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## 2020 Legislative Questionnaire

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Committee Name: Friends of Nikil Saval

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### CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name:

Office Sought: **State Legislator**

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to [info@phillynn.org](mailto:info@phillynn.org) and mail or fax a copy of the signature page to:

**Gloria Gilman**

**121 S Broad St, Suite 1720**

**Philadelphia, PA 19107**

**215-568-4990**

**(fax) 215-925-3748**

**BACKGROUND– PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:**

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held, including the one you're seeking?

**I was previously the elected Ward Leader of the 2nd Ward for the Democratic Party. I'm the first Asian American to be elected Ward Leader in Philadelphia. I stepped down from this position to run for State Senator of the 1st District.**

2. If you have previously held a government office:
  - a. What are the primary issue areas in which you were involved?
  - b. What committees, caucuses or working groups have you served on?

**N/A**

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

I have worked as a volunteer labor organizer and researcher, focusing on hotel development and school funding. Please contact: Dermot Delude-Dix <[ddix@unitehere.org](mailto:ddix@unitehere.org)>, Emiliano Rodriguez <[erodriguez@unitehere.org](mailto:erodriguez@unitehere.org)>, Rosslyn Wuchinich <[rwuchinich@unitehere.org](mailto:rwuchinich@unitehere.org)>, or Antony Dugdale <[adugdale@unitehere.org](mailto:adugdale@unitehere.org)>

4. Please provide copies of all your significant campaign materials, including position papers, and information on your campaign strategy, expected funding sources, and endorsements.

**We will attach a viability document and our extensive platform documents via email.**

5. What is your plan to win this race?

**We plan to sway 36,000 constituents to vote for Nikil Saval through a combination of door knocking, mail, digital, as well as moving institutional resources and leaders within the district who are rooted in and trusted by their communities. Nikil's election as ward leader was part of a broader transformation in the balance of power in the district. Since he became leader of the Second Ward, his neighborhood has posted turnout increases over the previous cycles of 40 percent, 30 percent, and 25 percent in the 2018 general, 2019 primary, and 2019 general respectively. South Philadelphia. Similar numbers hold in the rest of South Philadelphia east of Broad, and the river wards. A high vote share in those neighborhoods, as well as a competitive performance in Center City neighborhoods, can deliver the requisite win total.**

**Labor unions, which play a critical role in the district in terms of resources, members, and door-knocking capacity, are not allied with the incumbent, and are likely sources of endorsement and financing. Nikil's history as a labor organizer and researcher with UNITE HERE, the union of hospitality workers, in which he led on fights to unionize non-union hotels, and to restore jobs and dignity to laid-off cafeteria workers and noontime aides in the School District of Philadelphia, will establish credibility with leaders.**

**In addition, Nikil's relationships and presence in the media world will bring national attention to this race. His expertise on the future of work, city planning, and transportation will bring support from neighborhood associations and urbanist groups in Philadelphia and elsewhere. His platform—focused on climate change, affordable housing, and family care, and drafted by nationally recognized experts on the respective fields—will be groundbreaking for a Pennsylvania senate candidate. Downballot races are also increasingly recognized as the key to mobilizing voters over the long haul and to defeating Trumpism long-term.**

**The campaign plans to build a winning field program that knocks on 100,000 doors in the district. In the end, the campaign will be won at the doors. With an aggressive volunteer engagement and voter contact plan,**

targeted persuasion using digital and direct mail, and a compelling narrative driven through communications and grassroots social media, Nikil Saval will win the primary on April 28, 2020.

## ISSUES

**Please note: Although many of the following questions may be answered “yes” or “no” you should feel free to elaborate if doing so would provide a clearer statement of your position. If you believe you do not have enough information to answer a question, or have not formed an opinion, please say so.**

### I. OVERALL

What would be your three highest priorities as a legislator? Explain.

- 1) **Pass a Green New Deal series of bills: a) renewable energy legislation (akin to Chris Rabb’s HB 1425), though I would push to move our timeline to transition up to 2030, the year by which the IPCC believes we must act in order to avoid a critical 1.5 degrees of warming; b) expanding transit to encourage coordination within SEPTA’s commuter and urban system; c) moving to build, preserve, or convert thousands of units of housing to affordable, green units.**
- 2) **Make our school funding formula retroactive and immediately deliver funds for remediating and greening our school infrastructure.**
- 3) **Establish a benefits fund for long-term elder care and childcare, paired with mandated paid family leave.**

### II. Education

- 1) Do you believe public college, or community college, should be tuition free?  
**The average student loan debt in Pennsylvania is \$33,935, one of the highest in the country. I support making the PASSHE system and Commonwealth colleges tuition and fee free and provide cost of living stipends to students who are residents of Pennsylvania.**

- 2) What role do you believe standardized tests should play in evaluating teachers, schools and students, if any?

**In their current form, none. A genuinely diagnostic test would be one in which teachers and students were able to discuss answers. But the tests now generate profit for testing companies, produce ratings that are valueless, and take time from genuine instruction. I would seek to reduce testing to no more than ten hours a year.**

- 3) What factors do you believe should be considered in determining *overall levels* of school funding in the Commonwealth, and funding *per school district*?

**The current method of funding education in Pennsylvania is unconstitutional and racist. We face at least a \$3 billion dollar shortfall in funding, not remedied by the funding formula, which only channels new funding to our school districts. We need a retroactive funding formula that channels all funding, not just new funding, to our schools**

I have been calling since the day we launched this campaign for Redevelopment Assistance Capitalization Grants (RACP) to be given to our school infrastructure. The advocacy of state senators has influence over where this money goes, and in recent years that money has gone to subsidizing the Comcast Technology Center, the PES Oil refinery, and a luxury hotel on city owned land in order to remediate lead and asbestos. This is unconscionable when we are unable to keep our schools open. I support the Governor's call to devote \$1 billion in RACP funding to our schools, but \$1 billion is only a start.

I believe we also need a Green New Deal for schools. The needs of our schools, as well as our libraries and recreation centers, are compounded by increasing extreme weather, especially increased extreme heat, even as many public schools do not even have basic air conditioning capability. Pennsylvania should create a specific green infrastructure fund for jointly undertake capital repairs and green upgrades at the same time. Through integrated project management, companies compete on bids to conduct waves of retrofit that address health needs while preparing public buildings for all-electric, modern green building systems, like air source heat pump HVAC systems that provide both heating and cooling. The technologies in question will be increasingly deployed in commercial and residential buildings throughout the Mid-Atlantic, North-East, and Midwest (regions with similar weather patterns), bringing down costs. The developments of workers' and firms' skills and capabilities will help catalyze a broader green buildings economy, making Pennsylvania into a regional leader with commensurate economic benefits.

As capital repairs and green upgrades modernize schools, libraries, and rec centers, we will fight to permanently increase operational funds to these public amenities to offer wrap-around services all across the state, such as child care, basic medical care (eg, from physician assistants), and emergency relief services (heating and cooling centers during harsh weather, disaster relief headquarters during emergencies, resiliency trainings for increased extreme heat days on a regular basis). Because green retrofits will also lower water and energy bills by between one and two thirds, depending on local particulars, reduced utility payments will also increase operational budgets.

- 4) Approximately 33% of Philadelphia students are enrolled in charter schools. What is your position on the expansion of charter schools? Should they be given public money via vouchers or similar programs (like ESAs)? What role do you think public schools play in our city?

**We should end tax credits for private school education, and revise the school charter law, which currently makes it nearly impossible to close revenue-draining charters.**

### **III. Budget and Taxes**

- 1) Do you support a Constitutional Amendment to permit progressive taxation in PA, in whole or part?

**Yes. I would seek to reform the current state tax code, to support jobs and wage-growth in Philadelphia, to fund our public goods in the city and statewide, and above all for the cause of equity, solidarity, and justice. At once the simplest and the most difficult solution would be an end to the uniformity clause, which essentially mandates a flat tax (or worse), and hampers any form of progressive taxation. Repealing the uniformity clause would make the goals of our movement more realizable.**

**Within the strictures of the uniformity clause, however, I support the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center's (PBPC) "Fair Share Tax" plan. The Fair Share Tax would create two separate taxes: one on wages and interest, and one on wealth. By increasing the tax on wealth, the PBPC estimates we can reduce taxes for the vast majority of Pennsylvanians, and bring in \$2.2 billion in new revenue.**

**There is another immediate budgetary need: our public transit system, both of which face growing crises. SEPTA in particular faces a debt level of \$11 billion. In order to deliver more revenue, Pennsylvania should consider regional tax swaps. This would take a portion of the local tax base and put it into a regional fund which is then redistributed back to our area based on some criteria other than their contributions to the pool.**

**There are also sources of funding in our existing budget that we should look to free up. The state offers subsidies in the billions to the fossil fuel industry, something that must end. We should also put a moratorium on all new prison construction, at once a failed project of the neoliberal era to bring jobs to rural communities, as well as one predicated on inhumanity and racism; a system that profits off the destruction of families, communities, and the holding and disciplining of disproportionately Black and brown people. Similarly, we ought to have a moratorium on new highway construction, which subsidizes sprawl, drives segregation, and dooms our climate. We should end tax credits for private school education, and revise the school charter law, which currently makes it nearly impossible to close revenue-draining charters. We should also look into ending the Keystone Opportunity Zone program, whose mixed record of growth seems to have come at an enormous cost in revenues.**

- 2) Would you support raising the tax on unearned income as a way to increase state revenue without increasing burdens on working people?

**See #1.**

- 3) What changes if any would you support in corporate net income tax levels?

**See #1.**

- 4) What changes, if any, would you support in the personal income tax?

**See #1.**

- 5) Do you support full elimination of the Delaware loophole?

**Yes.**

- 6) Do you support a tax on fracking, and at what level?

**We should immediately transition away from fracking and all reliance on fossil fuels.**

**Pennsylvania's fossil fuel industry has left a mass of human and environmental wreckage in its wake. We can see the cost of their industry's unfettered reign in the recent Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) refinery fire, but we can also find a quieter, more nefarious legacy of extracting, storing, and refining oil and natural gas in this state: the blanket of brownfields and other toxic sites littering the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania landscape. As we push the fossil fuel industry out of the energy sector, we must force them to pay for the damage they've inflicted on our city and state by through a jobs program that supports all workers, whether Black, brown or white.**

**We should establish a Green Public Bank to to provide financing for clean energy projects. A Green Bank can use public investment to draw in private investment, create new markets, serve as a hub for innovation, and guide investment to socially beneficial ends. Green Bank loans would be subject to labor standards eligibility criteria, and also encourage worker cooperatives.**

- 7) Do you support the Keystone Opportunity Zone program? Would you introduce legislation to eliminate it, or to limit the number of times a parcel's KOZ designation can be renewed or extended? More generally, do you support tax breaks to lure or retain businesses?

**We should end the Keystone Opportunity Zone program, whose mixed record of growth has come at an enormous cost in revenues.**

#### **IV. Public Banking**

Would you support the creation of a Pennsylvania Public Bank, modeled after [the Bank of North Dakota](#)?

**I would absolutely support a public bank, to encourage the creating of worker-owned cooperative enterprises. A state public bank would make it easier to make low-cost loans for infrastructure improvement. Cities or counties would deposit tax dollars and other revenues into a local public bank, which would partner with community banks, credit unions and loan funds to support affordable housing and park improvements. I know that Neighborhood Networks has worked considerably on this idea, and I would love to work with the organization to pass a law creating a public bank.**

#### **V. Women's Rights**

- 1) Do you believe there should be any restrictions on a woman's right to choose? If so, what?

**I strongly support any and all efforts to ensure free, universal, access to abortion, and to ensure that those seeking to have abortions are free from harassment, intimidation, and harm. I would seek every available means to allow a single-payer or expanded Medicaid system in Pennsylvania to pay for abortion access. We should also eliminate restrictions on access to abortion for those under 18 (so-called parental consent laws), and eliminate the 24-hour waiting period for those seeking an abortion.**

- 2) What additional protections should be enacted into law to protect women's health care?

**See answer #1.**

- 3) Would you support proposals to ensure that women and men working in the Commonwealth receive equal pay for equal work?

**Yes.**

- 4) Do you support legislation to protect individuals against sexual assault?  
**Yes.**

#### **VI. Children and Families**

- 1) Should the state require businesses to provide paid family leave?

**The United States is alone in the developed world in its failure to cover healthcare for its residents, mandate paid parental leave, and adequately subsidize the cost of child and long-term elder care. The fastest growing section of the country's workforce, home health care aides, are among the poorest paying and most insecure jobs in the country. As the father of a young child, and a freelancer who has struggled with mounting healthcare costs, I know the squeeze that the current system places on working people, and the staggering amount of debt that people are forced to shoulder just to make ends meet.**

**A dynamic and innovative society is one that cares. We need to plan for an aging society, to make childcare affordable, and guarantee healthcare for everyone.**

**Pennsylvania should provide income support for all workers who need time off to take care of a loved one. All adults experience moments of increased caregiving obligations, such as the birth of a new child, or a partner falls sick, that interfere with full-time work. All workers should be able to attend to those care needs without fear of risking poverty.**

**Pennsylvania's population is aging, as older adults represent an increasing share of the total population. While some individuals require nursing home or other institutional services, nursing homes can be costly for families, and the majority of Americans prefer to remain at home if they are able. Currently, family and friends often serve informally as unpaid caregivers. Many unpaid caregivers do so while also working, creating challenges for those who have to balance the demands of their jobs with the needs of their loved ones. The paid caregiver workforce experiences low wages and inconsistent schedules, and nearly half live in low income households. The need to support skilled, available, stable caregivers to provide long-term care services is clear.**

**Despite the increasing need for caregivers to support older adults, people with disabilities, and their families, existing policies to support individuals and their families and caregivers fall short. Coverage for long term care services through Medicaid and Medicare is limited. Although privately purchased long term care insurance is available, the high costs are prohibitive for many, and few older Americans purchase extra private insurance. The gaps in long term care coverage leave many families scrambling to figure out how to provide care for loved ones when caregiving needs arise.**

2) Should the state provide universal availability of affordable child care? If yes, how would you achieve this?

**Yes. Pennsylvania offers only meager subsidies for childcare, and Philadelphia offers a limited subsidized pre-K program. The lack of subsidized childcare makes it hard on workers seeking a return to work, and also makes it difficult to guarantee caregivers a living wage. Early childhood education is also a critical factor in the growth and health of children long-term. A caring society should seek to make childcare affordable and eventually free.**

**I support the creation of a comprehensive universal early child care and education social insurance program for Pennsylvania. Child care would be universally available from 12 weeks of age, regardless of parent or guardian employment status, with private childcare solutions and home-care solutions supported through public subsidy.**

**I also support the expansion of the Child Care and Development block grant into the proposed Child Care for Working Families Act, which would subsidize 90% of childcare costs for families while establishing a living wage for childcare providers. The act also awards Social Security credits for In-home providers who take time off for childcare responsibilities.**

## **VII. Environment**

- 1) What measures, if any, would you support to move PA off its reliance on fossil fuels and expand use of renewable energy sources?

**Our state is suffering from a triple crisis of economic inequality, ecological devastation and climate change, and public disinvestment. Most Pennsylvanians' wages have stagnated, and many communities across our state suffer from deep poverty and despair. The climate crisis threatens the futures of people all over Pennsylvania—none more so than frontline and vulnerable communities and young people—on top of the thousands of premature deaths and tens of billions of dollars of public health costs already caused by fossil fuel extraction and consumption. And our state government's dramatic neglect of public services has led to toxic schools, unaffordable college, and crumbling infrastructure—all while working class Pennsylvanians shoulder far too much of the state's tax burden.**

**Pennsylvanians need a Green New Deal.**

**A Green New Deal is the path we must follow to realize our rights, as humans and Pennsylvanians: to clean air, clean water, clean transportation, healthy food, renewable natural resources, and a stable and livable climate. We must make these rights concrete realities in the lives of all Pennsylvanians. The Green New Deal is not one specific policy, but a recognition that our three crises are inseparable, and a commitment to addressing them at once: by attacking injustice, creating jobs, and empowering workers; by halting climate change, reversing environmental injustice, and caring for the natural world; and by investing in the public goods and services that working class people need to survive and prosper.**

**I support setting swift and responsible targets, including eliminating coal-generated electricity by 2025, and achieving 100% clean electricity by 2030. I also support the approach laid out in Representative Chris Rabb's clean energy bill (HB 1425 of 2019), in which the transition is iteratively planned with updated analysis and interim targets for emissions reductions, job growth, and equity. We must also create a climate equity fund by which 40% of benefits and investment during the transition are directed to frontline and vulnerable communities, including communities of color, the poor, and deindustrialized communities. We should also aggressively update the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards to require renewable electricity, and make community-owned renewable energy projects legal. We should shift the Pennsylvania Utility Commission away from judging utilities on the profitability of their capital investments, to a performance-based model that considers what matters to Pennsylvanians: decarbonization, equity, energy security, and public health. Finally, we should change the building code to ensure all new buildings are fossil-free and efficient, including eliminating the use of natural gas in new construction.**

- 2) Do you support a ban on fracking in whole or part?

**I support a ban on fracking.**

- 3) Do you think Philadelphia should be compelled or induced to sell PGW?

**No.**

- 4) The Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce advocates converting Philadelphia into an “energy hub” for oil and natural gas, or the “Houston of the East Coast.” Do you agree or disagree with this vision?

**I disagree with this vision.**

- 5) What, if any, other measures would you support to preserve or improve our environment? (water issues, park preservation, detoxification of school buildings, etc.)

**My Green New Deal for PA proposal is the core of my entire platform. We should immediately remediate asbestos in every school in the state and start to prepare and rebuild our schools with the knowledge that the climate is changing and our neighborhood schools must serve as resiliency centers. I’m proposing we clean up every single brownfield and toxic site in Philadelphia with union labor. As we stand up the clean energy sector in Philly, it’s vital that these jobs (all of which pay well and are shovel-ready) provide an off-ramp for oil and gas industry workers. We should also base all tax incentives, subsidies, contracts, procurement, and loans on project labor standards. For example, a clean energy project could receive a 50% tax exemption for meeting minimum program requirements (contracting with businesses that have a history of labor law compliance, are owned by women and minorities, and have local workforces and apprenticeship programs); a 75% tax exemption for additionally meeting prevailing wage rates determined by collective bargaining; and a 100% tax exemption for being governed by a community workforce agreement or project labor agreement. Additionally, we should make sure remediated sites stay under the control of community residents in co-operative ownership, so that they can exercise self-determination over the future of these spaces. I’m also proposing we establish a Green Public Bank to provide financing for clean energy projects. A Green Bank can use public investment to draw in private investment, create new markets, serve as a hub for innovation, and guide investment to socially beneficial ends. Green Bank loans would be subject to labor standards eligibility criteria, and also encourage worker cooperatives. Finally, we should agricultural policy to promote sustainable ecology, long-term soil health, food security, extreme weather resilience, broad land ownership, and labor rights. We should also recognize the human and natural value of our public lands, by investing in restorative forestry management and state parks. In Philadelphia, state grant money can be used to support urban agriculture, expanding community gardens and farms, which can be centers of community resilience where Philadelphians care for each other and the natural world.**

## **VIII. Criminal Justice**

- 1) Should stop and frisk be limited or outlawed?

**Yes.**

- 2) How would you deal with the problem of mass incarceration of minorities, particularly minority youth?

**Justice should make us safer, and the vigilante methods used by police derive from a deep culture of racism, that are inextricable from the history of policing in this country and its roots in trying to stop the liberation of Black people during Reconstruction. It will take a movement of**

millions to change it, and we should have representatives elevating that movement, elevating the lives lost, and elevating the direct threat Black and brown people face, everyday.

Much of the culture of overpolicing also derives from their monopoly on the legitimate use of violent force; legislatively, we should find ways to diminish that legitimacy. I support legislative efforts by the Black Lives Matter network to put serious restrictions on the ability of police to use violent force. We should revise statewide standards so that the municipal police use-of-force standard is deemed “necessary,” rather than “reasonable”; require de-escalation by police officers; and hold officers who violate these principles criminally liable.

In addition, we must stop any attempt by a municipality to enforce “stop-and-frisk” and “broken windows”-style policing, which create an aura of terror around entire neighborhoods and lead to mass incarceration. We should also pass series of bills that will end the war on drugs, through full decriminalization of cannabis, and ensuring that jobs created in any related industry go to those most impacted by the violent and terrible history of American policing and incarceration around narcotics. I support safe consumption sites, which will reduce deaths and also encourage diversion and treatment, rather than policing and incarceration.

3) Should marijuana be legalized for recreational use?

**Yes. We should also expunge all previous cannabis convictions. We should also pass series of bills that will end the war on drugs, through full decriminalization of cannabis, and ensuring that jobs created in any related industry go to those most impacted by the violent and terrible history of American policing and incarceration around narcotics.**

4) Should privately-owned prisons be permitted in Pennsylvania?

**I believe a democratic society cannot truly coexist with a system of incarceration, public or private, that deprives so many (no matter how many), of years of their lives, tears families and communities apart, and which is rooted in racial terror and white supremacy. We should begin to end the prison system by ending our system of mass incarceration. We can put a cap on sentencing for felonies and misdemeanors, and ending mandatory minimums in sentencing. We ought to eliminate any violations connected to fines and fees. I would seek a moratorium on all new state prison construction. I would eliminate the use of cash-bail, seek to abolish the death penalty, end life without parole, and revise legislation that allows juveniles to be tried as adults.**

5) Should we ban the box in Pennsylvania?

**Absolutely.**

6) Should PA continue to build new prisons?

**No. See answer to #4.**

7) Should PA begin to close prisons? Explain.

**Yes. See answer to #4.**

8) Do you support an end to the death penalty?

**Yes. See answer to #4**

9) When if ever, should a juvenile be tried as an adult?

**A juvenile should never be tried as an adult.**

10) As a general matter, what do you think the state can do to reduce the murder rate in Philadelphia, while maintaining respect for civil liberties and the overall need for decarceration of our city?

**We must take steps to heal the harm the racist war on drugs has wreaked on Black communities around the state — we must release those with drug convictions on their records from imprisonment, expunge their records and provide immediate assistance to assist those who are incarcerated to establish stable lives outside of prison. We must also recognize that the war on drugs has destroyed millions of lives, wasted billions of dollars, and is based primarily in fear and stigma, rather than proven evidence and research. It has disproportionately singled out communities of color and poor people, and caused irreparable damage to lives, incomes, neighborhoods, families, and futures. We should absolutely increase our investment in diversionary programs and reduce the number of people entering the justice system by expanding access to diversion programs. We must also invest in proven strategies to reduce gun violence that don't rely on cruel punishments, like Cure Violence, a strategy that uses credible community members to identify and deescalate conflicts before they become lethal. Implementing Cure Violence in North Philadelphia led to a 30 percent reduction in shootings.**

#### **IX. Campaign Finance Reform**

Would you support legislation to provide public financing for state and local election campaigns?

**Absolutely.**

#### **X. Labor**

1) Would you support legislation to strengthen protection for workers trying to form or join a union?

**I don't see a future for the safety and security of our workers, our families and our world without organized labor. I cut my teeth organizing with UniteHere by organizing boycotts and organizing to win back the jobs of 1,800 cafeteria workers and school safety staff when Republican Governor Corbett cut billions of dollars from our education budget. This culminated in a two week hunger strike led by workers and we won those jobs back — but it still sickens me that workers literally had to starve to bring attention to the plight around our schools.**

**I am grateful to the members of UNITE HERE in particular for teaching me the power, dignity, and beauty of workers fighting for justice in the workplace, and how its effects go much farther and more deeply than the shop-floor. I don't see any way to govern other than in lock step with the labor movement. My family is a union family. I'm a member of the National Union of Writers UAW 1981/AFL-CIO, and my wife is a member of AFSCME DC 47, Local 2178, as a preservation planner.**

**The US is out-of-step with other countries in the sheer lack of job protections it guarantees for workers, and in the terror its workers suffer in the country's workplaces. The lack of those protections also makes it more difficult for workers even to consider organizing; employers fire workers seeking to form a union and are slapped with labor violations that barely affect their business.**

**For those reasons, I would seek to end at-will employment in Pennsylvania and moving to a "just cause" standard for discipline and discharge. This would not only create stability in people's employment lives, but make it easier to organize. We should also enact laws that deny state contracts to employers who violate state**

**employment laws, increase the damages available to employees whose employers violate state employment law, increase the civil penalties the state can seek for violations of state employment laws, and increase the budget for enforcement. The Attorney General should also be prosecuting more employers; a Public Attorney General Act would encourage the AG to increase enforcement of state employment laws.**

**Worker misclassification is a problem across industries—from those who drive for Uber and Lyft to building trades workers on construction sites. It is a way for employers to deny workers benefits, overtime compensation, and job security. It also targets and disenfranchises undocumented workers, and helps to divide workers against each other. For this reason I would propose legislation that would guarantee direct employment status, similar to California’s Assembly Bill 5, to workers that are actually employees, and ensure that workers receive their fair share.**

**Existing labor legislation is also patriarchal and racist. Workers who are largely women, and largely women of color, are not protected by current legislation. I would propose legislation to allow reasonable accommodation for pregnant and breastfeeding workers on the job, allow home healthcare aides (what will soon be the largest sector of the workforce) to organize, and create a Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights, similar to the one passed in Philadelphia, for the state.**

**In addition to making the climate of organizing easier, I would want to make financing that can encourage solidarity. The use of RACP funding to development in particular should have stricter requirements on job creation and payment of prevailing wages; currently developers can receive RACP money by virtually making up numbers with regard to numbers of jobs, and there is zero accountability in the case of non-delivery. In addition, in the case of a firm going bankrupt, employees should be granted the right of first refusal to buy the company and run it as a co-operative. I would also support a public bank, to encourage the creating of worker-owned cooperative enterprises.**

- 2) Should the minimum wage be increased? If so, to what level and should the increase be indexed to inflation?

**I would increase the minimum wage to a living wage (\$15 an hour as a floor because, frankly, \$15 an hour is not enough), increase overtime eligibility and threshold number of hours for more workers, and support Representative Elizabeth Fiedler’s statewide “Fair Workweek” law to enact fair scheduling.**

**We must also end the tipped wage, and make efforts to unionize easier among currently low-wage workers (home health care aides, for example, projected to be the fastest growing sector of the workforce, but are only able to organize under ).**

- 3) Do you believe that Philadelphia and other municipalities should continue to be pre-empted from increasing the minimum wage on their own?

**No. The State should not be able to draft legislation that specifically pre-empts Philadelphia, but there may be reasons to adopt statewide legislation that have pre-emptive power for all municipalities, such as to change zoning ordinances to build multifamily affordable housing, to create statewide rent regulations and right-to-counsel in the case of eviction, etc.**

- 4) Do you support privatization of retail liquor sales in Pennsylvania? Are there any other services that you believe should be considered for privatization?

**No, I don't support privatization of retail liquor sales. I completely oppose the privatization of public infrastructure, and generally oppose the use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the maintenance of public infrastructure. We should recognize the root causes of the rise of PPPs, their partial utility for maintaining public infrastructure within the era of neoliberalism, as well as their harm to overall economic and racial equity, and attack those root causes.**

- 5) Philadelphia remains the most impoverished major city and about 75% of our residents lack bachelor's degrees. What policies would you implement to ensure that decent, high-paying jobs created here are accessible to the majority of our population, not just the relatively well-educated and already well off?

**As a scholar of the history of work, and someone who cut his teeth in organizing in the labor movement, I believe the strongest path to higher wages is unionization, and increasing union density. No one should have to work two or three jobs to get by; one job should be enough. As a correlate to that, enlarging the public sector and establishing a culture of low-carbon public affluence. In the answers to questions 4 and 5, I believe I outline the paths to greater revenue for public goods, and how we can improve working conditions and wages for all workers, whether Black, brown or white, and whether service-, construction-, or manufacturing-sector jobs.**

**One other way to enlarge employment in the region is through a Green New Deal. As part of my Green New Deal for Pennsylvania, we would, among other things, invest heavily in a rapid transition to electric vehicles around the state a fleet-wide conversion of all state and local government vehicles to EVs by 2030, a PennDOT-led charging station construction program that builds out a statewide system for EVs and puts more Pennsylvanians to work; clean up every single brownfield and toxic site in Philadelphia with union labor; retrofit schools, libraries, and recreation centers; and increase operational funds to public amenities to offer wrap-around services (child care, basic medical care, and emergency relief) all across the state.**

## **XI. Reforming Legislative Districts**

- 1) Do you support legislation that would (1) form an independent commission, and (2) apply sound methodologies, to draw all congressional, State House, and Senate districts fairly in Pennsylvania?

**Partisan redistricting encourages cynicism about the electoral process, and reduces the need for parties to engage in outreach and organizing: a fatal spiral for our democracy. I believe that future redistricting should take place under an independent commission.**

## **XII. Public Health**

Would you support state legislation to create a single-payer system in PA?

**The United States can afford, and Americans deserve, a single-payer healthcare system on a federal level. Creating this system will require coordination with states, and Pennsylvania should create its own single-payer system. I support a single-payer healthcare program in Pennsylvania. Existing single-payer bills in PA ought to be expanded to cover all residents, regardless of immigration status, and ensure that abortion rights, all forms of disability, physical and psychotherapy, and the needs of queer, non-binary, and trans patients are fully supported and met by the system. I also support immediately expand eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP. We should remove work requirements and other barriers for Medicaid, so that no one goes without needed healthcare services or is forced to go into debt.**

## A Society That Cares

The United States is alone in the developed world in its failure to cover healthcare for its residents, mandate paid parental leave, and adequately subsidize the cost of child and long-term elder care. The fastest growing section of the country's workforce, home health care aides, are among the poorest paying and most insecure jobs in the country. As the father of a young child, and a freelancer who has struggled with mounting healthcare costs, Nikil knows the squeeze that the current system places on working people, and the staggering amount of debt that people are forced to shoulder just to make ends meet.

A dynamic and innovative society is **one that cares**. We need to plan for an aging society, to make childcare affordable, and guarantee healthcare for everyone.

## Healthcare for all

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*Nikil supports:*

- **A single-payer healthcare program in Pennsylvania.** Existing single-payer bills in PA ought to be expanded to cover all residents, regardless of immigration status, and ensure that abortion rights, all forms of disability, physical and psychotherapy, and the needs of queer, non-binary, and trans patients are fully supported and met by the system.
- **Immediately expand eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP.** We should remove work requirements and other barriers for Medicaid, so that no one goes without needed healthcare services or is forced to go into debt.

## Paid Care Leave

Pennsylvania should provide income support for all workers who need time off to take care of a loved one. All adults experience moments of increased caregiving obligations, such as the birth of a new child, or a partner falls sick, that interfere with full-time work. All workers should be able to attend to those care needs without fear of risking poverty.

The current federal legislation provides unpaid job protection for 12 weeks, but it lacks income protection, severely constraining the ability of many workers to adequately meet the care needs they have. The ability of workers to care for their loved ones improves the wellbeing of children, adults, and older adults, providing immediate benefits for those involved and long-term benefits for society at large (including companies). **We have the collective responsibility to support caregiving.**

*Nikil supports:*

- **Establishing a paid care leave plan in Pennsylvania.** This plan should guarantee 100% of earnings for all workers making 70% or less of the state average weekly wage (SAWW). The

plan would be funded principally on employer contributions, either based on the size of the firm or the firm's profitability (in the case of small firms with high earnings). For those making more than 70%, workers should get 70% of the SAWW, and 60% of the earned income that is above 70%.

- **Mandating at least 12 weeks of paid leave for all care events.** The paid care leave plan should be guaranteed a minimum of 12 weeks of paid leave, with eligibility guaranteed by anyone who pays partially into the fund (direct employees or independent contractors). Needs include: birth, adoption, surgery, illness of kin.

## **Long-Term Care**

Pennsylvania's population is aging, as older adults represent an increasing share of the total population. While some individuals require nursing home or other institutional services, nursing homes can be costly for families, and the majority of Americans prefer to remain at home if they are able. Currently, family and friends often serve informally as unpaid caregivers. Many unpaid caregivers do so while also working, creating challenges for those who have to balance the demands of their jobs with the needs of their loved ones. The paid caregiver workforce experiences low wages and inconsistent schedules, and nearly half live in low income households. **The need to support skilled, available, stable caregivers to provide long-term care services is clear.**

Despite the increasing need for caregivers to support older adults, people with disabilities, and their families, existing policies to support individuals and their families and caregivers fall short. Coverage for long term care services through Medicaid and Medicare is limited. Although privately purchased long term care insurance is available, the high costs are prohibitive for many, and few older Americans purchase extra private insurance. **The gaps in long term care coverage leave many families scrambling to figure out how to provide care for loved ones when caregiving needs arise.**

*Nikil supports:*

- **The adoption of universal long term care coverage** for Pennsylvanians that is available for any individual or family regardless of income to access benefits to meet long term care needs. The coverage covers home and community based services. Long-term care could be funded either through the establishment of a long-term care benefits fund, or establishing the program as a new eligibility group within Medical Assistance (Pennsylvania's Medicaid program).
- **Living wages and opportunities for workforce development.** Caregivers are the fastest growing section of the
- **The adoption of a statewide Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights.** This bill would be modeled on Philadelphia's Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights, which guarantees rest and

meal breaks, paid time off, civil rights protections and written contracts for nearly all domestic workers.

## **Childcare**

Pennsylvania offers only meager subsidies for childcare, and Philadelphia offers a limited subsidized pre-K program. The lack of subsidized childcare makes it hard on workers seeking a return to work, and also makes it difficult to guarantee caregivers a living wage. Early childhood education is also a critical factor in the growth and health of children long-term. **A caring society should seek to make childcare affordable and eventually free.**

*Nikil supports:*

- **The creation of a comprehensive universal early child care and education social insurance program for Pennsylvania.** Child care would be universally available from 12 weeks of age, regardless of parent or guardian employment status, with private childcare solutions and home-care solutions supported through public subsidy.

## A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR PENNSYLVANIA

Our state is suffering from a triple crisis of economic inequality, ecological devastation and climate change, and public disinvestment. Most Pennsylvanians' wages have stagnated, and many communities across our state suffer from deep poverty and despair. The climate crisis threatens the futures of people all over Pennsylvania—none more so than frontline and vulnerable communities and young people—on top of the thousands of premature deaths and tens of billions of dollars of public health costs already caused by fossil fuel extraction and consumption. And our state government's dramatic neglect of public services has led to toxic schools, unaffordable college, and crumbling infrastructure—all while working class Pennsylvanians shoulder far too much of the state's tax burden.

### **Pennsylvanians need a Green New Deal.**

A Green New Deal is the path we must follow to realize our rights, as humans and Pennsylvanians: to clean air, clean water, clean transportation, healthy food, renewable natural resources, and a stable and livable climate. We must make these rights concrete realities in the lives of all Pennsylvanians. The Green New Deal is not one specific policy, but a recognition that our three crises are inseparable, and a commitment to addressing them at once: by attacking injustice, creating jobs, and empowering workers; by halting climate change, reversing environmental injustice, and caring for the natural world; and by investing in the public goods and services that working class people need to survive and prosper.

## **100% clean energy**

The past year has been a good one for serious state climate legislation, providing Pennsylvania with many templates for action. The successful pushes have been based on three key components: setting ambitious targets consistent with the science and scale of the problem; building in equity and justice from the beginning; and aligning coalitions of community groups, labor, and elements of the private sector by recognizing and removing barriers to action.

*Nikil supports:*

- **Setting swift and responsible targets**, including eliminating coal-generated electricity by 2025, and achieving 100% clean electricity by 2035 and 100% clean energy economy-wide by 2050.
- The approach laid out in Representative Chris Rabb's clean energy bill (HB 1425 of 2019), in which the 30 year transition is iteratively planned with updated analysis and interim targets for emissions reductions, job growth, and equity.
- **A climate equity fund** by which 40% of benefits and investment during the transition are directed to frontline and vulnerable communities, including communities of color, the poor, and deindustrialized communities.

- **Aggressively updating the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards** to require renewable electricity, and making community-owned renewable energy projects legal.
- **Shifting the Pennsylvania Utility Commission away from judging utilities on the profitability of their capital investments**, to a performance-based model that considers what matters to Pennsylvanians: decarbonization, equity, energy security, and public health.
- **Changing the building code to ensure all new buildings are fossil-free and efficient**, including eliminating the use of natural gas in new construction.

## A human right to clean transportation

Philadelphia deserves a fare-free, fast-moving public transportation system. Through PennDOT and SEPTA, we must invest in our best low-carbon transit option: electric buses, electric vehicles, and more frequent service on our passenger rail networks.

*Nikil supports:*

- **Reducing SEPTA fares to \$1 per ride, with a path to free service (dependent on federal funding) in place.** SEPTA should immediately be free for everyone under 18 years of age.
- **Working with PennDOT to increase service, offering a bus every eight minutes and a train every five minutes in Philadelphia.** This will require hiring more drivers/operators and purchasing more vehicles—putting more union drivers to work and providing more Philadelphians with a reliable, low-carbon option for their commute.
- **Adopting a 10-year moratorium on new highway construction projects that subsidize sprawl and hurt urban and suburban communities in the region.** Those funds should be redirected to repair the state’s crumbling infrastructure and developing plans to cap or remove the most toxic, congested urban freeways in Philadelphia.
- **Investing heavily in a rapid transition to electric vehicles around the state.** This includes a fleet-wide conversion of all state and local government vehicles to EVs by 2030, a PennDOT-led charging station construction program that builds out a statewide system for EVs and puts more Pennsylvanians to work, and a state-level buyback/credit program to accelerate the switch from combustion engine to electric vehicle ownership for everyone else

## Environmental justice and economic inclusion

Pennsylvania’s fossil fuel industry has left a mass of human and environmental wreckage in its wake. We can see the cost of their industry’s unfettered reign in the recent Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) refinery fire, but we can also find a quieter, more nefarious legacy of extracting, storing, and refining oil and natural gas in this state: the blanket of brownfields and other toxic sites littering the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania landscape. As we push the fossil fuel industry

out of the energy sector, we must force them to pay for the damage they've inflicted on our city and state by through a jobs program that supports all workers, whether Black, brown or white.

*Nikil supports:*

- **Cleaning up every single brownfield and toxic site in Philadelphia with union labor.** As we stand up the clean energy sector in Philly, it's vital that these jobs (all of which pay well and are shovel-ready) provide an off-ramp for oil and gas industry workers.
- **Basing all tax incentives, subsidies, contracts, procurement, and loans on project labor standards.** For example, a clean energy project could receive a 50% tax exemption for meeting minimum program requirements (contracting with businesses that have a history of labor law compliance, are owned by women and minorities, and have local workforces and apprenticeship programs); a 75% tax exemption for additionally meeting prevailing wage rates determined by collective bargaining; and a 100% tax exemption for being governed by a community workforce agreement or project labor agreement.
- **Making sure remediated sites stay under the control of community residents in co-operative ownership,** so that they can exercise self-determination over the future of these spaces.
- **Establishing a Green Bank to to provide financing for clean energy projects.** A Green Bank can use public investment to draw in private investment, create new markets, serve as a hub for innovation, and guide investment to socially beneficial ends. Green Bank loans would be subject to labor standards eligibility criteria, and also encourage worker cooperatives.
- **Transforming agricultural policy to promote sustainable ecology, long-term soil health, food security, extreme weather resilience, broad land ownership, and labor rights.** We should also recognize the human and natural value of our public lands, by investing in restorative forestry management and state parks. In Philadelphia, state grant money can be used to support urban agriculture, expanding community gardens and farms, which can be centers of community resilience where Philadelphians care for each other and the natural world.

## **A Homes Guarantee**

Currently, a million and a half Pennsylvanians pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing and the number of affordable units in the Commonwealth is shrinking. Our remaining stock of public and subsidized housing is crumbling or has been demolished, as the population in need of these units is growing.

### **We need a Homes Guarantee.**

A generational investment in housing and renters' rights is necessary to not only reverse these trends, but to address unmet affordability needs. The magnitude and breadth of the current crisis requires a multi-dimensional approach.

#### **1) Build, preserve, or convert 1,000,000 units of affordable housing**

*Nikil supports:*

- **Converting vacant, abandoned, and distressed homes into permanently affordable no-carbon, healthy units governed by democratic community land trusts.** We should channel funding from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Authority (PHFA) into grant programs that reward union labor, and apprenticeship programs to bring low-income workers into building trades union pipelines. Retrofit homes to highest standards of energy efficiency and replace all fossil fuels (heating oil, natural gas) with the most modern electrical systems. With an estimated 25,000 units of vacant or distressed homes in Philadelphia alone, this could create permanently affordable homes for 125,000 people.
- **Using RACP, PHFA, and other funding streams to build model no-carbon, green social housing complexes with ground-floor retail, services, and community spaces managed by public housing authorities, limited equity co-operatives, or community land trusts.** This housing should be mixed income, weighted to low- and very low-incomes, and develop a new model of social housing that could be expanded with federal funding.
- **Implementing and expanding on programs that leverage low income housing tax credits (LIHTC) and other federal programs to construct more units of no-carbon, healthy affordable housing (for example, PennHOMES, Mixed-Use Development Tax Credits).** Enhancing the impact of these existing programs, will ensure that state revenues are deployed efficiently without significant additional administrative costs. These additional units will not only ensure that more Pennsylvanians have access to stable, affordable housing, but they will also have significant economic impact, supporting more construction jobs and enhancing the vitality of neighborhoods. Further, by ensuring that the new units are built with energy-efficient construction techniques, materials, and appliances, the program can help to jump-start green businesses in the Commonwealth.

- **Preventing existing affordable housing from being demolished or converted to market rate, and upgrading that housing to emit no carbon and save on energy costs.** Additional funding streams to subsidize operations and maintenance of affordable units, green upgrades to electrify units with the most modern appliances and building systems, paired with regulations that make it more difficult to terminate affordability restrictions will enhance neighborhood stability and reduce the burden on new construction to meet Pennsylvania's affordable housing needs.
- **Giving municipalities and housing authorities the explicit authority and financial resources to acquire units and dispose them as rent-restricted or limited-equity properties to community land trusts, while helping finance green upgrades to eliminate fossil fuels and increase energy efficiency.** Neighborhoods throughout the state grapple with the impact of properties owned by speculators and unscrupulous landlords who invest nothing into properties while reaping unfair rents from tenants with few housing options.
- **Extending grants and zero-interest loans to landlords to make repairs and green retrofits that cut carbon pollution and increase home comfort and safety in exchange for agreeing to a deed-restricted affordability period.** Many market-rate affordable units are abandoned due to an inability of landlords to make repairs to roofs, plumbing, mechanicals, and other basic systems. would be another efficient means of preserving affordable housing units throughout the Commonwealth.

## 2) Increase housing quality and expand renters' rights

Renters and low-income homeowners are the most vulnerable populations in the housing market, and we advocate for policies that increase housing stabilization for these groups.

*Nikil supports:*

- **Establishing statewide rent stabilization.** Rent stabilization rates should be tied to cost of living increases in municipalities and should not exceed them, and rent increases between unit turnover should be minimized. Cities that do not want to implement rent stabilization policies to pay a percentage of their multi-family unit property tax revenues into the State Housing Trust Fund.
- **Increasing the number of house inspectors at the municipal level,** particularly for cities with an aging housing stock and increasingly rent-burdened populations.
- **Increased funding for home repairs,** prioritizing completely subsidizing repairs for low-income, elderly, disabled, and family households in areas where disinvestment is greatest and household income is below municipal-wide averages
- **Mandating funding and legislation for tenants to have a right-to-counsel in eviction cases,** with local 311 and statewide agencies affirmatively advertising and connecting tenants in need to these resources (replicating Philadelphia's Housing Resource Center initiative)

### 3) **Changing laws around zoning, taxation, corporate giveaways, and land use to enable affordable housing construction:**

Pennsylvania's taxation and land use system hamstring city taxation powers, gives money away to corporations, and enables corrupt land dealings on a city level. It means that there is no differentiated tax policy, and we can't tax Comcast higher than the average rowhome owner. However, cities can abate property taxes for specific property types (such as new construction in disinvested neighborhoods) or exempt certain classes from full property tax payments (such as the low-income, disabled, elderly).

*Nikil supports:*

- **Taxing corporate owners based outside of the State.** We should also adopt new language in the uniformity clause that exempts school districts from abatement language. Even when property taxes are abated for new construction and development in disinvested areas, local schools funds should not be impacted by this policy
- **An end to exclusionary zoning.** While it is critical to build and preserve affordable housing in the places with the greatest need and in the places experiencing the greatest neighborhood change, it is also important to ensure that higher income suburban areas are building their fair share. At least 10% of all units in each municipality must be deemed affordable; in cases where a municipality fails to meet this standard, developers should be permitted to significantly exceed local density limits, provided that at least 25% of the new units are affordable.
- **Ending no-strings attached corporate giveaways.** Despite Philadelphia's rapid transition into the 21st century economy, Pennsylvania continues to employ wasteful, discredited 19th century economic development strategies that enrich multinational corporations at the cost of our residents. While programs like the Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZ) and the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) can and have provided real benefits to Pennsylvanians, all too often these billion-dollar programs are deployed to fund luxury hotels and office buildings and to bribe companies into remaining in the Commonwealth. If we are going to fund construction projects that principally benefit large corporations, we must demand that they provide real public benefits, like union jobs, affordable housing, and green infrastructure.
- **Suspending of councilmanic prerogative in Philadelphia until all of the city's affordable housing, transit, and care policies are implemented in an equitable and inclusive manner.** We advocate for the replacement of councilmanic process with a dedicated, community-engaged planning process that utilizes the community advocacy planner model to adequately account for past harms in exclusionary planning processes and promote a more equitable and inclusive city. While we believe local control is important, we also believe that local needs must be balanced with citywide goals of fairness and redistribution.
- **Creating a new land use designation that would accommodate mixed use Community Land Trusts.** This new designation could zone for affordable housing, community-based

manufacturing and businesses (particularly those providing clean energy, cooperative ownership structures, and care services), and urban agriculture.