

# Human Rights Council of North Central Florida

## 2022 Gainesville City Commission & Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire Responses

- 1. The Florida Legislature passed and the Governor signed the so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill, formally known as the Parental Rights in Education Act, which prohibits any discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity by teachers and students in grades K-3. Do you support or oppose this law, and are there any steps the City Commission can take to support teachers and LGBTQ students who may be affected by this law?**

### Gainesville Mayor:

DAVID ARREOLA: I oppose this law. I believe the City of Gainesville can pass a resolution supporting teachers and LGBTQ students and their right to be their authentic selves in school. Additionally, we can make a city policy that specifically supports this personal right within all city funded programs and activities.

EDWARD BIELARSKI: As a graduate of two Jesuit Institutes of Higher Learning (Loyola University and St. Joseph's University), I have an unusual interest on this issue. My ethics training tells me the controversy with the law is a classic example of our challenge with prioritizing competing human rights. In addressing that challenge, the first thing to do is actually identify the human rights being tested. I see the competing rights as follows: 1. On one hand, does the law infringe on the rights of people with non-binary sexual orientation and/or non-traditional gender identity? 2. On the other hand, without the law, would any discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity by teachers and students in grades K-3 infringe on parental rights? Which of these rights is more compelling? Which individuals should the state protect? Difficult question, blending in a political powder keg. Let me address the first human right - Does the law infringe on the rights of people with non-binary sexual orientation and/or non-traditional gender identity? It's my understanding that the law doesn't preclude any adolescent from conferring with the teacher, under the caveat that the teacher or administrator communicate with the parent or guardian. Therefore, the law protects the individual rights of the child to bring their feelings into the open. The law doesn't appear to have anything to do with non-binary adult's rights. Ultimately, and probably most controversial, the law doesn't protect the socialization of the topic within the classroom. However, is the socialization of the topic a human right? Frankly, I don't think so. First, from my understanding, science still leaves a lot of unanswered questions on an adolescent's ability to grasp the nuances surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. A classroom discussion with that age group may be akin to introducing calculus to 5- to 8-year-olds. An important subject, if had at the right time and place. Moving on to the second human right – Absent the law, would any discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity by teachers and students in grades K-3 infringe on parental rights? While parents don't get the right to dictate everything that is taught in the K-3 classroom, it is obvious to me that at the pre-pubescent age of 5 to 8 years of age, parents and other guardians should have more control of their children's experiences and upbringing than teachers. I am not being critical of teachers. I am being supportive of parent's rights on a competing scale,

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

particularly when the topic at hand is so hard for a 5- to 8-year-old to comprehend. As a result, the rights that I believe are competing against each other are the parental rights to protect their yet-unaware, pre-pubescent children against a new right to socialize the sexual orientation and gender identity concepts that are still developing. In the end, I am not against discussion on sexual orientation or gender identity in schools. I simply think it needs to be age appropriate. As adolescents grow into teenagers, I think these competing rights arguments change. Parents succumb to the education growth cycle and more societal influences as teenagers turn into adults. In the end, I am really talking about if the discussion should be had, but when. I know this was long, however I had to offer the context of my thinking in order to answer the question in the correct manner.

ANSAUN FISHER: *N/R*

GARY GORDON: I oppose the law. I don't think even a Charter City can override State law but the City can pass a resolution opposing the law and make our opposition known in similar ways so the State knows where we stand. Having served on the City Commission 1983-86 I'm all too aware of the limits of the power of Municipal Government when going up against the State, but that certainly doesn't mean we keep our mouths shut.

GABRIEL HILLEL: I oppose this law. The City Commission can retain outside counsel to file a legal action to have Gainesville dissociate itself from the legislation. The City Commission can pass a non-binding resolution in opposition to the law.

ADAM ROSENTHAL: *N/R*

DONALD SHEPHERD: *N/R*

JULY THOMAS: This bill is ludicrous. I knew I was trans from the time I was four but I suffered as a child because I did not have the language to explain what I was feeling. When I am mayor, will teachers be allowed to talk about me? A transgender lesbian? We should support the school board in refusing to enforce anything related to this bill.

HARVEY WARD: As a parent of three children attending Florida public schools, as a Gainesville City Commissioner who has sworn to uphold the US Constitution, and as a Florida voter, I oppose this absurd and hateful law. I believe the city commission can best support teachers and students by committing to policies that create a safe, welcoming city for all of our LGBTQ neighbors of all ages. I am open to ideas for specific policies.

#### Gainesville City Commission District 2:

JO LEE BEATY: *N/R*

ED BOOK: This is State overreach through a poorly worded, ambiguous statute. Teachers should always be kind and caring resources, allowed to respond to children's questions about all matters including sexual orientation or gender identity. Since children in grades K-3 are very young, parents and guardians should have primary purview for teaching on these key life decisions. Teachers must focus on academics and may not be able to adequately provide proactive guidance, especially without the input of the child's family. Teachers - not city commissioners - act "in loco parentis". I support action (domestic partner registry, fair housing, family and insurance benefits without regard for orientation or identity etc.) already taken by the City Commission, which should always advocate on the side of protections against discrimination of any kind. I would also welcome suggestions about legal (under current Florida and Federal law) support the City Commission could consider.

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

JAMES INGLE: This law is horrible, not only for what it does, but also for the message it sends to a far wider audience than the k-3 classrooms it directly affects. What we can directly do as a city commission is limited. As I see it, the biggest impact is that students will not see examples of different types of individuals and families. One step we can take is assuring that programs offered by the city or library do include these banned topics. Similarly, we work to send the message that LGBTQ people are another valued part of our community. What can be done to support teachers is tricky. The legislature has put a target on teachers and I don't see a direct way the commission can stop that. My instinct would be to reach out to the Alachua county education association and ask what help they need.

MICHAEL RABURN: I oppose this law and all such cynical efforts by our state government to use fear of queer people to gain cheap political points. It is dangerous. The City Commission can advocate for, and sponsor, alternate forums where children and adults can be educated about issues faced by LGBTQ people. The church I pastor would be happy to host such educational and supportive events.

#### Gainesville City Commission District 3:

DEJEON LAMAR CAIN: I disagree with the passage of the so called Parental Rights to Education Bill. This bill could limit the potential discussion they may need to be had with our youth, even surrounding questions they may have about their own sexual identity. I believe that local government have a responsibility to ensure that every opportunity is granted to our youth to learn sexual identity and orientation. I would look forward to working with our school board to take appropriate action towards making this happen.

PATRICK INGLE: While I support this bill in part, school counselors should be allowed to discuss with LGBTQ students when asked.

CASEY WILLITS: This law is part of a coordinated effort to turn people against LGBTQ Americans for political gain. It's a witch hunt against LGBTQ teachers and any teacher willing to acknowledge the history and humanity of LGBTQ people. It's disgusting and dangerous. I oppose this law. Beyond a resolution opposing it I don't know what the commission can do, but I will support stronger responses.

#### Gainesville City Commission District 4:

BRYAN EASTMAN: I oppose this law both in practice and what it represents. It's a vague, unnecessary, and poorly written law that will have consequences beyond the intent of it. On a more personal level, my sibling is gender non-binary and much of my childhood was spent supporting them as they struggled through their gender identity. Our family surrounded ourselves with teachers, pastors, and friends who expressed their gender and sexual orientation in varied ways. They are now a well adjusted, confident adult who was married last month, and I believe much of that is because they had positive role models for living a healthy life as an LGBT adult. More children like my sibling need to see diverse expressions of gender and orientation. Anything our city can do to support the teachers and LGBT students affected by this law we should. We should also continue to highlight positive LGBT role models and the LGBT community across Gainesville to showcase the diversity of gender expression.

CHRISTIAN NEWMAN: I oppose the law. This law is personal. It impacts family, friends, and their kids. I was asked to sign this letter to the editor written by a friend and a parent of an

LGBTQ family with two children targeted by this awful, hateful law (<https://www.gainesville.com/story/opinion/2022/02/22/alachua-county-parents-bills-would-create-bullying-culture-in-schools/6890991001/>). I used to teach and coach, and I know first hand that we need to support our LGBTQ students and their families. Schools and teachers are often only place kids get structured emotional support. DeSantis and the Republicans are targeting schools and teachers. I believe the City and County have already come out against this law publicly and need to continue to make sure our City policies protect and strengthen the Gainesville LGBTQ community.

**2. Do you support and, if elected, would you vote for annual proclamations recognizing Gainesville’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Days?**

Gainesville Mayor:

DAVID ARREOLA: Yes, absolutely.

EDWARD BIELARSKI: Absolutely.

ANSAUN FISHER: *N/R*

GARY GORDON: Yes. I was an ardent supporter of the Gainesville Commission on the Status of Women and the Take Back the Night campaign when I previously served. Doing this is not only logical, it's important.

GABRIEL HILLEL: Of course. The more proclamations, the more good Democrats like yourselves will know that I am in lockstep with your wishes and demands.

ADAM ROSENTHAL: *N/R*

DONALD SHEPHERD: *N/R*

JULY THOMAS: Loudly and proudly, sweetie!

HARVEY WARD: Yes, and I look forward to signing these proclamations and attending Pride celebrations as Mayor.

Gainesville City Commission District 2:

JO LEE BEATY: *N/R*

ED BOOK: I wholeheartedly support now, and have participated in, events that arose and are related to such proclamations. I was also part of the first Santa Fe College delegation that took place and tabled in the Pride Downtown Festival (over a year ago - impacted by the pandemic). As an official at Santa Fe College, I have already been involved with discussions by the College Access and Inclusion Committee about the next time we can participate.

JAMES INGLE: Absolutely. As I mentioned above I think it is important that we send a clear message to counter the bigotry coming out of Tallahassee.

MICHAEL RABURN: Absolutely! More than annual proclamations, I advocate for the city to do more to promote Pride events and the annual Pride Parade. I have marched in that years past and was sad it got cancelled in 2021. I hope the one this year is the biggest ever.

Gainesville City Commission District 3:

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

DEJEON LAMAR CAIN: I do currently support the LGBT community, and would fully support days of recognition for community. Inclusion is not just for all races, creeds, and national origins, it also includes sexual orientation.

PATRICK INGLE: Yes.

CASEY WILLITS: Yes, and yes.

Gainesville City Commission District 4:

BRYAN EASTMAN: Yes I would and I have been an attendee at Pride Days for many years. It's a great, family-friendly event that brings together our community and should be celebrated and promoted.

CHRISTIAN NEWMAN: Yes.

**3. Do you support the city of Gainesville's maintenance of rainbow crosswalks downtown? Should they be expanded to other areas? Why or why not?**

Gainesville Mayor:

DAVID ARREOLA: Yes, and they should remain a permanent fixture. It should perhaps even be explored to name these crosswalks after Terry Fleming, God rest his soul. I would also want to implement new crosswalks in other areas of the walkable downtown. This should be done because the crosswalks have been received as a direct symbol of Gainesville's support for our LGBTQ community. Also, we are continually discussing a more walkable downtown and so there is also a practical side to implementing this successful policy.

EDWARD BIELARSKI: I support the maintenance of rainbow crosswalks downtown. In fact, I think the maintenance could be a community event with select people participating in the painting. Painting them could come with the slogan, "Different strokes for different folks." Probably a little too corny, but hey, I am child of the 60's.

ANSAUN FISHER: *N/R*

GARY GORDON: Yes, I support the ones downtown. As for elsewhere, and this might not be the answer you're looking for, in principle, yes, but the city's finances are a mess and I will have to weigh every cost in public works with the larger public works budget and all the other budgets, taking into account holding the line on taxes and dealing with the utilities mess and transfer.

GABRIEL HILLEL: They should be expanded in other areas, especially near historically white Trinity United Methodist Churches and in East Gainesville, near every black church so that they can know where we whites stand on these important issues. Black Live Matter but I am sure some of you think white gay rights matter more.

ADAM ROSENTHAL: *N/R*

DONALD SHEPHERD: *N/R*

JULY THOMAS: So here is my thing about the rainbow crosswalks: it kind of sucks being gay in this city because of the policies currently being pursued by the city and in light of that I sometimes feel like the crosswalks are performative. But also, I want Gainesville to serve, as it has for some time, as a beacon to queer people around the state. And I think the crosswalks serve this purpose. But we need to do more to address our community's material needs.

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

HARVEY WARD: Yes. I worked directly with Terry Fleming and city staff in the creation of the original rainbow crosswalks, interceded with downtown property owners to help them understand the importance of them, and made the motion to install them. I am supportive of adding more crosswalks, and would be willing to work with staff to get this done as an important part of the city's public art programs.

Gainesville City Commission District 2:

JO LEE BEATY: *N/R*

ED BOOK: Yes, I support this on local streets and areas where high non-vehicle use is present. Expansion on streets with high pedestrian use benefits from well-marked and safe walkways. Rainbow crosswalks have the added benefit of complimenting safety while supporting LGBTQ efforts and awareness. I would not expand to large highways / interstate roadway ramps or roadways with multiple lanes / high speeds designed for thoroughfare use because it may confuse motorists and cause additional safety concerns for pedestrians and multi-modal forms of transportation.

JAMES INGLE: Yes, I support the maintenance of the crosswalks. I don't know whether they should be expanded to other areas or not. To be frank, I'm a six-foot-tall, cis gendered, straight, white dude. I have very little first-hand knowledge of discrimination. I would feel pretty ridiculous deciding what would be the best advocacy for marginalized groups. It's a big reason having an organization like the HRCNCF is so important to me as a commissioner. If what the LGBTQ community wants to see is an expansion of rainbow crosswalks I'd say that's a pretty small ask. If the thought is there are different meaningful steps we can take, I'd love to hear them. My fear is that I end up doing something that seems fine to me but isn't what the community wants or that is more performative than helpful. I'll need your help seeing that doesn't happen once I'm elected.

MICHAEL RABURN: I love the rainbow crosswalks! (See my current Facebook profile pic, which I took the day I qualified to run.) I support them being expanded to other areas. They send an important message of solidarity.

Gainesville City Commission District 3:

DEJEON LAMAR CAIN: I fully support it. I was excited to see us embrace the rainbow crosswalks downtown. I believe we should in-fact expand that idea to other areas in the city.

PATRICK INGLE: Yes.

CASEY WILLITS: Yes, I want the city to properly maintain them and repaint them on some kind of schedule. I'm open to expanding them to other areas, but I think we should solicit the community for ideas about what other historical movements might be appropriate to feature next.

Gainesville City Commission District 4:

BRYAN EASTMAN: I support the city of Gainesville's maintenance of rainbow crosswalks downtown. I want to help make Gainesville a more vibrant city, both with the literal colors of the rainbow and with its symbolic show of support of the LGBTQ community. Using our crosswalks for public art and expression are a great way to integrate art, identity, and community values into everyday objects within our city. I would like to expand the idea of using public property as

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

public art to more objects than just crosswalks, such as bus stops, bike racks, utility poles, etc. This would both make our city more interesting, attractive, and express our unique identity and values as a welcoming community.

CHRISTIAN NEWMAN: I want to answer this question honestly and provide insight into how I will approach policies and decision-making. I support rainbow crosswalks, particularly because they are valued by the LGBTQ community and raise the consciousness of our citizens about the challenges and discrimination they face. My understanding is that the Pride Community Center funded the crosswalks. I support maintenance and expansion of the crosswalks, however I am concerned that the City does not have its finances in order and is not strategically investing in overall maintenance and infrastructure. These crosswalks should be maintained like all crosswalks in the City. It shows that we have pride in our City and our LGBTQ community.

**4. Describe efforts you have taken locally to support or advocate for LGBTQ rights. If elected, how would you represent the concerns of LGBTQ constituents, given the increasingly negative environment LGBTQ people are facing in Florida today?**

Gainesville Mayor:

DAVID ARREOLA: I supported and voted for the City Commission's ban on the harmful practice known as 'conversion therapy.' I have attended Pride Days, Trans Day of Remembrance, and We Say GAYnesville events to show my support. Currently, the city is in the process of reevaluating its health care benefits. I will seek to ensure gender transition health services are included in city employee health plans. Furthermore, I pledge to always be an ally of my LGBTQ constituents in action and policy. Previously I have been endorsed by HRCNCF and Equality FL in my races for the City Commission. This support is a tremendous honor and would mean a lot to me again.

EDWARD BIELARSKI: During my career, I have hired and advocated for openly LGBTQ individuals. While at GRU, I included lunch and learns with all sorts of diverse groups, including the LGBTQ community.

ANSAUN FISHER: *N/R*

GARY GORDON: I have worked with LGBTQ people; I would represent their concerns as equal members of our community. Since moving back to Gainesville from L.A. (a much more diverse, free environment) my work on this issue seems to center on arguing with people who don't think Gays should get to marry. Yes, it's a negative environment here and sometimes I feel like the photo of the person in the meme with the sign: I can't believe I still have to argue this sh\*t after 30, 40, 50 years.

GABRIEL HILLEL: I have blogged and will continue to blog about the area historically white and separately historically black United Methodist Churches remaining unclear where they stand when the national organization has split on LGBTQA (Asexual) grounds. Can Gays get married in any of the area's Methodist Churches? I would ask Judge T. S. Monaco, president of Trinity United Methodist Church board, where he personally stands. So that we can prepared for his ascendancy as a senior judge to the local bench. I will ask Harvey L. Ward, former executive secretary of the Foundation of the historically white powerful church where he personally stands in public on these issues. I certainly will look forward to and use against him whatever answer you publish about his hypocritical views.

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

ADAM ROSENTHAL: *N/R*

DONALD SHEPHERD: *N/R*

JULY THOMAS: This is a weird question for me to answer. I transitioned in 2015 and while I wasn't the first trans person in Gainesville I was the first to enter many spaces. I have had a lot of conversations with people around town about things they needed to change to make us safer. My policies are driven first and foremost by the fundamental needs of my community, which I have found time and again to be the big three of jobs, housing and healthcare.

HARVEY WARD: I have consistently and vocally advocated for the rights of my LGBTQ neighbors since before I was elected to the Gainesville City Commission to not only that body but also the Alachua County Commission. I have supported Pride celebrations and public advocacy with my time and financial resources, and have worked directly with the Pride Center and other LGBTQ organizations on a variety of programs. As a city commissioner I voted to ban conversion therapy in our city and moved and voted for the installation of rainbow crosswalks. As mayor I will continue to do my best to learn how I can be a personal, political and policy advocate for LGBTQ issues and to turn that education into making Gainesville the most welcoming and affirming city it can be.

#### Gainesville City Commission District 2:

JO LEE BEATY: *N/R*

ED BOOK: For my entire life, I have supported LGBTQ efforts, rights and diversity, access, and inclusion. The police department where I now work (Santa Fe College) is a model of diversity and a welcoming professional environment for all. In the past, I served on numerous hiring committees and advocated for recruitment and retention efforts in policy that play an integral role in a diverse workforce. I have served on the active inaugural Santa Fe College Access and Inclusion (A&I) committee since inception. The A&I subcommittee which I chaired led to a billboard and hand card with the campaign "We are all Saints", which promotes tolerance, understanding, and most importantly, a welcome to all. (That billboard can be seen by the Santa Fe College NW campus baseball field.) And before the pandemic, I spoke to our College LGBTQIA+Club about safety and answered general questions.

JAMES INGLE: My life has been greatly impacted by LGBTQ friends and family and I have tried to be a good ally. I still have a picture of the group of us that spoke at the county meeting back in 2013 to get the Alachua County Human rights ordinance passed when all the "Bathroom Bill" nonsense was going on. I have done volunteer electrical work at the pride center several times. I am proud of the work we have done in my union to try and be more inclusive. As far as how I would represent LGBTQ constituents, I hate to sound like a broken record but that plan will mostly involve listening to those constituents to find out what those needs are. I expect we are in for more terrible legislation from the state and we will probably have to change plans and tactics repeatedly to keep up with those attacks.

MICHAEL RABURN: I have marched in the Pride Parade. I have attended LGBTQ rallies. I have moved my congregation to be open and affirming of all queer people. I have supported other ministers doing that same work. I have personally counseled with queer folks wrestling with their faith and relationships with family members. I have helped make GRACE Marketplace a fully affirming space. If elected, I will vocally advocate for our queer citizens as both a commissioner and pastor, and adamantly oppose any and all discrimination against them. My main reason for running for office is to make sure the voices of all our citizens are heard and

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

respected – especially those who often get ignored. I will do this by seeking out and listening to queer perspectives and advocating for the policies they need and want.

### Gainesville City Commission District 3:

DEJEON LAMAR CAIN: Back in 2013, I had the privilege of attending the Gainesville Pride Days Festival Parade. I was excited to see the level of support that the City of Gainesville provided to facilitate this great event. This event increased my resolve to ensure that everyone is included and that everyone is aware.

PATRICK INGLE: Ensure the LGBTQ has a voice.

CASEY WILLITS: I have attended marches, rallies, and vigils for LGBTQ rights. I joined many community members at City Hall to lobby the commission to pass the conversion therapy ban. During the pandemic I sponsored two digital fundraisers for the Pride Community Center of North Central Florida. As a city commissioner, I want to verbalize to the public and the media, frequently, that there is a coordinated effort to divide Americans with wedge issues that harm LGBTQ people. The moral panic around trans children and LGBTQ people that is being created is literally dangerous and we need to say that plainly and loudly.

### Gainesville City Commission District 4:

BRYAN EASTMAN: Gainesville holds a large weight on our shoulders as a welcoming community in state and area that can be hostile to that. We owe it to the North Central Florida community to protect and support LGBT people in our area, to make it a safe place for them to visit and live. That will become harder in the future with a Supreme Court and state government that are hostile to the rights of LGBT people. It will be my job to ensure that we are responding in real time to new threats, working with the LGBT community to find how we can support, and to push back against overreach from our state legislature. I have been an ally for LGBT Floridians for years, and I will continue that allyship and advocacy on the Gainesville City Commission.

CHRISTIAN NEWMAN: For my entire adult life as a voter, I only consider candidates who are supportive and vote for the concerns of LGBTQ constituents. As a business owner and boss, I had LGBTQ employees that I supported, promoted, and mentored and I created a culture of inclusion. I heard my LGBTQ friends, family, and students and signed that letter to the editor about the Don't Say Gay bill (See above) and attended the Don't Say Gay rally. I also recently attended and donated to the Equity Florida Gala. If elected, I would continue to listen and learn to support policies and actions that will represent the concerns of LGBTQ constituents. I believe that LGBTQ constituents want to live their lives without fear and discrimination. Still, they want to support policies that strengthen Gainesville, create jobs and equal opportunities for all our citizens, and see the City be inclusive and transparent about decision making that impacts all citizens.

## 2022 Alachua County Commission Candidate Questionnaire Responses

1. The Florida Legislature passed and the Governor signed the so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill, formally known as the Parental Rights in Education Act, which prohibits any discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity by teachers and students in grades K-3. Do you support or oppose this bill, and are there any steps the County Commission can take to support teachers and LGBTQ students who may be affected by this law?

### Alachua County Commission District 1:

MARY ALFORD (DEM.): I oppose this bill and I wrote a resolution against this bill that was passed, unanimously, by the Alachua County Commission. Given the impact on students, one effort that I am taking is working towards an LGBTQ youth shelter to provide both emergency shelter and housing for LGBTQ foster children. This is a complicated legal goal and one expensive to implement but we have a team of folks working on these challenges. This is an effort that should be supported by the county commission in multiple ways – funding, collaboration, site selection, etc. The county commission has a record of supporting the school board in our collective fight against the leadership in Tallahassee. I plan to continue that relationship of mutual support for the future of the children in Alachua County.

RAEMI EAGLE-GLENN (REP.): *N/R*

### Alachua County Commission District 2:

ED BRADDY (REP.): *N/R*

CHARLIE RAY JACKSON (DEM.): *N/R*

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM.): I do not support the Parental Rights in Education Act. As a retired public school teacher, I have watched how social media has informed society about many issues regarding human sexuality. Our young children are exposed to more information than even their parents might realize. It takes a caring teacher to answer questions that children are not comfortable discussing with family members. Kids are coming to school from same sex parents not knowing this is considered unusual or tabu and should be a feel safe in discussing publicly. Teachers, likewise, should not be fearful that addressing a child's questions might put them in jail. As County Commissioners, we have access to lobbyists who will not only present our concerns to the Legislature, but will guide us to the people we must work to enlist for help in making our concerns known. We often write letters of support for issues such as this.

### Alachua County Commission District 4:

KEN CORNELL (DEM.): I oppose this bill and I really do not understand why Tallahassee wants to legislate and prohibit discussions of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The County Commission unanimously passed a resolution opposing this bill.

JAMES ELMORE (REP.): *N/R*

ANTHONY JOHNSON (NOP): *N/R*

**2. The Florida Competitive Workforce Act seeks to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity statewide in employment, housing and public accommodations. Would you support an Alachua County resolution that would urge the Florida Legislature to pass this bill? Why or why not?**

Alachua County Commission District 1:

MARY ALFORD (DEM.): Absolutely I would support this – the county has a very broad anti-discrimination policy, one that I am very proud of. I would support this being adopted at a state level to help people located in counties that are not as proactive as Alachua County in protecting the rights of citizens.

RAEMI EAGLE-GLENN (REP.): *N/R*

Alachua County Commission District 2:

ED BRADDY (REP.): *N/R*

CHARLIE RAY JACKSON (DEM.): *N/R*

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM.): I would be glad to support a resolution to prevent discrimination of any group that would prevent employment and housing as well as public accommodation. It is astounding to think that we would even separate a group from the general population and deny them rights to what all Americans should have rights to.

Alachua County Commission District 4:

KEN CORNELL (DEM.): Yes. I am against any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity statewide in employment, housing and public accommodations. For Florida's workforce to remain competitive we must avoid policies that discriminate against LGBTQ individuals.

JAMES ELMORE (REP.): *N/R*

ANTHONY JOHNSON (NOP): *N/R*

**3. Do you support and, if elected, would you vote for annual proclamations in recognition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Days?**

Alachua County Commission District 1:

MARY ALFORD (DEM.): Yes, as a lesbian I am proud to advocate for these annual proclamations.

RAEMI EAGLE-GLENN (REP.): *N/R*

Alachua County Commission District 2:

ED BRADDY (REP.): *N/R*

CHARLIE RAY JACKSON (DEM.): *N/R*

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM.): I have always looked forward to the activities sponsored by our local Stonewall Democrats. I would continue to support them and would gladly read the proclamation myself.

Alachua County Commission District 4:

KEN CORNELL (DEM.): Yes. LGBTQ Pride Days are an important expression of community solidarity, and an event that brings people to our county and showcases our commitment to equality. Public support by the county government is an important demonstration of that pride.

JAMES ELMORE (REP.): *N/R*

ANTHONY JOHNSON (NOP): *N/R*

**4. Describe efforts you have taken locally to support or advocate for LGBTQ rights. If elected, how would you represent the concerns of LGBTQ constituents, given the increasingly negative environment LGBTQ people are facing in Florida today?**

Alachua County Commission District 1:

MARY ALFORD (DEM.): I have already mentioned Alachua County's fight against the Don't Say Gay bill and efforts to create shelter for LGBTQ youth. I have been proud to serve as an "out" lesbian commissioner, and I proudly wear my rainbow Florida pin, even as I lobbied in DC with Republican lawmakers. I have been involved in several national healthcare and "healthy counties" initiatives and I have made LGBTQ rights part of that conversation – I was shocked at how often it was not included.

RAEMI EAGLE-GLENN (REP.): *N/R*

Alachua County Commission District 2:

ED BRADDY (REP.): *N/R*

CHARLIE RAY JACKSON (DEM.): *N/R*

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM.): Many of the students I have taught are currently taking leadership roles in the LGBTQ community in Gainesville. They know how proud I am of their work and have easy access to me as current Commissioner of Alachua County. I know also that there is a large LGBTQ population in the African American community and hope that by working to remove the stigmas as we see, those citizens will feel free to join the organized groups that are actively working for their acceptance and security.

Alachua County Commission District 4:

KEN CORNELL (DEM.): For my two terms as an elected official, I have always supported and/or advocated for LGBTQ rights. If the State of Florida and our local community are going to stay competitive both economically and socially, it is important that government officials advocate for LGBTQ rights and an inclusive society. I do not understand why individuals and certain elected officials feel the need to create a negative environment for LGBTQ people and I will continue to support and advocate for LGBTQ rights. I have been endorsed by the HRCNCF

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

and Equality Florida in both 2014 and 2018 and hope that the HRCNCF will consider endorsing me again in 2022.

JAMES ELMORE (REP.): *N/R*

ANTHONY JOHNSON (NOP): *N/R*

## 2022 School Board of Alachua County Candidate Questionnaire Responses

- 1. National studies have shown that harassment and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth lead to higher dropout rates and up to three times the rate of suicide among LGBT teens compared to their straight peers. Do you believe the school system's current anti-bullying policy adequately protects LGBT as well as other potentially vulnerable students?**

### Alachua County School Board District 1:

TINA CERTAIN: Yes, Our District (Alachua) has a guide for principals and staff. There is a District administrator on the Equality Florida advisory committee which has helped with policy development.

DANIEL FISHER: *N/R*

### Alachua County School Board District 2:

DIYONNE MCGRAW: As long as we have students who aren't safe, protected, and respected in their school, we have a broken system. Students must be provided an environment where differences are respected and there are safe methods for reporting bullying, discrimination, and inconsistencies in protective practices. The solution is not easy as it requires shifting mindsets, addressing biases, and eliminating systemic practices that allow staff and students to ridicule, turn a blind eye, and even embarrass students due to differences. The destruction of those practices requires training, strong accountability systems, and reporting processes that protect students from being victimized by the bully and the people or processes designed to keep them safe. This can be done with the right people engaged, real data, parental and student engagement, required training, and methods to ensure policies are consistently enforced. Policies must require interventions and consequences so real change in behaviors and beliefs can take place.

MILDRED RUSSELL: *N/R*

### Alachua County School Board District 3:

RAY HOLT: *N/R*

SARAH ROCKWELL: I don't believe our school district's anti-bullying policies adequately protect any of our students. We have seen dramatic increases in violence and bullying on our school campuses that aren't being addressed. The bans on SEL and the "Stop Woke" and "Don't Say Gay" laws make it even harder to adequately address bullying, especially for LGBTQ+

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

students. We must be able to talk to students about their various identities and about their mental and emotional health in order to prevent and stop bullying.

Alachua County School Board District 5:

KAY ABBITT: *N/R*

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PRESCOTT COWLES: As a data administrator, I know that the data regarding the mental health and wellbeing of all our students is alarming, and is especially so for our LGBTQ+ youth. While our district works hard at protecting vulnerable youth, I believe we can still do better. This year, our district took the long-overdue action to update its “LGBTQ+ Critical Support Guide” for our district. The updates were the result of the collaborative efforts of various workgroups that included students, parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, and community members. When these updates are in place and combined together with the Board’s existing anti-bullying policies, I believe that our school administrators and teachers have a much-needed foundation to ensure that the rights, and the lives, of our LGBTQ+ youth are protected. Ensuring that these policies are being followed as written is a priority to ensuring their successful implementation.

- 2. Do you support or oppose Florida’s so-called “Don’t Say Gay” law, formally known as the Parental Rights in Education Act, which prohibits any discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity by teachers and students in grades K-3? How do you think this will affect children in LGBTQ homes or those students who may identify as LGBTQ themselves? Are there ways the School Board can protect teachers and LGBTQ students in spite of this law?**

Alachua County School Board District 1:

TINA CERTAIN: I do not support the “Don’t Say Gay”; sexual orientation or gender identity is not a Florida standard taught in grades K-3. I think this legislation has a “chilling” effect in that it will make some teachers hesitant to discuss or address non-heterosexual comments or topics that may come up in class. School Districts can try to train staff on allowable topics but this law puts teachers in a difficult position because training can’t cover every scenario. Students come from all walks of life and deserve acceptance, inclusion and freedom to be who they are. As a Board member I would support a teacher accused of violating this law.

DANIEL FISHER: *N/R*

Alachua County School Board District 2:

DIYONNE MCGRAW: I believe teachers and students should focus on building a strong academic foundation while in school during the primary years. I do not feel the schools have the right and teachers have the appropriate training to address many questions around sexual orientation or gender identity and can therefore introduce more bias, religious rhetoric, personal views, and stereotypes in their efforts to explain something they either don't agree with or don't understand. I think if students are curious, identify as LGBTQ, or live in what is considered a "non-traditional setting, they should have a safe place to ask questions and understand more about their experiences without adverse actions or a negative impact. Parents, a school counselor

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

social worker, or trained staff should be available to provide support. I am fearful if we do not seriously provide someone trained to support students as they grow, students may be made to feel they are wrong, religiously flawed, or unjustly characterized by people who are simply ill-equipped to properly support them. The board can and should address this through training, budget allocations, and specific, proactive language in the policy.

MILDRED RUSSELL: *N/R*

Alachua County School Board District 3:

RAY HOLT: *N/R*

SARAH ROCKWELL: I completely oppose the “Don’t Say Gay” law. It is intended to erase the existence of LGBTQ+ families, teachers/staff, and students. It will isolate and stigmatize LGBTQ+ students, families, and teachers/staff. To help protect LGBTQ+ students and teachers, the board can vote to challenge the law in court or join existing challenges, encourage teachers and staff to join the union so that they will have legal support if their instruction is challenged, and the board can adopt policies to define some of the vague terms in the law. For instance, distract staff and the board can use state standards to help determine what is age appropriate at grades 4-12 and define that so that teachers will be more confident having discussions about gender and sexual identity. The board can also set in place arduous procedures for reporting “inappropriate” books so that it is very difficult to remove books from our media centers.

Alachua County School Board District 5:

KAY ABBITT: *N/R*

PRESCOTT COWLES: I strongly oppose the “Don’t Say Gay” bill and am dishearted by our legislators that signed it into law. Not only is the legislation an attempt to erase the identity of students, teachers, and families who are the part of the LGBTQ community, but its ambiguous language about keeping classroom discussion “developmentally appropriate” is nothing more than a thinly-veiled threat to stifle the speech of teachers by wielding costly litigation as a weapon against critical conversations that create safe, welcoming classrooms for all students. The School Board has an obligation to reassure students, teachers, and staff that our schools will acknowledge and embrace every individual, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

**3. Do you support allowing students to participate in sports activities with those who match their own gender identity?**

Alachua County School Board District 1:

TINA CERTAIN: I am undecided on this. I need more information. I want the playing field to be level for all athletes, I want students to be able to participate. I was an athlete in school and it was my experience that males held an advantage over females in strength, speed, and development.

DANIEL FISHER: *N/R*

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

Alachua County School Board District 2:

DIYONNE MCGRAW: I participated in sports with guys as a young athlete. Although I did not identify as a male, because of my height and skill level, I was often included yet targeted because I was actively participating with the opposite gender. I can only imagine how hard it is today for students who identify differently than genetically assigned at birth. I support students being able to participate and play on any team in which they are unbiasedly selected and possess the skill level to make the team. I have raised athletes who want the best players on their teams and don't care how they identify. Parents and staff often worry about the bullying, changing facilities, instances of violence, and even the way adults view students who identify as LGBTQ. This too will require real shifts in policies and systems of accountability. Board members will need the support of parents, students, teachers, and other influencers to ensure students are safe in locker rooms, free from verbal and physical attacks from team members as well as spectators. We must allow all students (LGBTQ or otherwise) to embrace teammates not based on sexual orientation/identity but on the very basis that they are human beings.

MILDRED RUSSELL: *N/R*

Alachua County School Board District 3:

RAY HOLT: *N/R*

SARAH ROCKWELL: I absolutely support allowing students to participate in sports with those who match their own gender identity. School sports are not professional sports, and children and teens are not fully grown or matured, so I don't see any reason to prevent students from participating in sports according to their gender identity regardless of whether they are taking hormone replacements or puberty blockers. School sports should be about learning the value of team work and creating healthy exercise habits that last a life time, and preventing trans students from participating in affirming ways is counter to those goals.

Alachua County School Board District 5:

KAY ABBITT: *N/R*

PRESCOTT COWLES: Yes, as a former student-athlete and track coach myself, I know firsthand the value that sports can provide as a part of well-rounded youth development. Our school system should be removing barriers to access to extracurricular activities, including youth sports, and that includes allowing the participation of students in activities that match their own gender identity.

**4. Do you support allowing students to use the restroom that corresponds with their own gender identity?**

Alachua County School Board District 1:

TINA CERTAIN: Yes.

DANIEL FISHER: *N/R*

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

Alachua County School Board District 2:

DIYONNE McGRAW: I do not if students can not be protected and kept safe in those areas. The level of hate, fear and violence occurring in our schools is a growing issue that must be addressed. Some anti-LGBTQ people are cruel and set students up to hurt them and "change them" through acts of violence. Schools are currently understaffed, so safety is my major concern. Students are who they identify as and should have safe facilities. This is an area where internal work is needed. Facilities can be modified to allow students to feel more at ease but honestly, the system is not there yet. Safety concerns make me hesitate to simply mandate this without ensuring the appropriate supports are in place.

MILDRED RUSSELL: *N/R*

Alachua County School Board District 3:

RAY HOLT: *N/R*

SARAH ROCKWELL: Yes, I support students using the restroom that corresponds with their own gender identity. I think there is far more risk of a student being attacked or otherwise bullied when forced to use a bathroom that does not align with their gender identity. I do not see any risk to cis students from allowing trans students to use the bathroom that makes them feel most comfortable.

Alachua County School Board District 5:

KAY ABBITT: *N/R*

PRESCOTT COWLES: Yes. These rights for our students are protected by federal law, and allowing students to be their authentic selves for their entire school experience is critical for fostering truly safe and supportive school environments.

**5. Describe efforts you have taken locally to support or advocate for LGBTQ rights. If elected, how would you represent the concerns of LGBTQ constituents, given the increasingly negative environment LGBTQ people are facing in Florida today?**

Alachua County School Board District 1:

TINA CERTAIN: I connected with Equality Florida to learn more about issues and how other districts were implementing policy, and ways of supporting students and staff. I will continue to attend All Together Now conferences and participate in the Equality Florida Advisory committee.

DANIEL FISHER: *N/R*

Alachua County School Board District 2:

DIYONNE McGRAW: I have very openly and publicly advocated for the rights of all people, including the LGBTQ community. I have engaged heavily and partnered with them in the fight for safe facilities, equality, and the implementation of policies to ensure students are kept safe in our schools and throughout our community. Our Governor's recent actions made it more difficult

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

to push for the support needed in our community. His actions, quite frankly, have the potential to take us back centuries. We must focus on the forward progress around equality and the protection of all rights and build on that through courageous actions. My track record, while in the seat, will show I have not waivered for my fight for policy changes, safety, and the rights of the LGBTQ community. I am committed to staying the course and will solicit the engagement and support of those who share my desire to keep all kids safe and free from adult or student ridicule.

MILDRED RUSSELL: *N/R*

Alachua County School Board District 3:

RAY HOLT: *N/R*

SARAH ROCKWELL: I am a member of Equality Florida and attended their North Central Florida fundraising gala. I am also a member of Stonewall Democrats, the LGBTQ+ caucus of the Alachua County DEC. I left messages for and emailed Gov. DeSantis, Senator Perry, and Rep. Clemmons to advocate against the “Don’t Say Gay” law. I attended the “Say Gaynesville” rally to protest the “Don’t Say Gay” law before it was signed.

Alachua County School Board District 5:

KAY ABBITT: *N/R*

PRESCOTT COWLES: As a middle school teacher, ensuring a classroom culture where every student knew that they were valued as their true selves was a non-negotiable. Specifically working in a Boys’ Preparatory school, attacking issues of toxic masculinity head-on was at the core of many heartfelt and important mentoring conversations. For example, one of my 7th-grade students came out as gay in one of my classes which of course both brave and incredibly challenging for him to do. At the first sign of another student making jokes at his expense, I made it clear that that behavior was unacceptable as a student in my class, or as a young man in today’s world. My other students recognized my direct and principled stand as a tone-setter for the rest of the year, and solidified the expectation of mutual respect for all in my classroom. If elected, I would continue to be a vocal ally for the LGBTQ community and would keep equal opportunity, access, and respect at the forefront of all of my leadership decisions.

## **2022 State House & Senate Candidate Questionnaire Responses**

- 1. National studies have shown that harassment and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth lead to higher dropout rates and up to three times the rate of suicide among LGBT teens compared to their non-gay peers. Would you support a bill that requires school districts to specifically prohibit bullying directed toward students based on real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity?**

State Senate District 9:

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

RODNEY LONG (DEM.): I can support such legislation.  
KEITH PERRY (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 21:

YVONNE HAYES HINSON (DEM.): Yes, absolutely. As a school principal I have had to follow and enhance school board rules directly related to protecting students from this cruel practice. I would also support legislation that would educate teachers and staff on the best ways to support them..Additionally, I fought the Florida Legislature vehemently against their so called “Don’t Say Gay” Bill.

HOLLYE MERTON (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 22:

TY APPIAH (REP.): *N/R*

CHUCK CLEMONS (REP.): *N/R*

OLYSHA MAGRUDER (DEM.): Yes, I support legislation like this. Florida does not provide specific legal protections to the LGBT community at the state level. In fact, the legislature enacts laws that promote discrimination toward them, such as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill. Other laws to promote diversity and prohibit discrimination, such as the Gay and Transgender Panic Legal Defenses bill, and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion bill, did not even pass the Judiciary Committee in 2022. It is more than necessary to have a bill that specifically prohibits bullying directed toward students based on real or perceived sexual orientation because human rights cannot be left open for interpretation. Passing such a bill would mean our state’s government would expand protections to vulnerable communities that the Civil Rights Act does not explicitly protect.

BRANDON PETERS (DEM.): All of our children should have the opportunity to attend safe and supportive schools. Bullying doesn't belong anywhere in society but especially not in our schools or workplaces. As your representative I'll work to protect all of our students from this type of harassment and ensure there's an equitable process in place for reviewing these incidents. We must do more to prevent bullying in our schools, and I would be supportive of this legislation in concept.

- 2. The Florida Commission on Human Relations – the agency responsible for enforcing the state's civil rights laws – now accepts discrimination claims based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Commission cited the U.S. Supreme Court's 2020 *Bostock* decision which ruled that Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act's prohibition of discrimination “because of sex” extends to one’s sexual orientation and gender identity. The Florida Competitive Workforce Act is a bill that seeks to codify LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections into the state’s civil rights law. Do you support or oppose this bill?**

State Senate District 9:

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

RODNEY LONG (DEM.): I support this civil rights law.  
KEITH PERRY (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 21:

YVONNE HAYES HINSON (DEM.): I support any and all Civil Rights Policies that protect people from discrimination. We have seen that neglecting to codify certain principles encompassed in Supreme Court decisions can endanger the longevity of these protections. We all have a right to work and a right to dignity.  
HOLLYE MERTON (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 22:

TY APPIAH (REP.): *N/R*

CHUCK CLEMONS (REP.): *N/R*

OLYSHA MAGRUDER (DEM.): I support this bill. The Civil Rights Act does not specifically protect the LGBTQ+ community. We must codify protections for LGBTQ+ into our state's civil rights law in order to ensure their dignity is not up for interpretation on a case-by-case basis. Our government, at all levels, must protect the rights of its citizens. The right thing to do is to add sexual orientation and gender identity as impermissible grounds for discrimination and codify this into our state's civil rights law. This is common sense.

BRANDON PETERS (DEM.): As your Representative, I'll never forget where I come from or the Florida values that were instilled in me by my parents, my grandparents, and my teachers. Those values include ensuring that no one is discriminated against based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Civil rights have been at the heart of my 30-year career as an attorney. If I am elected to the Florida House of Representatives, you can count on me to defend the basic human dignity of all Floridians, especially groups that have been singled out historically for unfair treatment. Everyone deserves the freedom to be safe from bigotry. Hatred has no place in our state. I support this bill and believe state civil rights protections should extend to sexual orientation and gender identity.

**3. Do you support or oppose Florida's so-called "Don't Say Gay" law, formally known as the Parental Rights in Education Act, which prohibits any discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity by teachers and students in grades K-3? How do you think this will affect children in LGBTQ homes or those who may identify as LGBTQ themselves? Are there ways that county School Boards can protect LGBTQ students in spite of this law?**

State Senate District 9:

RODNEY LONG (DEM.): I am opposed to this law. The law will limit those students who may be ready to come out from discussing these issues with adults they trust, teachers. I am not sure how School Boards can protect LGBTQ students in spite of this law.

KEITH PERRY (REP.): *N/R*

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

State House District 21:

YVONNE HAYES HINSON (DEM.): I do not support this bill and personally debated against its passage in the Florida Legislature. It will have negative consequences. It may endanger children's lives in homes that are intolerant and unaccepting. It is the responsibility of the schools and school boards to protect these children in spite of this law. I will work with my local school to do just that.

HOLLYE MERTON (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 22:

TY APPIAH (REP.): *N/R*

CHUCK CLEMONS (REP.): *N/R*

OLYSHA MAGRUDER (DEM.): I vehemently oppose the "Don't Say Gay" law. It must be repealed as soon as possible. This law will add to the environment of rejection and violence – now facilitated by our state's government – that Florida exhibits toward people who identify as LGBTQ. It is an attack on the mental well-being of our children. As a former public school teacher, I understand how important it is to have a classroom environment of acceptance. Education is not rote learning and memorization. It is opening our children's minds to the world around us and that includes the great strengths of diversity. The government must not hinder our teachers' freedom to educate our future citizens.

BRANDON PETERS (DEM.): I oppose the law. Officials in Tallahassee desperately need some common sense, fresh from North Central Florida. The Parental Rights in Education Act, like many of the laws enacted the last several years, is focused on a phony culture war "problem" created by fringe elements on the right wing. The purported problem simply doesn't exist. Censorship always has a chilling effect on any learning environment, and I'm opposed to such measures. I believe that educating our kids is an effort that requires input from parents and caregivers, professional staff and educators finding a solution to help support LGBTQ+ students requires input from all of these stakeholders. This is a harmful piece of legislation impacting families, students, and educators, and I am still reviewing the legal and practical options that may exist to prevent its harmful impacts.

**4. Do you support allowing students to participate in sports activities with those who match their own gender identity?**

State Senate District 9:

RODNEY LONG (DEM.): Yes.

KEITH PERRY (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 21:

YVONNE HAYES HINSON (DEM.): Yes. People have the right to compete with other's who match their gender identity. These folks have been vilified while making up a small percentage of the population. Let the children play, grow, and learn without interference or bigotry. Full

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

disclosure, we may need to look at body mass and weight and arm span to make competitions fair play but not gender.

HOLLYE MERTON (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 22:

TY APPIAH (REP.): *N/R*

CHUCK CLEMONS (REP.): *N/R*

OLYSHA MAGRUDER (DEM.): I support all students being able to participate actively in sports. No student should be barred from participating in sports based on their gender identity. Transgender athletes must have the same opportunity as any other cisgender athlete; any claim of a lack of “fairness” or “advantage” to transgender athletes has absolutely no credibility. In fact, these claims are simply bigoted attacks toward people who identify as transgender. To many politicians, transgender people pose a threat to their society and their way of life and they simply want to strip transgender people of all rights because of their fear and prejudice. This is particularly egregious as children are involved. All children should have equal access to all sports regardless of their gender identity.

BRANDON PETERS (DEM.): Instead of spending time on real issues, our Legislature has conjured a mythical problem that creates derision without examining the facts and the realities. Ultimately, how one chooses to express their gender identity is an intensely personal decision, and students should be able to express that identity in all areas of their lives, including in sports.

**5. Do you support allowing children to use the restroom that corresponds with their own gender identity?**

State Senate District 9:

RODNEY LONG (DEM.): Yes.

KEITH PERRY (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 21:

YVONNE HAYES HINSON (DEM.): Yes, where this is not an option all gender- or gender-neutral bathrooms should be put in place.

HOLLYE MERTON (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 22:

TY APPIAH (REP.): *N/R*

CHUCK CLEMONS (REP.): *N/R*

OLYSHA MAGRUDER (DEM.): I support allowing all children to use the restroom that corresponds with their own gender identity. Bathroom bills that restrict access to bathrooms are a despicable attack against transgender people that attempts to scare them into conformity. By forcing transgender people to use a bathroom that does not align with their gender identity, trans individuals will feel isolated, distressed, and uncomfortable with going out in public. Bathroom

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

bills are one of the most restrictive laws ever written as they completely destroy rights to privacy; they are unenforceable and unconstitutional. We must fight back against this horrific display of bigotry.

BRANDON PETERS (DEM.): As a civil rights attorney, I believe that all Americans have a fundamental right to privacy. This is very simply an issue of privacy, and I believe that children should be able to make their own decisions on this issue.

**6. If the U.S. Supreme Court reversed its 2015 decision affirming marriage equality, would you support codifying marriage equality for LGBTQ residents at the state level?**

State Senate District 9:

RODNEY LONG (DEM.): With the potential ruling to overturn Roe v Wade from the US Supreme Court almost certain, this could impact other constitutional rights including marriage equality. I can support legislation to codify marriage equality at the state level.

KEITH PERRY (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 21:

YVONNE HAYES HINSON (DEM.): Yes, I would support codifying marriage equality. We should have done this years ago. It is an embarrassment that this could be at risk in the year 2022. This along with all other civil rights should have been codified when it was decided.

HOLLYE MERTON (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 22:

TY APPIAH (REP.): *N/R*

CHUCK CLEMONS (REP.): *N/R*

OLYSHA MAGRUDER (DEM.): I would absolutely support codifying marriage equality at the state level. Marriage equality is an essential right that belongs to everyone. If the Supreme Court strips away this freedom from the nation, it is the state's responsibility to assure that these rights are protected for all LGBTQ individuals. The right to marry who you love is simple- everyone deserves that right. Anyone who says otherwise is operating in bigotry and discrimination trying to scare away anyone who thinks differently from them. As a state legislator, I will ensure that marriage equality is protected at the state level so LGBTQ Floridians will still be able to marry who they love.

BRANDON PETERS (DEM.): Yes. Marriage exists in our modern age as a secular institution that permeates throughout our government and our laws. Every American of legal age should have the right to participate in this institution, regardless of their sexual orientation. I would support codifying marriage equality into Florida law. I have a family member who is part of the LGBTQ+ community, and I believe the government has no role to play in their decisions about whom to marry.

**7. Describe efforts you have taken to support or advocate for LGBTQ rights. If elected, how would you represent the concerns of LGBTQ constituents, given the increasingly negative environment LGBTQ people are facing in Florida today?**

State Senate District 9:

RODNEY LONG (DEM.): As a local elected official on the Gainesville City Commission, I proclaimed the first Gay and Lesbian Pride Week in Gainesville in 1992. Equality for all is a major part of my campaign and I will advocate for equality for all citizens at the state level.

KEITH PERRY (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 21:

YVONNE HAYES HINSON (DEM.): Again, as a current Florida Legislator, I have personally fought this egregious legislation in debate and press conferences. I voted against all harmful and bigoted anti-LGBTQ legislation, I attended rallies in support of our LGBTQ community, I have listened and worked with members of the community in an effort to expand my knowledge, understanding, and acceptance. I regularly attend the Equality Gala and I am a regular donor.

HOLLYE MERTON (REP.): *N/R*

State House District 22:

TY APPIAH (REP.): *N/R*

CHUCK CLEMONS (REP.): *N/R*

OLYSHA MAGRUDER (DEM.): I have been involved in many LGBTQ activities and support LGBTQ organizations (Pride Center, Equality Florida, Stonewall Democrats, etc.). I feel I am positioned well to advocate for LGBTQ concerns as I am a bisexual woman. I stand proudly with my LGBTQ brothers and sisters, friends, and family, as I advocate for this community. I will be sure to include members of the community in any conversation around legislation that will impact the community. We cannot afford to move back into the days of draconian laws that work against the people rather than for the people. We must fight to make sure the rights of LGBTQ citizens are protected and prioritized.

BRANDON PETERS (DEM.): As the Voter Protection Director for the Florida Democratic Party and the Biden-Harris Campaign during the 2020 election cycle, I worked tirelessly for two years to ensure that every legal ballot was counted. Civil rights have been at the heart of my 30-year career as an attorney, including state and federal cases based on gender discrimination, racial discrimination, disabilities discrimination and age discrimination. If I am fortunate enough to serve in the Florida Legislature, I look forward to the opportunity to stand in the breach and fight for the rights of all Floridians to be healthy, prosperous, and safe. Every Floridian must be allowed to exercise the freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution and our Bill of Rights.

## 2022 U.S. Congress Candidate Questionnaire

- 1. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the Equality Act which would amend existing civil rights laws to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories. Do you support or oppose this bill? Why or why not?**

Congress District FL03:

MANUEL ASENSIO (REP.): *N/R*

LINDA BROOKS (NPA): *N/R*

KAT CAMMACK (REP.): *N/R*

DANIELLE HAWK (DEM.): I strongly support the Equality Act and all other efforts to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. As lawmakers, we must protect everyone's constitutional, civil, and human rights, no matter who they love or who they are, especially those who are most vulnerable to discrimination and harassment. LGBTQ+ Americans deserve the dignity afforded by legal protection from discrimination as do other marginalized communities.

JUSTIN WATERS (REP.): *N/R*

TOM WELLS (DEM.): I support the Equality act without reservation. As with race, religion, and ethnicity, people with varying sexual orientations and gender identities should not be discriminated against. The bill codifies the protection of people with varying sexual identities and gender and provide for them the same universal rights entitled to every person. This is essential in moving America into an equitable future for all - but in no way sufficient. The reactionary forces of fascism and white supremacy, typified by Florida's HB 1557, are at an unprecedented level. These put us at the intersection of LGTBQIA2S+ rights, abortion rights (more generally bodily autonomy rights), and 1st Amendment freedoms of all - but most particularly teachers and medical professionals. To prevail we must make common cause.

- 2. Would you support or oppose legislation that would allow businesses to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals based on the business owner's religious beliefs? Why or why not?**

Congress District FL03:

MANUEL ASENSIO (REP.): *N/R*

LINDA BROOKS (NPA): *N/R*

KAT CAMMACK (REP.): *N/R*

DANIELLE HAWK (DEM.): I adamantly oppose all legislative proposals that would permit businesses to discriminate against LGBTQ+ individuals. Our private right to believe or not believe in any religion does not justify discriminating against our fellow Americans accessing services open to the public. Enacting legislation enabling discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people for "religious reasons" would compel the government to define

*"N/R" indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

religious belief thereby potentially leading to governmental interference in private religious matters.

JUSTIN WATERS (REP.): *N/R*

TOM WELLS (DEM.): I do and will adamantly oppose any legislation that allows discrimination against LGTBQIA2S+ persons either in bodily autonomy or employment. I do strongly oppose any legislation that allows private sector businesses discriminate services to or employment of members of the LGTBIA+ community. I will oppose any bill that limits LGTBIA+ individuals' opportunity for success in academia, public service, or the military. I will work with my colleagues and convey how dehumanizing, degrading, and inequitable such policies would. However the problem of a 'business owner's religious beliefs' is one created by the Supreme Court and is nominally beyond the reach of the Congress. In particular the Supreme Court ruling in Hobby Lobby is egregiously wrong. It allows employers to impose their religious views on their employees – in direct contradiction of the explicit and foundational 1st Amendment freedom of religion. It is May of 2022. The Supreme Court is shredding the Constitution from privacy rights (Roe v Wade), to 6A rights to fair trial. . . Constitutional remedies for correcting the Court are out-of-scope here.

**3. Do you support or oppose allowing students to participate in sports activities with those who match their own gender identity?**

Congress District FL03:

MANUEL ASENSIO (REP.): *N/R*

LINDA BROOKS (NPA): *N/R*

KAT CAMMACK (REP.): *N/R*

DANIELLE HAWK (DEM.): I support allowing students to participate in sports activities with those who match their own gender identity, because we must ensure that transgender people are respected by our society and guaranteed equality by our government.

JUSTIN WATERS (REP.): *N/R*

TOM WELLS (DEM.): Students, athletes, school faculty, and sports employees should exercise what they see fit as an introduction of members of opposite or differing genders joining their respective leagues. In the realm of free competition and pure recreation, it should not harm anything. For higher levels of athletics, e.g. at the collegiate and professional levels, I will look to the pertinent medical/genetic specialities to define some concept of fairness. My expectation is that it will be both complex and imperfect.

**4. Do you support or oppose allowing students to use the school restroom facilities that align with their gender identity?**

Congress District FL03:

MANUEL ASENSIO (REP.): *N/R*

LINDA BROOKS (NPA): *N/R*

KAT CAMMACK (REP.): *N/R*

*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*

DANIELLE HAWK (DEM.): I support allowing students to use the school restroom facilities that align with their gender identity and oppose all efforts to demonize transgender individuals with dehumanizing laws and language.

JUSTIN WATERS (REP.): *N/R*

TOM WELLS (DEM.): I assert that once a student has identified as another gender, that they should be allowed to use the appropriate and corresponding restroom facilities. These facilities should already involve and require a tremendous level of privacy for all students, regardless of gender. Thus students should be able to feel comfortable, and safe at school. I would oppose any effort to force children into certain gendered bathrooms, if it makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

**5. Describe efforts you have taken to support or advocate for LGBTQ rights. If elected, how would you represent the concerns of LGBTQ constituents, given the increasingly negative environment LGBTQ people are facing in Florida today?**

Congress District FL03:

MANUEL ASENSIO (REP.): *N/R*

LINDA BROOKS (NPA): *N/R*

KAT CAMMACK (REP.): *N/R*

DANIELLE HAWK (DEM.): I have always been a proud ally of the LGBTQ community. During high school, I participated in the inaugural chapter of the Gay-Straight Alliance in my school district. Recently, I took part in local pride celebrations including the “Say GAYnesville” rallies in support of LGBTQ Floridians facing bigoted attacks from the Florida legislature. In addition, I am a proud supporter of Equality Florida’s efforts to ensure an equal and equitable society for LGBTQ+ Floridians. If I have the fortune of serving as the next congresswoman for Florida’s 3rd District, my office will include a staffer dedicated to LGBTQ+ concerns who will liaison with the community.

JUSTIN WATERS (REP.): *N/R*

TOM WELLS (DEM.): I would vote for legislation that codifies into law the rights for same-sex marriage, and the access to healthcare for transgender people. In addition to these policies, I would continue to represent the needs of the LGTBQIA+ community, and seek to refute and do away with Florida’s new draconian “Don’t say gay” bill and urge my colleagues in Congress to pressure and push for the state legislature to remove that policy. I believe I am capable of this, through my attendance at many LGTBIA+ organizations and events, and I have gone on to connect with many people from that community and understand their plight and see where action can be taken. I would use my seat in congress to represent all people from my district and to instill an equitable society that understands the needs of all people and does not base discrimination on sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, economic class or religion.

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*“N/R” indicates no responses were received from candidate.*