



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World

2019 8th District Questionnaire - Challenger

Prepared by: Tonya Bah Phone/610-333-3568 Email: tb3692@gmail.com

Campaign Manager: Kairol Rosenthal _____ Phone/Email: 773-426-8081 / kairol@tonyabah.com

Committee Name: People for Tonya Bah

Campaign Address:P.O. Box 44156, Philadelphia PA. 19144

Email: kairol@tonyabah.com Website: tonyabah.com _____

CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name Tonya Bah

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: _____ Tonya Bah _____ Date: __1-09-19

**Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to:
info@phillynn.org and mail a copy with the signature page to**

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

I. INTRODUCTION

Although many of the questions in Section III below call for a simple yes or no answer, please feel free to provide an explanation for any of your choices. If you have not yet come to a final decision, or don't currently have enough information to provide an informed answer, please so state.

II. BACKGROUND

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held?

I have not been elected or appointed to any government office.

2. With respect to your other qualifications for the office of 8th District Council member:

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

EDUCATION ISSUES

PSSA, PASA, and the Keystone Exams

Organized Philadelphia's largest single school opt out movement.

Educated, parents, students, communities, and educators on the steps, and their rights, to opt out of standardized tests and the consequences of not doing so.

Testified in favor of **SB-756**, Senator Dinniman's bill addressing the Keystone Exams.

Testified and provided a practical and less expensive alternative to PSAT's.

State Senator Arthur Haywood

Toni Keg - Policy and Research Director for State Senator Dinniman

Kelley Collings - WE Caucus, Philadelphia Public School educator

Alison McDowell - Parent and lead activist on testing

School Reform Commission and School Board

Worked to abolish the School Reform Commission by testifying at hearings and recruiting parents.

Ran on Our City Our Schools slate for appointed School Board position.

Kendra Brooks, Project Coordinator, Our Cities Our Schools

Arielle Klagsbrun, Community Organizer 215 People's Alliance

Public School Advocacy

Testified and assisted in organizing protest on the elimination of 9th grade and gentrification of Strawberry Mansion High School and community.

Lobbied, as parent of bullied child, for restorative practices approach and training for all educators and students.

LABOR ISSUES

Fair Workweek Legislation

Provided written testimony using my personal experience as a hotel worker.

Advocated for \$15/hour minimum wage for all city workers, contractors, and subcontractors.

Organized and recruited other workers and activist for direct action against business owners abusing employees.

Councilwoman Helen Gym

Gabriella Jones-Casey, Lead Organizer

PASNAP: Inadequate and Unsafe Staffing

Worked on efforts to gain staffing rights for nursing and ER staff at Einstein, St. Christopher's, Hahnemann, and

Delaware County Memorial Hospitals.

Organized faith based institutions to call local elected officials.

Picketed, spoke for community, and communicated status to local civic groups.

Patty Eakin, PASNAP President

Jessica Way, PASNAP Organizer

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers

Organized 1,000 days no contract Widener Middle School teachers' walkout.

Evette Jones, Educator

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Organized, scheduled, and fostered a working relationship between PWD, school transportation, and my community for stormwater management installation.

Consulted, trained, demonstrated and presented facts on Clean Water Fund's initiative to eliminate lead poisoning in our city.

Greg Ely, Clean Water Fund Director

Engaged local religious leaders, community advocates and residents to oppose the permitting of the Nicetown Gas Plant.

Protested the gas plant at SEPTA hearings, License and Inspection, and in community meetings.

b. What about your background or experience do you think most qualifies you to be elected? Please attach a brief bio.

As a City Councilwoman fighting for fair public education, \$15 an hour minimum wage, and rights and services for low income people, I will be the most tenacious voice in the room; I care deeply about the policy, fiscal calculus, and moral obligation required to reduce poverty, and I am fueled by personal experience.

Although I earned a full scholarship, I had to drop out of college to earn money for my family. Low income Philadelphians are constantly sacrificing the opportunity to get ahead for the reality of living in poverty. On council, I will push legislation that tackles the roots of poverty instead of promoting the false solutions of piecemeal programs and isolated, incremental improvements.

I am a former hotel worker. We must have in City Hall the voice of an hourly wage earner not just on days when residents line up behind a mic to publicly testify, but we need my voice in closed chambers, on Council committees, and in regular meetings with the Mayor.

I have both rallied against and worked with City Council and the School Board in my capacity as an organizer, activist, and advocate for fair education and social justice issues, and as a widowed mother of special needs twins. As such, I possess a realistic understanding of navigating broken systems and the pressure required to change them.

Please [follow link](#) to attached bio for Tonya Bah.

c. What other endorsements have you received?

Neighborhood Networks is the first organization I have completed a questionnaire with.

d. How do you plan to win?

Our campaign strategy centers around a robust field program, in which we will recruit scores of volunteers to knock on tens of thousands of doors throughout the district.

e. How much money have you raised? **\$30,000** How much do you expect to raise? **\$60,000**

3. What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected?

I will change the way in which City Council views their power and ability to influence the Philadelphia Public Schools and the School Board that governs them. Every resident of Philadelphia deserves open and transparent access to the entire proposed school district budget before it is approved. My office will assemble a People's Policy Team to interpret, review, and solicit residents' feedback and create an accountable budgetary process.

As a City Councilwoman I will fight for \$15. The limitations of Harrisburg can no longer be used as an excuse for stagnant wages for Philly's hourly workers. I will sponsor legislation that requires a \$15 minimum wage in Philadelphia, and build momentum for what is hopefully a Democratic General Assembly in 2020 to lift state preemption.

I will work with Department of Human Services, Department of Behavioral Health, The Philadelphia Prison System, and The Philadelphia Courts to increase access to restorative justice practices as an alternative to current punitive approaches to handling truancy, mental illness, crime, and violations.

III. ISSUES

A. Economic Development

Would you back legislation to:

1. Impose an impact fee on businesses failing to pay workers \$15/hr to reimburse the City for the costs of relieving poverty? **Yes. I would shape strong legislation on this issue by conducting policy research of what has succeeded and/or failed in other municipalities around the country. I would also work closely with my progressive allies in the State House and Senate to create workarounds to potential barriers in State law.**
2. Take \$200 million of City pension funds now invested in the stock market to invest in neighborhood economic development projects? **No. I believe in funding neighborhood economic development projects but believe that the return on such investments are too risky to use as an investment vehicle for City workers' pensions.**
3. Create a program to provide technical assistance and start-up funding for cooperative, worker-owned businesses? **Yes, it would have to be a need based program.**
4. Increase taxes to support City and/or School District services, and if so, which ones?
I would begin by eliminating the 10-year property tax abatement on new development. Additionally, City Council needs to apply coordinated and strong pressure on major exempt institutions that should be paying PILOTS. We need to seriously reform our tax assessment process so that it is accurate and that middle class and wealthy homeowners are paying their fare share, and we need to collect unpaid property taxes from absentee landlords. We need to consider how the city hotel tax is being used and

direct much of that funding toward the School District. Lastly, we cannot ignore that administrative inefficiencies cost the city millions of dollars annually that could be directed towards our schools.

5. Reduce taxes as an economic development strategy, and, if so, which ones? **No, however, we need to create a wage tax exemption for low-wage workers.**
6. Create a commission to study the creation of a Bank of Philadelphia to hold all City deposits and invest them locally? **Yes.**
7. Create a system of participatory budgeting that would allow 8th District residents to control allocation of all or a portion of funds coming to the District? **I believe District Council budgets need to be detailed, transparent, and available to the public for comment and suggestion. It is up to the residents to elect a strong City Councilperson who will represent the people's needs and listen to their desires around budget allocations.**

B. Education

Would you back legislation to:

1. Enact a plan that would help regulate charter schools by making their budgetary practices transparent, ridding them of conflicts of interest, and stopping them from cherry-picking their student bodies? If so, what would that plan look like? **Yes. Council needs to apply steady pressure on the School Board to deny any charter school application that does not abide by the same standards and regulations that apply to public schools, including but not limited to cherry-picking student body, comparable salary, benefits, and rights to unionize for teachers and staff, and budgetary practices transparency.**
2. Provide universal pre-k to all 3 and 4 year olds in the City? **Yes, however, we need to create and enforce guidelines to ensure that it is quality care from which children will actually benefit.**
3. Make the School Board an elective office, or otherwise deepen community participation in School Board appointments? **Yes. I will take leadership in Council on this effort.**
4. Compute the cost/benefit ratio for the School District of all proposed KOZ zones before they're approved by Council? **Yes, and we need to ensure that the entity computing this cost/benefit ratio is doing so objectively.**
5. Increase funding for the School District? If so, please explain. **Yes. A first priority is increasing the School District Capital Budget to remediate mold, lead, and asbestos.**

C. Criminal Justice

Would you back legislation to:

1. Create an independent civilian police review board with subpoena power and the ability to suspend or fire police officers found to engage in misconduct? **Yes. Subpoena power is important and should come immediately. While suspension and firing would be an ideal power of the civilian board, we also need to ensure that the city negotiates a police union contract that allows the police department to suspend or fire police found to engage in misconduct.**

2. End the stop and frisk program?
Stop and frisk must end. I support a plan to measure not only the reduction in overall stop and frisk but a measurable reduction in the percentage of stop and frisks conducted on people of color. Alongside stop and frisk, the city needs to look at reducing neighborhood profiling, which contributes significantly to the discriminatory application of stop and frisk.
3. Demolish the House of Corrections? **I need to learn more about this.** My limited understanding is that the House of Corrections is currently being used for prison administrative offices and training classrooms. If this building is demolished, does that provide the prison system justification and encouragement to build new facilities for administrative and other purposes?
4. Increase post-release counseling for jobs, housing and other support services? **Life skills training needs to be a significant part of public education curriculum so we empower people with these skills early on in life.** For incarcerated individuals in need of re-entry planning, this process must begin at the time of sentencing. Waiting until post-release is too late in the process. And, most importantly, the City first needs to work on increasing jobs and housing opportunities so such counseling is not hollow but actually leads to placements.
5. Bar employers from denying jobs to ex-offenders without a specific job-related basis? **Yes.** This legislation must include enforcement measures and substantive penalties for employers who do not comply.

D. Reducing Corporate Power Over Our Politics and Economy

Would you back legislation to:

1. Bar or limit privatization of City property and work done by City employees? **Yes.**
 More specifically are there any circumstances under which you would sell PGW?
No.
2. Move Pension Fund investment decisions in-house? **Yes.**
3. Reform PIDC, the City's main economic development funding agency, so that its Board has a majority of public and community members, rather than Chamber of Commerce appointed members? **Yes**
4. Require the City to withdraw subsidies from corporations that fail to provide jobs or other benefits to City residents? **Yes**
5. Publicly finance City elections? **Yes**

E. Housing

Would you back legislation to:

1. Enact a rent stabilization program? **Yes.**
2. End, limit or curtail Councilmanic prerogative over land disposition? **Curtailed it and insert a transformative process that is inclusive of the community.**
3. Enact inclusionary zoning requirements to compel inclusion of affordable units in all market rate developments? **Yes, we need to enact and enforce well researched zoning requirement plans for market rate that actually serve the needs of low-income people.** A distinction must first be made between

housing for low-income residents versus affordable housing for working and middle class families. Next, we need to seriously survey the most sensible avenue in which low-income residents can benefit from market rate development. It does not serve low-income residents to live in a newly built development if it is not close to public transit, affordable supermarkets, schools, and government buildings.

4. Support a dedicated fund to provide technical assistance and start up funding for land trusts and housing co-ops? **Yes.**
5. Require the land bank to prioritize the disposition of properties for low-income and cooperatively owned developments? **Yes.**

F. Environmental Justice

1. Would you use the City's power of the purse to block SEPTA'S completion of a natural-gas fueled power plant in Nicetown? **Yes.**
2. What is your position on the proposal to build a new Liquefied Natural Gas Plant in Southwest Philadelphia? **I oppose this plant. It is contrary to Philadelphia's plan to reduce its carbon emissions by 80% by 2050.**
3. What will you do, or have you done, to support and promote the use of solar and other renewable energy sources in the District?
We must make it easier for homeowners of Philadelphia to install solar on their houses, and for renters to be able to access community solar projects. Unlike most cities, our city has the advantage of an abundance of flat roofed housing. We must promote educational curriculum and training programs that prepare Philadelphians for green jobs installing renewable energy projects and carrying out energy efficiency retrofits..
4. Do you support a plan for City government or the entire City to be fossil-free by a particular date? If so, how would you accomplish those goals?
Yes. Philadelphia cannot afford to reinvent the wheel and instead needs to consult with other major cities to learn best practices for rapidly transitioning to 100% clean energy. As a first step, I will strongly support Philadelphia signing on to the Sierra Club's Ready for 100% Renewable Energy Commitment. We must oppose all new fossil fuel projects in favor of renewable energy projects.

G. General Statement

Use this space to provide any further information that you would like us to consider about your candidacy, not covered by the questions above.

It is important that City Council candidates are transparent about their donors and funding sources. I have made a commitment to not accept funding from large developers, the fossil fuel industry, and charter school interests. Ours is a true grassroots campaign largely staffed by volunteers, and relies more so on the power of people rather than the power of the purse.