor for the student's abilities within the last few weeks, not for the whole year. We need to evaluate our students using all three of our learning styles instead of just two.

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 think funding for our schools need to be determined based off the number of students in a classroom.

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?

Charter schools are a for profit business trying to run as a nonprofit to receive funding from the school district. If charter schools want to receive city and state funding they must be held at the same scrutiny as our public schools. We need more regulations and oversight over charter schools before they receive public funding, until then no charter schools should be expanded and receive public funding. We need more funding for our public schools, because they have more regulations and oversight and are crucial to the safety and development of our children.

## III. Budget and Taxes

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

I would need more information on this in order to adequately answer this question.

2) Would you support raising the tax on unearned income to increase state revenue without increasing burdens on working people?

Yes, we need to tax the 1% and corporations more and give a tax break to the middle class and low-income families.

3) What changes if any would you support in corporate net income tax levels?

I think corporations need to be taxed more and start taxing them through their land and insurance usage.

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

I would create legislation to reduce taxes for individuals that make under 70,000 a year, and any individual that makes over 70,000 should have an increase in taxes

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

Yes, we need corporations to pay their fair share in taxes and be able to hold them to the same scrutiny as other corporations that are public.

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

Absolutely! I do not believe fracking should be legal. If for some reason we cannot get the legislature to vote on legislation to eliminate it, then we need to be taxing fracking companies at a higher tax than other corporations and businesses.

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?

Yes, I will support only if a report proves that the KOZ would benefit the area and create more jobs. KOZ currently as we know it allows developers in certain underserved areas receive 0 to low interest rate. Currently, there is no proof that the developments in these KOZ's will create jobs and opportunities for community. I think it should be a case by case basis until a norm is defined to determine if a parcel should be limited on being extended or renewed. I will support a tax break only if the developments benefit the community and not the developer.

#### **IV. Public Banking**

Would you support the creation of a Pennsylvania Public Bank, modeled after [the Bank of North Dakota](#)?

Yes, because it allows our interest money to be bought back into Philadelphia, and not Wall St. Currently North Dakota's public bank is propelling the state by funding it's schools, streets, and communities. We can model the same system and divide that money up to repair our schools with asbestos and fund programs that will help with renewable energy sources to help our environment.

## **V. Women's Rights**

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

No, I believe all women have the right to choose, and have the right to fair funding and resources for which ever decision they decide on.

- 2) What additional protections should be enacted into law to protect women's health care?

Prochoice needs to be permanent law, and not something that can be legislated out.

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

Absolutely! We are seeing right now more and more women taking on higher positions in the work force that require the same amount of experience and work performance as a man would, so women should be giving the same amount of pay as men. I believe woman for the most part do a better job than men in my experiences, because they are fighting to let society know that they are just as qualified maybe even more qualified than men. So, we need to make it a priority that women get equal or more pay than men do.

- 4) Do you support legislation to protect individuals against sexual assault?

Yes, I have seen too many times where sexual assault is downgraded, because people view certain situations as a norm. We need to hold workplaces and the legislators accountable for creating a safe environment for all people no matter their race, gender, or class.

## **VI. Children and Families**

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

Yes, working in the finance/human resource industry it bothers me that employees must decide on whether to put their family first, or continue to work while their family member suffers due to lack of care. This is mandatory that all people who are employed receive a paid FMLA, to support their own or loved one's health issues.

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

Yes, a constituent I know is having a hard time getting paid to care for her baby cousin. CCIS is taking too long to approve her and said once she gets approved to be the caregiver, she will only be paid \$13 a day. How can anyone live off \$13 a day? We need to investigate and reevaluate the process for children getting childcare in the home. I believe all children should have affordable childcare and the caregivers should be paid equally to what caregivers make when caring for seniors.

## **VII. Environment**

- 1) What measures, if any, would you support to move PA off its reliance on fossil fuels and expand use of renewable energy sources?

I believe in the new green deal and want to support the efforts of our federal officials to make sure it becomes law. We can create more jobs through renewable energy resources than using fossil fuels that harm our environment and the health of the community.

- 2) Do you support a ban on fracking in whole or part?

I support banning fracking in whole it is a business that is making a huge profit here in our state and is causing our environment to become a victim to global warming. We need to make fracking illegal in the state and in the US.

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

No, we should not sell PGW because if it was in the hands of a privatization company it would not be regulated by the city rules. We would see more homelessness because there would be no programs to help low income families, setup a budget to pay their gas.

- 4) The Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce advocates converting Philadelphia into an "energy hub" for oil and natural gas, or the "Houston of the East Coast." Do you agree or disagree with this vision?

No, we want renewable energy that will help improve the environment and health of the people in our city. It will also open a door for more jobs for the community.

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

Stop the gas plant from operating in our district. I live at Wissahickon and Roberts Ave, I have severe asthma, if this plant was to begin to operate the people in East Falls, Germantown, Nicetown, Allegheny West, and North Philly would be impacted and I as a resident of the immediate area would be impacted as well. As a legislator

I would create legislation to stop any and all fossil fuel use in Pennsylvania, especially in residential areas. We must address this immediately, because we will be waking up one day to the news reporting that our residents are dying and having severe health problems due to the Septa's gas plant.

## **VIII. Criminal Justice**

1) Should stop and frisk be limited or outlawed?

It should be outlawed, as an African American millennial in the city of Philadelphia, I feel on edge when cops follow me at night when I'm on my way home. My anxiety goes up, because I must worry about if I resembled someone they are look for. I must worry about whether I will survive a police officer stop, because no one is around to witness my encounter with the police. Even though I sit on the police advisory board, I still feel a sense of discomfort. I'm black man, so that puts me in a dangerous situation when stop and frisk is still not outlawed.

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

I currently sit as the chair of a diversion program for the District Attorney's office. This program allows juvenile's who are first time offenders come before a panel of community leaders instead of going before a judge. Our job is to look over the case, talk with the juvenile and his/ her parents about what happened, and then come up with a 3-month contract that the juvenile must complete. They are also paired with one of the panelists to be their mentor through the process. I believe this program has been affective in so many ways, it gives the juvenile a second chance and gives them the ability to build a relationship with a potential lifelong mentor. This program needs funding on the city and state level and could possibly be legislation to help all juvenile who go through the justice system get another chance.

3) Should marijuana be legalized for recreational use?

Yes

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

No because it promotes more incarceration. There needs to be regulations and oversight over the prisons, because prisons will turn into a business.

5) Should we ban the box in Pennsylvania?

Yes, I believe if you did the time and you paid for your mistakes you should be able to have same opportunities for employment than anyone else. If you are qualified and pose the skills for the job why should your past qualify you for a job.

6) Should PA continue to build new prisons?

No, we need more jobs in renewable energy, and more funding for schools.

7) Should PA begin to close prisons? Explain.

Yes, most of the prison population is made up of prisoners who are awaiting trial for misdemeanor cases. We need to release people who have low level offenses, and close prisons.

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

Yes

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

Never

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?

They need to reexamine and recreate the public-school system curriculum. We need to create economic stability through jobs and increase the minimum wage. People need to be able to have a livable wage and not go into debt trying to obtain higher education and special skills. Once we do those things, I think we will see a decrease in arrest in Philadelphia and across the commonwealth, because people are able to provide for their families, and children are able to receive a quality education.

## **IX. Campaign Finance Reform**

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

Yes, we currently have a corrupt political system that is biased, and only supports candidates based off their finances and money raised and because the candidate is qualified for the position. I believe if we took money out of the equation and let the people decide, we would have a well-rounded federal, state, and local government that works for all.

## **X. Labor**

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

Yes

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

I think with every increase with inflation there should be an increase in the wage.

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

I do not know yet because I do not know where the push back is really coming from.

- 4) Do you support privatization of retail liquor sales in Pennsylvania? Are there any other services that you believe should be considered for privatization?

No

- 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 most of our population, not just the relatively well-educated and already well off?

We need to redefine and reexamine job qualifications. Jobs should also remove a degree from the catalyst of qualifications. I'm a product of a person who hasn't obtain a degree yet, however I'm very successful in the finance industry. We need to promote more trade and stem for children versus higher education like college. Every child does not have to go to college to be successful in life. Also, there are many people who do not have a degree and are very successful in their career compared to other people in the same career who have degrees.

## **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, we need a commission that is a collective of people who are from the community and can provide accurate district lines based on the census and geographic areas.

## **XII. Public Health**

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

Yes