

Annapolis Pride 2021 City of Annapolis Primary Election Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: **DAJUAN GAY, WARD 6 (D)**

(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.

In the past, I've participated in the inaugural Annapolis Pride parade. I think our city desperately needed an event as such. It let families and individuals know that we are more accepting than our history implies. In my experience both as a councilman and individual, I've always tried to make others feel welcomed in any space. It truly makes me angry when individuals allow focuses like another's choices to love someone to impact their lives so much that they lead a life of hate. It is unnecessary and unbecoming of a decent neighbor.

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.

While I have not directly done so for LGBTQ+ communities specifically. I have been outspoken about the need to invest in mental health care, treatment, and facilities. As someone who has struggled previously with mental health struggles, I realize it is not something that we feel comfortable coming forward discussing. It is also a challenge to receive care without the appropriate healthcare access. Using spaces like the Community

Resource Center's in Annapolis we need to provide free access to mental health experts and treatment.

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 harrasment 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.

When it comes to pronouns, I will admit, I have struggled to adapt, both in my work and personal life. However, it is of the utmost importance to me to make my friends and family feel welcomed. I make a conscious effort to be correct in my communications in a way that also makes my friends comfortable. Respect is key. Any public restroom facility should service people based on the appropriate identification labeled on their ID card. I realize not all states are like Maryland and provide the option for gender identity outside of male/female to be chosen – this too, should be included in the fight forward.

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.

In the past I've been more reactive instead of proactive. Meaning I've waited for opportunities to stand up for those who need assistance in places of work, academic settings, and personal spaces. Can I be more proactive in my advocacy? Yes, I think as I've grown older, I've grown more conscious of the occasions provided to speak up and highlight disparities the LGBTQ+ community faces.

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.

The negative health outcomes for LGBTQ+ people can be contributed to the cumulative and intersecting impact of many different factors, particularly their reduced access to employer-provided health insurance, the negative stereotypes associated to the

community, and a lack of cultural competence and representation in the healthcare system. The first step is to erase the stigma individuals feels when applying for assistance in healthcare setting, often, the option for respondents to identify sexual orientation or gender identify is absent creating conflict from the beginning. In the Transgender community individuals are often unable to access preventative and primary care due to historic exclusions from basic insurance policies. While we fight for healthcare expansion, we must remember to include mental health assistance too. Far too many LGTBQ+ people suffer from this crippling disease.

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

I stand behind the police department and their heroic acts against violence in our communities, in particular, gun violence and domestic violence. It claims far too many innocent lives in the City of Annapolis, and we must stand strong against that behavior. While I support the department, there is always room for reform. I firmly believe that a community policing approach is the best way to move forward. This means the department will consider the social challenges communities face and include tactics to improve trust in those communities. The same can, and should, be said for the LGBTQ+ community and the unique challenges shared. Having an ally in the department creates a haven for those seeking assistance.



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.