



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATE PROFILE

Candidate Name:	Kimberly Owens
Position/Office on the Ballot:	Charlotte City Council, District 6
Party Affiliation:	Democrat

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE + MATERNAL HEALTH:

1. As federal policies threaten to widen health and economic disparities – particularly through cuts to Medicaid and SNAP – what strategies would you advance at the local level to build a more equitable and cost-effective system of care that ensures all residents can access the services they need, regardless of income or insurance status?

City Council can lead by example in providing living wages and benefits to city employees. We can also reevaluate our city procurement policies such that we are not tied to taking the "lowest responsive bid" and can explore what "lowest responsible bid" would look like. We could take into account the totality of amounts for change orders, delays etc when determining true "lowest cost" and we can push for an updated procurement matrix that allocates value to the wages and benefits vendors are providing to our citizens as their employees. Beyond city employees and vendor procurement, I believe City council can be a voice uplifting these disparities and the effects they have on homelessness, mental health care and crime. We need to work with our colleagues in Raleigh and in other facets of local government and non-profits to appreciate that health and economic disparities are at the foundation of many of big cities' problems, especially after the pandemic.

2. With rural hospitals in North Carolina already under threat of closure due to rising uncompensated care resulting from cuts to Medicaid, what investments or partnerships would you support at the local level to expand access to primary care, mental health services, and maternal and child health – especially in underserved areas within your municipality?

As above, we need thoughtful collaboration with our legislature, with local colleagues and non-profits to center the health and well being of the constituents we serve. We need to use the voice the office provides to lift up narratives of our citizens and the effect National policies are having. We need to partner with hospitals, non-profits and community and faith leaders to fill the gaps that federal and state policies are creating by their cuts to Medicaid and policies that reduce care options for our citizens. We have to listen and promote the lived experiences of our constituents as a means of persuading stakeholders of the harm caused by these reckless cuts to Medicaid. We need to center access, transportation and ease of use when developing or streamlining programs that bring multiple care organizations under a single facility like has been done with the Umbrella Center and family justice. We need to facilitate access and bring resources to people with

more co-responders who are trained in ways we cannot expect our police to be skilled at when mental health concerns are raised.

3. How would you ensure that community voices – particularly those most impacted by health disparities and barriers to care – are meaningfully included and elevated in shaping local policies and programs aimed at expanding access to healthcare and addressing systemic inequities?

One of the most effective means of building support and empathetic, effective responses to crises is the uplifting and sharing of stories of lived experiences. I would continue to make myself present in my community on routine bases around the District and would carry the stories of others to the Dias. Local policies cannot be shaped in a vacuum and must center the lives of the people they are to benefit. We need to take feedback through multiple channels to give opportunity to those who work schedules that do not lend themselves to attending in person City Council Meetings, and we need to start all City Council meetings on time respecting the time of the attendees who have signed up to share their concerns. We need to center respect for all citizens and bring lived experiences to our local policies and programs and be prepared to tweak things that are not working as intended. We are learning often as we go and cannot be tied to something that is not serving the people.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

1. Do you support ordinances that penalize people for sleeping in public spaces, panhandling, or living in their vehicles? Why or why not?

I do not support such penalties which are effectively a penalty on being poor or being mentally ill or substance dependent. The causes of being unhoused are myriad and complex -- aging out of foster care, rejection by a family for one's LGBTQIA status, a medical emergency, a mental health issue, a lost job or an eviction etc. ... I believe each one of us is far closer to being unhoused than we are to being in the 1% controlling wealth in this country. Many unhoused folks hold jobs but don't make enough for housing. Many unhoused folks need wrap around services to get to a place where they can again find their footing in our society. We need co-responders and trained professionals assessing the reasons folks are without shelter and working with private, public and non-profit and faith groups to finding housing first approaches that center the basic necessity of security and then begin to help with the other issues that led to the unhoused situation. We need shelters that don't divide families, shelters that are along transit lines and housing that is safe and supported with wrap around care.

2. What is your plan to address homelessness without resorting to criminalization or displacement?

I am impressed by the Faith In Housing initiatives and in the idea of pivoting to more Christ like behaviors than Christian labels. Faith communities turning vast amounts of now underutilized lands and buildings into housing for seniors and chronically unhoused brings purpose to the lives of congregants in truly loving thy neighbor and in lifting up those marginalized folks around us. I am supportive of co-responder social worker resources who are skilled in ways law enforcement is not and who can provide assistance along a housing first model that provides the underpinning for then addressing the root causes of unhoused situations.

3. What policies will you support to ensure law enforcement officers in our town are held accountable for the use of deadly force, especially when it results in the injury or death of unarmed individuals?

We must hire a chief of police who puts accountability and transparency to the community on par with support and "having the back" of officers. I am cautiously optimistic that many of the problems of partisanship and racism can be worked through for the benefit of our community by a renewed relationship between the Mayor, City Council and the law enforcement officers of our city. Reading the postings of the Fraternal Order of Police and the animus they have for both the mayor and for the current chief of police, I understand that this is not an issue that can be addressed overnight. I hope to work with all parties to broker better, trusted relationships based on the common values we share for the health and well being of all Charlotte citizens. I favor dash cams and body cams and accountability for officers exceeding the force needed in given situations. I favor broader access to mental health care for our officers and an approach to community that is more collaborative and less antagonistic. I believe officers should be able to live in the communities they support, thus work force housing and other community based efforts like take home cars should be priorities.

DEMOCRACY

1. How will you address underrepresentation in North Carolina's voters—especially among Black communities and young voters ages 18-29?

I will continue to use my voice each and every election cycle to be out in community trying to get out the vote and pushing back on any efforts to disenfranchise voters. I will lead with transparent, constituent-based actions designed to rebuild confidence in local government and to empower voters to feel like it matters who sits in these seats. I hope to inspire others to lean in and run for office, appreciating that we all need to take our turn at leading. I will know when to lead and importantly when to leave so that new voices can bring their talents to our city's governance.

2. How will you ensure that state and local district maps reflect fair representation across party, race, and geography?

I will work with our representatives in Raleigh, will support our judiciary and will speak on the importance of fair maps where voters chose their leaders rather than leaders choosing their voters.

3. Would you support legislation to establish a truly independent, non-partisan commission for redistricting, free from legislative influence?

100%. I also would support efforts to make City council non partisan as is the case for most of the local governing bodies in NC. I support term limits as well for Mayor and for our other local electeds so that people are not just parking in these jobs and not actually showing up for the people they are supposed to serve.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

1. What policies will you support to foster innovation and encourage an equitable entrepreneurial environment in the state?

I want to look closely at how procurement policies work, especially with the new transit authority to ensure opportunities are widely distributed and that all voices have opportunities to contribute to our growth and prosperity.

2. The NC workforce is dealing with cooling hiring markets and ongoing labor shortages across education, transit, health care, public service and more. What specific initiatives – such as apprenticeships, skills-based hiring, or public-sector retention programs would you support?

I am excited to partner with our School Board to continue trades based education and entrepreneurship for those for who a college degree is not the right path. AI is a challenge and an opportunity and must be managed in ways that involve appreciation for the disruption it is poised to have on many markets. I support apprenticeships and incentives to businesses to hire and retrain workers for jobs of the future. I support a focus on environmental sustainability and working with our transit authority to build out thoughtful infrastructure that prepares us for further climate changes and provides skills to our workers in environmental science.

3. Current state legislative budget proposals aim to reduce personal and corporate income tax rates tremendously by 2030. Do you believe such cuts are fiscally responsible given projected revenue shortfalls, or would you oppose accelerating them?

I oppose these tax cuts as I believe they will hurt the communities leaving them without revenue for needed services. These tax cuts, especially for corporations, are pandering to the wealthiest among us while leaving our people without basic necessities.

EDUCATION:

1. Considering the consistent defunding of public education that we have seen over the past several years as a result of poor policy decisions, what is your plan of action to ensure that you are coordinating with the school board to provide the best quality education feasible for students?

I will work with the School Board to ensure a sound, basic education to our students and to prepare them for enlistment, enrollment or employment with a focus on keeping public dollars in public schools. I do not support vouchers that take money from our public schools and will work in any way the City Council can to elevate the needs of our public schools as the great leg up education has always been for marginalized communities. We cannot hope to provide a compelling case for businesses to move to Charlotte if we cannot provide top quality public schools for the families of their employees. I will work with the County to ensure liveable wages for our teachers and will work to provide work force housing so that our teachers can afford to live in the communities they serve.

2. Do you support increasing educator pay to meet the national average and reinstating master's and related advanced degree pay?

100%

3. What is your stance on private school vouchers? Do you support using public funds to fund private school voucher programs?

No, I do not support this as our entire community benefits from having educated members. Regardless of the path a family chooses, public funds going to public schools benefits the entire public.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

1. North Carolina faces various water quality challenges, including contamination caused by PFAS, CAFOs, and other forms of industrial and commercial pollution. How do you plan to ensure communities across the state, particularly yours, will have access to clean, safe drinking water?

I will work with experts in Soil and Water conservation and other river and lake environmental groups to ensure that we are consistently offering access to clean, safe drinking water. This is table stakes for a community. We must ensure our infrastructure and climate resposiveness align with the needs of our growing population.

2. With recent federal limitations of the IRA and the continual removal of environmentally sound initiatives, as well as the impacts of defunding Medicare and Medicaid, how do you plan to ensure readily and equitable access to healthcare and other resources to ensure community needs are met?

I don't know what I can do beyond continue to inform myself, listen to the experts and the stories of our residents and advocate for equitable health and resource allocation to all citizens of Charlotte.

3. Greensboro: What is your stance on the toxic waste site, Bingham Park. located in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Greensboro? Do you support the community's request for full remediation?

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