



### **At Large Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the 2022 Ward 7 Democrats Candidate Forum for candidates in the Democratic Primary for the **At-Large Councilmember**. Below is a pre-Forum questionnaire that will give you the opportunity to expand on your position and goals in depth and afford our membership the opportunity to truly understand your positions.

Please respond no later than 11:59pm on Friday, February 18, 2022. **Timely completion and submission of this questionnaire is a prerequisite to participate in the Candidate Forum.**

#### **Candidate Information**

Your responses will be posted on the Ward 7 Dems webpage. Please provide a headshot of the candidate.

Candidate Name: Sharece Crawford

Candidate website: [www.crawfordatlarge.com](http://www.crawfordatlarge.com)

Candidate Twitter: @CrawfordAtLarge

Candidate IG: @CommissionerCrawford (Unfortunately @CrawfordAtLarge was hacked)

Candidate Facebook: @CrawfordAtLarge

#### **General Questions**

1. What makes you the right selection for the Democratic nomination for At-Large Councilmember

a. As D.C.'s next At Large Council-Member I am proud to represent black excellence in every form of human endeavor. Historically our culture has been the bridge to transcend race, religion, political and economic ideals. I am living proof that we can achieve higher heights despite our circumstances. I have personally transformed from an "At-Risk" youth — who survived extreme poverty, food deserts, homelessness, extreme violence, and even three shooting incidents — to now a first-generation HBCU College Graduate and the first in my family to run for office. I'm running to bring my formula of transformation to the Council of the District of Columbia so that every resident — regardless of their zip code — has access to a government that works for them.

I am the only candidate with a background and track record of igniting and connecting all 4 corners of the District of Columbia. As the current elected At Large Committeewoman for the DC Democratic Party I know what it's like to invest long hours to achieve shared goals around policies that specifically address the generations of harm and divestments in underserved communities. I have proudly engaged with the citizens of the world to come to an agreement based on our humanity and commonalities. We deserve a Council-Member that is a master negotiator to execute and ensure proper oversight of our budget, tax dollars, education, health, housing and infrastructure outcomes. That is what we deserve. That is the value I intend to bring to the Council of the District of Columbia.

As Councilmember I will center the needs of our multi-generational families — from my 6-month-old great nephew Brayden who wants to wobble in peace and deserves adequate child-care without economically straining families — to my late grandmother Beulah Mae Crawford who wanted to age in place and have proper access to resources and leave a family inheritance.



2. As an At-Large Councilmember, what steps would you take to ensure that you are able to meet the needs of the residents of Ward 7?

The leadership I have experienced in Ward 7 is beyond self-sufficient leadership that simply needs champions on the council committed to amplifying the leadership that exists. Ward 7 deserves an At-large Councilmember who actually listens to Ward 7 residents and takes direct political actions to amplify existing leadership and the demands to repair and address historic oppression and budget priorities. That leader is me. When the residents of Ward 7 by way of the ANC's and Ward 7 Democrats stood up to demand their land during the redistricting process, I was there. When it was time to get a city-wide census count and to counter the narrative EOTR does not show up — I was there to count residents by hand by meeting the residents where they were. In community and at their doorstep. As a former Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (ANC) I made it a priority to call every ANC in Ward 7 and every Member of Ward 7 Democrats to center my process and policymaking around their input.

3. How can Councilmembers better connect with communities that have lost faith in the ability of the government to solve problems?

The first step is to listen and be open to accepting accountability. Next is to engage directly with local experts in their fields. In Ward 7 we have Legal professionals, Health, Housing, Education; Environmental justice; food professionals and elected leaders like that should be centered in the decision-making process but too often are not. We need a leader that doesn't pretend to have all the solutions but openly engages with standing leaders to regain trust. Collective work and responsibility look like setting clearly defined goals with at least one direct outcome and focusing on achieving this goal collectively.

4. How would you describe an effective relationship of the Council Chair and other At-Large members with Ward 7?

I'd start with enacting legislation to include monthly leadership roundtables per ward to hear direct and immediate actions that can be taken to address the multi-level crisis we are experiencing right now. Next, collectively create an annual plan with one priority outcome we can agree on. I will advocate for the council to trust and empower Ward 7 leadership by outlining a collective strategic plan. I will trust and work with Ward 7 Leadership to legislate on land and budget demands. I will advocate for my colleagues to embrace the community-led policy and budget priorities. I believe that transparency with negotiations has been an excellent starting point in the process.

#### Education

1. Do you believe the per-pupil formula is adequate? If so, why? If not, how would you modify the per pupil formula to ensure that all schools are sufficiently funded and facilitate equitable outcomes in communities in Ward 7 and Ward 8?

The divestment in Education is directly correlated to youth violence and school professionals' mass exodus. We have created generations of economically unstable violent youth and families. In Ward 7 — DC provided a maximum of \$16,463 and a minimum of \$7,994 per student. Knowing that more than half of schools in Ward 7 are among the 40 lowest-performing schools in DC yet still reduced the total budget overall by 94.76% From Aiten Elementary School to CW Harris and Woodson HS our government has divested. This is the divestment that has caused many of our youth to not have adequate support with transitioning from the board game of monopoly to economic stability. This is not sufficient for the student growth and learning



processes. We must publish an immediate assessment and gain better oversight as to how the dollars are being spent and how to best reallocate and what investments are needed. As a former student of C.W. Harris and Fletcher Johnson, We are seeing the negative outcome of shutting down Fletcher Johnson and defunding C.W. Harris Youth services. When it comes to my personal experience with education, I started early education in Ward 7. When my family was uprooted from our home in Congress Park for renovations we were fortunate to relocate to 54th St. SE. At that time Shadd Elementary school was a parking lot away from our home and we were told it was out of boundaries. So we went 10 blocks up the hill and around the corner dodging unsafe and unclean streets with hopes of making it to and from school every day. I know my mother was worried about how she prayed. The good news is my time at CW Harris was fruitful as a member of the best track team in the city. The bad news is this is still an educational barrier to this day. Children and seniors are forced to put their safety at risk while commuting to and from schools every day. This has to change.

2. What legislative tools would you advance to improve the ability of the Council to recruit and retain quality teachers? Currently, we are experiencing a mass exodus of school professionals. We must reprogram funding to increase pay for substitute teachers as well as focus on increasing FTE for Math and English teachers where Ward 7 are among the lowest-performing test results. We can and we must create intergovernmental partnerships with local colleges and universities to prepare their students to provide social and emotional learning among English and Math majoring college students. This will create a pathway to the education workforce utilizing lab hours to funnel to our education system.
3. How could the Council exercise more effective oversight over DCPS?

Oversight should be a quarterly process. Waiting until the budget season is a mistake when student dollars stay with the school even after students transfer. We must increase the questions that are being asked and gain more community input. Residents should be able to ask government witnesses direct questions on records pertaining and not limit questions that are only produced by the council.

4. How could the Council exercise more effective oversight over the Public Charter School ecosystem?

Because the Charter board is under federal jurisdiction this requires more joint advocacy combined with public testimony led by the council, mayor, and shadow representatives to communicate strong messages to the Charter board. I have not seen clear publicly engaged communication from our executive branch to our public charter school board with the improvements that are needed outside of Covid Regulations. If the Charter school board can comply with Covid Regulations they can comply with better standards of operating.

5. Are there any intervention programs you believe should be enhanced or expanded? Are there any that should be curtailed or terminated?

The council must simplify the process of creating and publicly sharing an education comprehensive plan of school-based programs citywide. Based on the current curriculums we must return vocational education back to the school system. This time as young as middle school so that high school graduates can have an economic future if debt-free college is not a goal and obtainable. Removing vocational education opportunities has economically castrated many families and the generations behind them. I am committed to developing and implementing a plan to connect our scholars to financial literacy and economic opportunities with the high-powered industries.

#### Economic Development and Housing



1. Ward 7 hosts a disproportionately high percentage of vacant and dilapidated buildings and vacant lots. How would you address this issue without inadvertently depriving middle-income families of a rare asset?

Turning dilapidated properties and vacant lots into vibrant, useful, and thriving is an urgent priority. From the council, I will prioritize multi-agency collaboration working with DGS, DEMPED, DCRA, OTR, and ANC's to obtain a full inventory of taxes owed / ownership to immediately develop a strategy as to the use and zoning of the lots. This should be done by including input from civic leaders, tenant associations, housing advocates, and elected leaders. As councilmember I am committed block by block negotiations and supporting the best use of land and properties. This was a part of the comprehensive plan framework that I advised on as an ANC.

2. The DC Housing Authority and its Board faced significant challenges in 2021. What changes, if any, are needed to sustain and increase affordable and public housing in DC? Are there any decisions on the allocation of affordable units that deserve closer scrutiny?

When I read the auditors report and learned about the \$82 Million dollars that were inappropriately used we held a press conference to bring light to the issue and later testified during the oversight hearing. If my grandmother Beulah Mae were here she would demand that the housing committee reimburse the funds and reissue an RFP in advance time for developers who have the capacity to build at 0%-30% AMI and have enough time to bid and submit. We must have a more transparent RFP process and revisit outdated criteria.

#### Public Safety

1. The District of Columbia is experiencing a general decline in crime, but a spike in murder. What would you identify as the core causes of this spike and what legislative tools would you suggest that could stop the increase and address the root causes?

We are experiencing an eruption of generations of concentrated poverty. From the council, I will enact legislation to create immediate government and private strategic partnerships to support youth becoming entrepreneurs before they are indoctrinated into crime culture as young as 8 years old. The council must simplify and increase oversight of the Foster partner process to improve the effectiveness of our unhoused and housing insecure population of offenders who are creating economic crimes. The council must create a united nation's approach to include local leaders and organizations that achieve results and prevention. There are too many underfunded community-based organizations and too many overfunded incentives that are not required to communicate with each other. Again economically stabilizing the next generation of youth and families is the only way to reduce crime.

2. What would you recommend that the Committee on Public Safety and Justice do to improve oversight over MPD?

Greater accountability is needed. The allegations made against MPD officers are critical and too often swept under the rug. This issue of FOIA request not being responded to based on targeted groups should publicly be stated that it is unacceptable. I've been fortunate to work with great community police both in my community and in my school who genuinely love and care for the neighbors and the safety of our city. The voters who I have heard from want to defund officers with strong allegations of abusing their authority and amplify/expound the officers who are doing good deeds and keeping our city safe. We cannot promote lawlessness and lack of accountability internally and expect citizens who break the law not to consider this pattern.



3. What legislative tools would you create or modify to reduce recidivism and reintegrate Returning Citizens into our communities?

Let's start with critical negotiations and adequate investment in ensuring that every person leaving our justice system has access to identification and vital records. I testified that leaving returning citizens to "figure out" and or strongly rely on family to ensure these records are provided is a disaster waiting to happen. Business fees, business plan development, and filing documents should be waived for Returning citizens with the tools needed to start up a business if that is their focus 60 - 90 days before returning to the general population. Workplace assignment and hire opportunities should begin 60 - 30 days prior to release. And lastly, secure housing. I understand that ward 7 did not want the responsibility of housing returning citizens after the location in Ward 8 was closed. This leaves the city to think proactively as to how not to concentrate an economically challenged group in one location. These are some of the legislative actions that can be done through strategic partnerships to minimize recidivism.

#### Jobs and Employment

1. What legislative tools would you create or modify to increase the percentage of District employees that reside in the District of Columbia?

The mayor's office mandated that high-level executive administrators must live in the District of Columbia. There has not been much oversight and issuing audits for accountability. The next step should be to enact legislation for an annual audit of the FTE's similar to how business locations are required to comply with pop-up inspections through DCRA. This will be a new compliance measurement process.

2. The unemployment rate in Ward 7 is 14%. What legislative tools would you create or modify to improve the ability of the District to restore these residents to the workforce?

When it comes to new hires to the DC Government we must prioritize hiring from our high school students. Preparing our youth to fill local Government FTE's should begin in middle school similar to trade programs. Next / simultaneously we must assess the disability needs and the rare conditions caused by covid to see the demands and expand our criteria to assist new employees who want to work with the accommodations needed. This is the transformation that we need to correct the errors of the past with new disciplines for the future.