

Annapolis Pride 2021 City of Annapolis Primary Election Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: KARMA O'NEILL, WARD 2 (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.

I feel fortunate to have grown up in a very open and inclusive family, where acceptance of people's differences and personal beliefs was a given. I am aware of the many opportunities for advocacy and have supported and promoted equity for all members of our population. This includes supporting such groups as Planned Parenthood, Special Olympics, and equal access programs for school children. This is my first foray into politics and I fully support equal access for all. If elected, I will work to increase awareness of the plight of our LGBTQ+ community and I hope my open-mindedness and willingness to learn and grow can set an example for others.

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.

Up until this time I have not had a platform to create legislation, but as a representative of the City of Annapolis I would support any and all legislation to ensure the safety and security of our LGBTQ+ residents and work towards increasing mental health support for all of our citizens. In my volunteer experience I have worked with school PTAs to be welcoming to all students and provide an environment to address all students' physical,

mental and emotional well-being. If elected, this practical experience can be a useful tool to help all citizens of Annapolis, including the LGBTQ+ community.

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.

The adoption of policies such as this is critical to our moving forward in acceptance and providing equality for all students. I fully support the rights of individuals to be who they want to be without being subjected to harassment or ridicule. I believe bathrooms are a private place that shouldn't become a battleground for rights - I support schools and public locations' movement to unisex, private bathrooms to solve this issue.

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 both my personal life and my business, I foster an environment of inclusion and positivity and am always open to learning new ideas. I do this by using non-binary language on my website and contracts, advertise that my business is LGBTQ+ friendly, and work with clients to ensure their event is what they want it to be.

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.

In some ways Annapolis is far behind other more progressive areas of the US in the advancement of medical treatment and accessibility to the LGBTQ+ community. We need to work harder to ensure all of our residents have equal access to doctors and health centers who can meet their needs. We need to eliminate the negative stigma

surrounding the LGBTQ+ community by promoting and enhancing programs such as Planned Parenthood and community health clinics that focus on the specific needs of the LGBTQ+ community. This, along with free youth health clinics, will also help our struggling young LGBTQ+ community have better access to mental health experts. I support legislation that addresses these disparities and helps move Annapolis forward in protecting all of our residents.

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 strongly support police reform - what worked 10 years ago is different today. We need to break down the barriers that prevent us from understanding each other and work to build better relationships, both between police and the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized communities. On-going education is crucial to understanding our differences and celebrating our similarities. Specifically, sensitivity training should be required for all people in service level positions - healthcare workers, police, fire, retail and restaurants.



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.
