



HIGHER HEIGHTS FOR AMERICA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Higher Heights for America is the only national organization exclusively dedicated to building Black women’s collective power and leadership from the voting booth to elected office. Created by Black women for Black women, Higher Heights for America, a 501(c)(4) and its federal connected political action committee, Higher Heights for America PAC, works to:

- Provide a trusted resource as the political home for Black women giving them the tools to be informed, engaged and to take action. Higher Heights works to organize and mobilize our national network and members, their networks and all eligible Black women voters;
- Elevate the voices and issue concerns of Black women in elections and advance progressive policies that reflect the core concerns of Black women;
- Elect Black women;
- Cultivate, invest and support Black women candidates and elected leaders through online training and research;
- Strengthen the environment for Black women to effectively run, win and lead through culture-shifting communications work and digital campaigns.

Issues/question bank

Note that the issue portion of the questionnaire is considered on the record and is a vital part of our mission to help inform Black women about their choices in this election, therefore the issue portion of the questionnaire will be made available on our website.

The questions below focus on the core policy concerns and voting issues as identified by our members. Consistent with national polling among Black women, these issues include; access to affordable healthcare, economic security, the social safety net and criminal justice reform. The questions below are meant to provide the opportunity to discuss your proposals and strategies to address these issues.



Healthcare

- 1. Please outline the specifics of your policy proposal on healthcare, including expanding access, what would be covered, lowering prescription drug costs and transition from the current system.**

I believe healthcare is a fundamental human right, and it's past time we finally started treating it as such. The Affordable Care Act was a significant step towards achieving this, and I have fought tirelessly to protect it as Attorney General and in the U.S. Senate. It's time to expand on that progress and I agree that we need Medicare for All.

My Medicare for All plan, which will cover all medically necessary services, including emergency room visits, doctor visits, vision, dental, hearing aids, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, and comprehensive reproductive health care services. It will also allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to set fair prices for prescription drugs and tax profits made from abusive drug prices in order to offer rebates to consumers. Further, under my plan households making below \$100,000 (or more in certain high cost areas) would be exempt from any income-based premiums.

We must recognize that Medicare for All is about healthcare as well as racial justice. People of color makeup roughly 40% of the nonelderly U.S. population yet account for over half of the total uninsured population. Medical debt remains a glaring issues disproportionately impacting Black Americans and Black and low-income women are more likely than others to be treated at under-resourced hospitals. Universal health care supports the health and economic security of patients and solve for the affordability and accessibility issues that disparately impact people of color.

- 2. How does your plan address the myriad of disparities – including chronic illness, underdiagnosing of illness, heart disease, mental health, access and affordability that negatively impact the health and well-being of Black women?**

We have to make sure that, as we make comprehensive healthcare available to everyone, we reduce racial disparities in the healthcare system. The United States is one of only thirteen countries where the rate of maternal mortality is worse now than it was 25 years ago. Black women are three-to-four times more likely to die in pregnancy. Black women are also twice as likely to suffer from life-threatening pregnancy complications. My Maternal CARE Act would create two new grant programs focused on reducing racial disparities in maternal health, one to address implicit bias in the medical field, and another to help states implement pregnancy medical home (PMH) projects which are designed to deliver integrated health services into maternity care which can further reduce adverse maternal health outcomes. It is shameful that we have failed to adequately address our maternal health crisis and my administration will bring a renewed focus to solving this problem.

And, we absolutely need to do more to eliminate disparities in the availability of mental health services. And I believe this starts by prioritizing treatment over incarceration in our criminal justice system, particularly for individuals who would benefit from behavioral health services. Given the shortcomings in our mental health care system, our criminal justice system continues to be tasked with frontline interactions with people whose primary need is mental health care. We should be supporting efforts by law enforcement and other community officials in getting people the treatment and other health resources they need rather than responding with traditional law enforcement interventions. So, instead of simply incarcerating individuals because of drug addiction or mental health issues, we should look at alternatives to incarceration such as drug courts and other treatment programs.

3. What are your policy plans for the future of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid?

My Medicare for All plan would ensure that we expand comprehensive coverage to every American. I believe that healthcare should be a human right and that it's time to stop playing games with the health of the American people, which means passing Medicare for All and transitioning Medicaid into this comprehensive program.

In addition, I think we do need to take steps to strengthen Social Security. That's why I have co-sponsored the *Social Security Fairness Act* which would increase benefits for low-income seniors and use more accurate metrics to create cost-of-living adjustments. I will fight to sign this bill into law as president.

4. How will your administration protect *Roe v. Wade* and a woman's legal right to reproductive rights and justice?

As president, I will nominate jurists to our court who respect that *Roe v. Wade* is the law of the land, fight to protect funding for Planned Parenthood and reverse Trump's dangerous gag rule that prevents doctors from discussing medical options with their patients. States have mandated that women submit to invasive ultrasounds, passed laws requiring survivors of sexual assault to carry their rapist's child to term, and placed onerous and medically unnecessary restrictions on health clinics. We need to fight back and block these dangerous and deadly laws before they take effect. So, as President, similar to the preclearance requirement of the Voting Rights Act, I will require, for the first time, that states and localities with a history of violating *Roe v. Wade* obtain approval from her Department of Justice before any abortion law or practice can take effect.

5. How does your healthcare plan address access and affordability issues to the full range of reproductive services including contraception, comprehensive sex education,



STI prevention and care, disparities in prenatal, pregnancy and postnatal care, which disproportionately impacts Black women, women of color, women who may not be able to afford these services and/or may not have the ability to travel long distances to access these services?

My Medicare for All plan will cover all of those essential health services. That's part of why I feel so strongly about Medicare for All, we have to make sure everyone is able to get the full suite of health services they need, regardless of where they live or their socioeconomic status. We also must strengthen provider networks so that everyone is able to access those services in their communities. My Medicare for All plan is a way for us to do just that.

6. Do you support the repeal of the Hyde Amendment? Why or why not?

Yes, I do. I believe that access to full reproductive health services is a right that everyone in this country should have, regardless of their income or where they live. As a result, we should not be restricting federal funding for healthcare. That's also why I co-sponsored the EACH WOMAN ACT and announced my plan for a Reproductive Rights Act to require states to preclear any reproductive rights law before it can go into effect. We have to fight back against the attacks on reproductive rights and I won't leave anyone to fight alone.

Economy

1. How will your administration address the racial wealth gap, the pay gap for women and promote economic security for middle, and low-income Americans?

Working to repair the systemic inequalities people of color face in this country will remain a top priority for me as president. I know that economic justice and racial justice go hand in hand. That includes generational wealth, access to capital, closing the pay gap and breaking down barriers to access.

As President I will invest \$100 billion to provide down-payment and closing-cost assistance to four million homebuyers who rent or live in historically red-lined communities and amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to require the credit scores reported by credit reporting agencies to include payments of rent, phone bills, and utilities. We'll require lenders to calculate debt to income on a monthly basis and expand the sources of income for purposes of the calculation and strengthen anti-discrimination lending laws and implement stricter enforcement. Further, we'll make sure new homebuyers have the necessary financial literacy to stay in their homes, we'll increase funding for the Housing Education and Counseling (HEC) program.

I will fight to undo Trump's tax giveaway to the top 1% and use that money for my LIFT Act, which will provide a tax credit of up to \$6,000 a year to working and middle-class Americans. I



also plan to work with Congress to create a \$12 billion program to support Black entrepreneurship in order to provide a better platform for people to start a business and to make changes to federal contracting preference programs so that more minority-owned small businesses have a leg up in competing for a federal contract. Also, as part of my \$60 billion investment in HBCUs and other MSIs, I have called for creating STEM teaching and research hubs, as well as investment in entrepreneurship training programs. Black Americans should be leading the future of our innovation economy and my administration will commit the resources to make this happen.

Under a Harris Administration we will require companies to get “equal pay certified” and demonstrate they have eliminated pay disparities between women and men who are doing work of equal value. If they fail to receive this certification, they will be fined 1% of their profits for every 1% of the wage gap they allow to exist. Also, I will continue to fight to pass the Raise the Wage Act, because we are overdue in raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

2. How do your plans for economic growth address investment in underserved communities?

As part of my plan to close the opportunity gap, I will invest more resources in HBCUs and MSIs, particularly focused on STEM education and expanding resources for entrepreneurship. I will invest \$60 billion in STEM education at HBCUs and MSIs to create hubs for teaching and research. And then, I’ll work with Congress to create a \$12 billion capital grant and support program to directly help minority small business owners start businesses. And, I’ll bring back the State Small Business Credit Initiative with a \$10 billion investment to support state programs that help strengthen small businesses and I’ll add incentives to encourage the funding to be used to support minority small businesses in high-poverty communities.

And, I’ll reform the Opportunity Zones program and set new goals to make sure funds go to minority-owned small businesses, prioritize lowest-income neighborhoods, prioritize hiring in those neighborhoods, and have safeguards to ensure that housing projects that are built actually contain affordable units. Additionally, I’ll make sure ensure that there is more transparency in the Opportunity Zones program to make sure that it is held accountable to achieving its goal of helping those most in need.

And, I’ll support for Black entrepreneurs navigating the permitting process and other regulatory barriers that can make it hard for them to succeed in starting small businesses.

3. Do you support a \$15 minimum wage? Why or why not?

I am a co-sponsor of the *Raise the Wage Act*, which would raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour. As I mentioned above, Black women are more likely to be working in jobs that pay less. For example, in 2017, Black women had median annual earnings of



\$36,000, earnings that were 21% lower than that of White Women.¹ That's part of why I believe so strongly that it's past time to raise federal minimum wage and I will fight to sign this bill into law as president.

4. How will your administration address the disparities in access to capital for Black women owned small businesses?

Black entrepreneurs face enormous obstacles to getting the startup capital they need. They are more likely to rely on personal credit cards carrying balances than traditional bank loans, and when Black entrepreneurs do get a loan, they are more likely to be offered a smaller amount and pay higher interest rates. That's why I will invest \$60 billion in HBCUs and other MSIs, including creating hubs for STEM research and education at those campuses. I'll also work with Congress to strengthen programs to support Black entrepreneurship in order to provide a better platform for people to start a business. This will include a \$12 billion capital grant and technical support program to directly help people start businesses and another \$10 billion to support state and community-led programs.

I'll also streamline the application process for the SBA's 8(a) Small Business Development Program, which helps minority-owned businesses in the federal contracting process. We need to strengthen the program so it serves even more minority-owned businesses, particularly in underserved communities.

5. How do your plans address climate change and "green jobs" impact communities of color?

I believe that our solutions to our climate crisis must confront environmental injustice head on. That's why I will work immediately as president to properly enforce important environmental protections that the Trump Administration has abandoned, including the *Clean Air Act* and *Clean Water Act*. I'll work right away to reinstate executive orders designed to combat environmental injustice and pass my Climate Plan for the People, which includes the *Climate Equity Act* to ensure that our solutions to this climate crisis include our most vulnerable communities. I will also pass my *Water Justice Act* to make improvements to our aging water infrastructure, particularly in low-income communities such as Flint, MI that have recently had public health emergencies due to outdated drinking water infrastructure. I will also continue to fight to modernize our transportation, energy, and water infrastructure, accelerate the spread of electric vehicles, solar panels,

¹<https://www.epi.org/blog/10-years-after-the-start-of-the-great-recession-black-and-asian-households-have-yet-to-recover-lost-income/>



and wind turbines and make bold investments in innovative technologies to build a carbon free future.

- 6. Do you support reparations? If so, please describe your specific policy proposals to address the systematic and institutional legacy of slavery, Jim Crow and other forms of racism and discrimination. If not, please explain.**

I have co-sponsored the Senate companion legislation to H.R 40 calling for a formal commission to study the impacts of slavery and make recommendations.

There's no doubt that discrimination and historical injustice have created significant wealth inequality for people of color. As president, I will take tangible steps to reverse this. That's why I announced a \$100 billion plan to provide grants to increase Black homeownership and will invest heavily in HBCUs and other MSIs, including creating hubs for STEM research and education at those campuses. I'll also work with Congress to strengthen programs to support Black entrepreneurship in order to provide a better platform for people to start a business. With access to proper resources, we can create a pipeline for ensuring that people of color are leading the research and entrepreneurship to grow our innovation economy and participate in the wealth it generates.

Criminal Justice Reform/Judiciary/Civil Rights

- 1. Please outline the specifics of your plan to address criminal justice reform and include relevant information on returning citizens, over-policing and sentencing reforms.**

As president, my priority will be to fight for end-to-end criminal justice reform. Throughout my career I have seen first-hand how our criminal justice system is deeply flawed, informed by bias, and in urgent need of reform, and I have taken tangible steps to reform it. As District Attorney, I championed one of the first re-entry programs in the nation to direct young people arrested for drug crimes into job training and counseling programs instead of jail. As Senator, I championed sentencing reform and introduced bipartisan legislation to end our country's money bail system. As president, I would continue that record to seriously reform this system and change policies that led to mass incarceration.

That's why I recently introduced my plan to reform our criminal justice system. My plan has three central pillars. We'll focus on ending mass incarceration by reforming our sentencing laws, expanding the use of clemency to further sentence reductions, legalizing marijuana, investing in alternatives to incarceration for women and children, seeking a federal moratorium on the death penalty and promoting rehabilitation and reintegration



over incarceration.

We'll focus on ensuring law enforcement accountability by setting a national standard for officer use of force that builds on the best practices communities across the country have been working on, prioritizing independent investigations for police shootings, holding prosecutors accountable, and investing in our public defenders.

And we'll take profit out of the criminal justice system by eliminating private prisons, reforming the cash bail system, and ending the system of fines and fees that criminalizes poverty.

Furthermore, we have to reorient our justice system to get it to protect the vulnerable among us. That's why, as another part of my plan, I will establish a Bureau of Children's and Family Justice in the Justice Department. Modeled after a similar bureau I established in the California Department of Justice the bureau will be charged with ensuring that our justice system is working *for* children and families, including in our education, healthcare, and foster care systems.

2. How will your administration work with the Department of Justice to handle police misconduct and death in custody issues in state and local police departments?

I will fight to ensure accountable and constitutional policing where law enforcement must earn and maintain the trust of the communities they police. These are issues I have been committed to throughout my career including as California Attorney General when my Justice Department became the first statewide agency to mandate the use of body cameras and launched the first of its kind implicit bias and procedural justice training in the country. I will also double the Justice Department's civil rights division, renewing and expanding pattern and practice investigations, enforcing consent decrees, and supporting legislation to end racial profiling. I will work to create a national standard for law enforcement use-of-force modeled after best practices being piloted by communities across the country. And I will work with Congress to enact proposals that would require any state receiving federal Byrne JAG funds to enact laws mandating the independent investigation and prosecution of the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers.

3. Please outline your specific policy proposals on gun safety. Do you view gun violence as a public health issue?

Yes, gun violence is a national epidemic and a public health emergency. We're not waiting for a good idea – we have good ideas. We're not waiting for another tragedy – we have seen the worst human tragedies we can imagine. We're not waiting for momentum – because of the tireless and courageous work of students and faith leaders, victims and



families, mayors and moms, a chorus calling for action has swept the nation. What's missing is the courage in Washington to stand up to the NRA.

If Congress fails to send comprehensive gun safety legislation to my desk within the first 100 days of my presidency – including universal background checks, an assault weapons ban, and the repeal of the NRA's corporate gun manufacturer and dealer immunity bill – I will take the most sweeping set of executive action on guns in American history to keep our kids and communities safe.

I'll mandate near-universal background checks by requiring anyone who sells five or more guns per year to run a background check on all gun sales. I'll revoke the licenses of gun manufacturers and dealers that break the law and take the most egregious offenders to court—regardless of whether they're protected by the Protection of Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA). I'll close the online gun sales loophole to ensure that websites such as Armslist.com must perform background checks. And, I will ban AR-15-style assault weapons from being imported into the United States.

4. Do you support the death penalty?

I do not. I have opposed the death penalty my entire career and will seek a federal moratorium on it as president.

5. How will you strengthen the Voting Rights Act, protect voting rights and ballot access?

There is no question, we need to take steps to repair our democracy. Passing the For the People Act would be a significant step in the right direction, and I am proud to co-sponsor the measure in the Senate. Right now, the right to vote is under attack by voter suppression tactics and our outdated election infrastructure stands vulnerable to foreign attack. I am committed to fighting back against voter suppression and making it easier for all eligible voters to vote. Across the country, millions of Americans are being denied the right to vote by a wave of state laws intentionally designed to disenfranchise Black Americans, Latinx Americans, Native Americans, and college students. As president, I will restore the full protections of the Voting Rights Act, require the availability of early voting, fight for automatic voter registration and early voting nationwide, and make Election Day a national holiday.

And, a crucial part of protecting voting rights means ensuring our elections are protected from hackers and foreign adversaries intent on undermining our democracy. In the Senate, I introduced the bipartisan *Secure Elections Act* to protect against foreign

interference and support the *Strengthening America's Federal Elections Act* and the *Protecting American Votes and Elections Act*, particularly using paper ballots and robust post-election audits in all elections. As president, I will fortify America's election infrastructure by funding election security improvements, implementing cybersecurity guidelines, and replacing outdated electronic voting machines.

6. Will your administration recognize violence perpetrated by white supremacist hate groups as acts of domestic terrorism?

My plan for combatting domestic terrorism and violent extremism calls for creating a new "Domestic Terrorism Risk Prevention Order" to give federal courts the ability to seize a gun from someone who may imminently commit a hate crime. We also have to close the online gun sales loophole and require websites like ArmsList.com to perform background checks. And, I will direct the National Counterterrorism Center to address the threat of global white-nationalist terrorism and seek the authority to include domestic terrorism in their mission.

7. What type of judges will you seek to appoint to the Federal bench and the Supreme Court?

Nominations to the federal judiciary impact the lives of millions of Americans and I take them very seriously, and personally. Had the Supreme Court not decided *Brown v. Board of Education*, I would not be running for President of the United States. I was part of the second class to integrate at Berkeley public schools after the Brown decision, and so like millions of Americans across the country, I know that the decisions our courts make have real impacts on people's lives every day.

This is a make-or-break moment for the federal judiciary. The stakes have never been higher for women's rights, labor rights, LGBTQ+ rights, civil rights, voting rights, and so many more of the rights we've fought to achieve. And unfortunately we have seen Republicans abuse power and change the rules to pack courts at all levels with right wing justices who will not uphold the civil and worker rights that have been the foundation of the labor movement.

I will select nominees to the courts, particularly the Supreme Court, similar to how I have evaluated nominees in the Senate. I will listen to advocates and experts who are on the front lines, including unions and women's rights, immigrant rights, and civil rights groups. I will consider nominees who are committed to that promise above the Supreme Court - Equal Justice Under Law.

In addition, diversity of judicial nominees is critical to me. This includes race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, as well as professional diversity. There are lawyers other than just corporate attorneys and prosecutors who would make excellent



judges and I will consider more potential nominees who work in public interest, civil rights, public defenders, and other professions.

Finally, I will select nominees who respect the rule of law and understand no one regardless of money or stature or political office is above it.

Education

1. **Please outline your platform on K-12 education, and Post-Secondary education opportunities other than two-or four-year college like apprenticeships, trade school etc.?**

When President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act into law, he said it would “bridge the gap between helplessness and hope.” We have made some progress since then, but we have a long way to go before that gap is fully closed. That’s the task we face, and I don’t believe Washington has done enough to meet it.

We also must recommit to the central federal role in education: Ensuring equity in our classrooms and protecting students most in need of support. As Attorney General, I took on Corinthian Colleges, one of the largest for-profit college scams in the country, and obtained a more than \$1 billion judgment for students and veterans.

As president, I will continue the fight to ensure every child has an opportunity to succeed. I will fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Act, ban for-profit charter schools that exploit our children for profit, reinstate protections of survivors of campus sexual assault that were rolled back by Betsy DeVos, and crack down on for-profit colleges and lenders that defraud our students.

And, we must continue to provide a variety of opportunities for lifelong learning to make sure that all workers are well supported as our economy changes. That’s why I will fight to pass my 21st Century SKILLS Act to help provide workers with up to \$8,000 to access skills training and other educational opportunities (for example, professional certificates and union apprenticeships), as well as pay costs associated with pursuing that opportunity, such as childcare and transportation costs.

2. **Do you support charter schools?**



I do not support private charter schools. I believe that public charter schools can play a role in our education system, but they should be held to high standards to make sure they are accountable to students.

Furthermore, my administration will commit to robust enforcement of public charters to ensure they are actually delivering for students.

3. How will your education plans address the school to prison pipeline, the over-discipline of Black girls and protect programs like STEM?

An important component of dismantling the school to prison pipeline is making sure that stop using antiquated school discipline tactics. My criminal justice reform plan would help orient us in this direction, including by establishing a Bureau of Children's and Family Justice in the Justice Department. This would be modeled off of the Bureau of Children's Justice I established when I was Attorney General, which was given a mission of ensuring that we treated elementary school truancy as a cry for help, rather than a reason for punitive measures and helped empower school districts to develop better interventions.

And we absolutely must do more to get Black girls and other underrepresented students into STEM fields. That's why I announced my plan for creating STEM centers of excellence at HBCUs and other MSIs. That's also why I introduced the *21st Century STEM for Girls and Underrepresented Minorities Act* to create a \$40 million competitive grant program for school districts to increase participation in STEM programs among underrepresented students, including Black girls. We need to make sure that people of color, particularly Black girls, are playing a leading role in building our innovation economy and my plan would be a significant step in the right direction.

4. Do you support increasing teacher pay?

Yes, I believe we must fundamentally change the way America values our educators and invests in our public schools. That's why the first policy proposal I announced on this campaign was the largest ever federal investment in educators. In America today, public school teachers make 11% less than other professionals with college degrees. It's a national failure and it demands a bold national response. As president, I will raise taxes on the top 1% and put \$315 billion into our public schools to entirely close the teacher pay gap within my first term.

My teacher pay plan will also narrow the gender and pay disparities to lift up teachers of color, including women. This includes providing \$2.5 billion to support HBCU programs that will generate more Black teachers. Its long past time that we finally started investing



in our educators, particularly educators of color and my plan will be a significant step toward doing so.

5. How will your administration address funding disparities among school districts?

We absolutely need to make sure we do more to ensure that all schools receive the funding they need. I will nominate an Education Secretary who is committed to restring the federal government's central role in education: ensuring equity so that every child gets the education they deserve. And my administration will work with school districts, states, and communities to begin eliminating funding disparities across the country.

6. How will you address the student loan crisis in America?

There's no doubt that crushing debt burdens are keeping many Americans from fully participating in our economy and achieving economic security. That's why I support making community college free and making four-year public college debt-free. Part of this means providing an income boost to nearly 1 in 7 Pell Grant recipients through my LIFT Act, which will be the largest tax cut for working Americans in generations. And it means looking for ways that we can expand additional debt relief options for people who are currently stuck under an insurmountable debt burden, including through forgiveness.

I'll also crack down on for-profit colleges and lenders that take advantage of our students. As Attorney General, I took on Corinthian Colleges and their outright fraud, winning more than \$1 billion when I was Attorney General of California.

7. How do your plans for higher education address HBCU's?

Ensuring equity and opportunity also requires that we support HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). This issue is personal to me. As a graduate of Howard University, I know firsthand the role HBCUs and MSIs play in opening the door of opportunity for students who are too often denied a chance. That's why I introduced a plan for investing \$60 billion to create hubs for STEM research and education at HBCUs and other MSIs. That's also why successfully passed bipartisan legislation in the Senate to reauthorize the HBCU Historic Preservation Program, successfully secured a 14% increase in HBCU funding in the appropriations process, and why, as president, I'll fight to make MSIs debt-free for students.