

Annapolis Pride 2021 City of Annapolis Primary Election Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: **SCOTT GIBSON, WARD 2 (R)**

(See candidate responses in bold, blue, italic font)

1. Please let us know if you have ever volunteered with or supported any LGBTQ+ organizations, such as Annapolis Pride, PFLAG, or the Human Rights Campaign. Feel free to include events in which you participated. Please include all groups you feel are pertinent including LGBTQ+ Equity actions or advocacy that you have taken in other non-LGBTQ+ organizations or Boards. If no previous volunteer or advocacy experience with or for LGBTQ+ Community, please explain why not and how you now understand the importance of such advocacy.

I believe that all people, including the LGBTQ+ community, are entitled to equality under the law. My work, to date, however, has been focused on advocating for equality for people with disabilities, who until recently in Maryland could still be paid less than the minimum wage and who still face disproportionate under/unemployment.

In my lifetime, I have watched public opinion change from opposed to issues like same-sex marriage to supportive of them. In full honesty, public opinion changed – in part - because hearts and minds like mine were opened. As a young man, raised Catholic, I know my view was once overly simplistic and heavily dogmatic. As these issues attracted more attention, I could not help but realize how they impacted friends and family – people that I hold dear.

Initially, as a supporter of equal rights under the law for the LGBTQ+ community, I thought that organizations like the ones listed in your question were not for me to join.

It was only in the past couple of years with renewed focus on the civil rights work left to do that I came to appreciate the critical importance of allyship. If elected to the City Council, I will value hearing from a broad segment of the community. That will include reaching out to and soliciting feedback from groups such as the ones you mentioned.

2. [The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health 2021](#) surveyed nearly 35,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13-24 across the United States. Among the key findings of the survey:
 - **42% of LGBTQ youth** seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including **more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth**.
 - **12% of white youth** attempted suicide compared to **31% of Native/Indigenous youth, 21% of Black youth, 21% of multiracial youth, 18% of Latinx youth, and 12% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth**.

Please discuss your feelings about the data above and how you would help support LGBTQ+ youth and specifically Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and transgender nonbinary youth. Have you advocated for or endorsed legislation and actions on the state or local level to keep LGBTQ+ youth safe? Explain if you have not and what you intend to do in the future to improve the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth in Annapolis.

The data immediately brings two things to mind. First, mental health does not get nearly enough attention and resources, especially among our youth. Second, that challenge is even more pronounced in communities that face barriers to care.

As a member of the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission, I seek out opportunities to fund innovative replicable work to address the disparities in the quality of health and healthcare across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups. While I know the Commission has funded work in the LGBTQ+ community (e.g., the Commission has awarded grants to Chase Brexton, which began as a volunteer-run gay men's health clinic in Baltimore). These stats have caused me to ask Commission staff if we have done enough to account for access challenges that might be unique to the LGBTQ+ community.

While the City does not run mental health programming, it can be a conduit for youth seeking help by running top-notch youth programming that focuses on making sure all children feel welcome in their community and that creates a safe place for youth (and their families) to learn about resources in the community that can be of assistance.

As an alderman, I will work with my colleagues on the city council, to ensure that programming and those safe places are well supported.

3. On June 16, 2021 the Anne Arundel County Public School Board passed the [Safe and Inclusive Environments for LGBTQ+ Students](#), a comprehensive policy that prohibits discrimination and harassment based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The policy states support for the right of any student to be addressed by a name and pronoun that correspond to the student's gender identity. Additionally, the policy supports the right of any student to use school facilities that correspond with gender identity in which the student identifies.

Please discuss the importance of the adoption of policies in schools that respect student gender identification, including consideration of reasonable and respectful accommodation in regard to facilities. Please provide your feelings regarding "Bathroom Bills" that have been proposed around the country.

Education issues generally do not come before the Annapolis City Council, and I believe that it is a mistake to inject politics into education issues.

If I were on a board of education making such a decision, I would want to understand: (1) what best supported the child's interest in school/learning, and (2) what best supports the child's development. I would also want to know how (or if) the policy should vary based on grade level/stage of the child's development. I would want my position to be informed by education experts, child psychologists, and social workers, as well as the lived experience of members of our community.

I want all people to be equal under the law and I want all people to feel like they belong in their community. I would support policy that advances that, and resist policy that needlessly detracts from it.

4. How have you advocated for the LGBTQ+ community and supported inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community in the past (i.e. have you spoken out publicly for policies at your place of business, testified before government bodies, adopted written policies for your employees, marched for equal rights, etc.)? Please be specific.

As the leader of a human services non-profit, I took great care to develop a cultural competency plan that seeks to identify and break down barriers to people receiving our services.

A few years ago, when an employee shared with me that our medical plan's family planning benefits did not serve same gender couples well, I amended our benefits to resolve the issue.

In 2012, I voted for Question 6, which legalized same-sex marriage.

5. It has been well documented that LGBTQ+ people face health disparities linked to societal stigma, discrimination, and lack of access to quality health care. How have you advocated to reduce LGBTQ+ health disparities? Explain if you have not and what you intend to do in the future to improve the health of LGBTQ+ people in Annapolis.

For the past five years, I have served on the Community Health Resources Commission, which was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 2005 to expand access to health care services in underserved communities in Maryland with an eye towards resolving disparities. The Commission's work is done primarily through grant making.

6. What is your position on police reform and do you support police training and education on issues of concern to the LGBTQ+ community?

While I support law enforcement and believe that most law enforcement officers are good individuals that put their lives on the line to serve and protect their communities, I believe that police reform is necessary and have authored two columns in The Capital Gazette calling for reforms including amending the Maryland Public Information Act to allow certain misconduct complaints to be subject to disclosure and injecting more independence in the oversight of alleged misconduct.

My experience is that law enforcement is well served by having a deep understanding of the community it serves and that requires a deep understanding of our community's diversity.

As the leader of a non-profit serving people with disabilities, I have seen first-hand the difference law enforcement training makes. One way our organization carries out its mission is by providing neurodiversity training to law enforcement officers and first responders. These trainings review topics from how to interact with a non-verbal person to how to react to stimming, and I am certain they have helped officers better handle (or de-escalate) situations that otherwise would have gone badly.

As a member of the City Council, I would encourage our law enforcement to seek out as much understanding of the communities we serve as possible.



Annapolis Pride invited all candidates in the upcoming City of Annapolis elections to participate in our first candidate questionnaire to educate voters impartially and on a nonpartisan basis. We encouraged all candidates to participate regardless of party affiliation. Candidate questionnaire responses are distributed for purely informational purposes.

Annapolis Pride is a volunteer, grassroots non profit organization that advocates for the LGBTQ+ community all year long and hosts the annual Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival held in June. Learn more at AnnapolisPride.org. Contact Annapolis Pride at info@annapolispride.org or by mail, PO Box 4822, Annapolis, MD 21403.
