

## Candidates for Council At-large

### Anita Bonds

Q. If elected to the Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. Despite the economic boom underway in DC, there are still notable amounts of concentrated food deserts. Food access in DC is deeply connected to the issue of poverty and transportation and these areas have a tendency to have concentrations of low-income and minority residents, which invoke socioeconomic and racial divides.

This is why I recently co-introduced B22-207, the "East End Health Care Desert, Retail Desert, and Food Desert Elimination Act of 2017". As introduced, this bill would require the Department of Health Care Finance (DCHF) to establish a new capital project, the East End Medical Center and provides for its funding, operation, and maintenance. The bill also establishes a special fund administered by DCHF, the East End Medical Center Fund and program, the East End Grocery and Retail Incentive Program.

Throughout my next tenure, I will look to support legislation such as this and make sure that healthy and equitable food systems remain a priority at the Council by viewing this issue in a holistic and comprehensive perspective and exploring ways to improve food access and food quality for all District residents, particularly our most vulnerable populations of seniors and children.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents? What will you do in your first year in office?

A. Many of the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as the right to life, the right to marriage and a family, the freedom to move, the right to democracy, and the right to an education are without meaning if someone is not healthy, and food justice is a critical requirement for full and complete health.

In the short term I would move a Sense of the Council resolution that would express the Council's intent that the District work towards greater food justice for all District residents. As the issue of food justice is a very complex one that cannot be solved without a great amount of work, I would encourage that a study be conducted to analyze the state of food justice in the District and make concrete recommendations as the conclusion of the study for accelerated efforts by the District to ensure that all residents had access to healthy food.

Q. The use of federal nutrition programs in the form of SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, senior and childcare meals bring in over \$350 million dollars to the District of Columbia, yet money is still left on the table. What will you do to make sure that every program can take advantage of this federal funding is actually doing so?

A. Oversight is a critical component and task as a member of the Council. As a legislator, it is my duty to ensure that the budget aligns with the service delivery and that the Executive is implementing the policies and initiatives passed by the Council. I will utilize my role as a member of the Committee on Education as well as my oversight duties over the District of Columbia Office on Aging to ensure that any federal funds that are being used for nutritional programs will be maximized to its fullest capacity.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a “central kitchen” where meals for DC’s schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

A I would support the creation of a central kitchen from which schools and other institutions could obtain fresh or recently pre-cooked meals. However, it is important that we have a facility and staff with the resources to prioritize nutrition and quality rather than an overwhelmed kitchen that would eventually form a mass-production mentality out of necessity. If the Council takes up this issue and we have a consensus on such an approach, my colleagues and I should be prepared to work collaboratively between our various committees to not only properly fund this kind of kitchen facility during the budget process, but also to diligently oversee it’s operations throughout the year. An ambitious undertaking like this one could not be the responsibility of a single silo of the government or the Council, but would require a cross-sector approach.

Q. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food, however, access to food isn’t enough. Residents need to be educated about how the food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the city?

A. I believe it’s important to instill healthy eating habits at a young age, so I would work with our schools to take a creative approach to teaching students about nutrition and making healthy choices. Physical education classes, health classes, after school sports, and other after school activities all provide opportunities and avenues for discussing these topics. My hope is that if the students are engaged and learn about the importance of a nutritious diet in an approachable manner, they will be excited and eager to share their knowledge with their families.

I think there is also great potential for public private partnerships to increase nutrition education services, particularly with grocery stores. This could include anything from signs and labels that highlight healthy foods, to cooking demonstrations, to providing space for organizations to table or display educational materials.

Dr. Omekongo Dibinga

Q. If elected to the Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. I believe that food equity is a human rights issue. I have lived and worked in over 20 countries and some of the challenges I've seen in developing countries are surfacing in our great city. If elected to DC Council, I will continue to support the grassroots efforts taking place in the District. Specifically, I will work to increase the network by which DC residents are informed about opportunities available to them such as DC Produce Plus. Unfortunately, programs like these are not common knowledge to many residents. In addition to increased outreach on programs with proven track records, I would spearhead the expansion of community garden and food prescription style programs that have proven effective. I will fight for the elimination of food deserts in the District so that our residents will not have to travel 2 or more hours total for healthy options. As someone who has worked in the area of sustainable development and microfinancing in countries abroad, I will ensure that our city is drawing on best practices and innovations from other global cities. In addition to working with teachers and students, it is imperative that we work to also educate parents on food choices and access. I would fight for more central kitchen style facilities that are staffed by residents of those communities. I will also call for an evaluation of all programs that seek to aid residents obtain better access to healthy food and aid in the creation of programs that deliver healthy foods to residents who may have difficulty travelling to sites to receive health food. Lastly if elected, I will work to create more collaborative opportunities with companies currently not involved in programs related to food equity.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents? What will you do in your first year in office?

A. In the short term, I will meet with local experts in the area of food justice to identify the areas of most need as well as enhance programs already working. In the long term, I will work to promote mobile food units, support efforts to increase healthy food instruction in schools, community centers, and our religious institutions. Lastly, I will support the creation of more community gardens, and brick & mortar locations for families to get access to healthier foods.

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A. When it comes to the issue of food justice, we cannot afford to waste a single dime because it can literally be an issue of life and death. In order to ensure that no money is left on the table, regular assessments need to be conducted before the end of the fiscal year. If there are areas that do not need the extra assistance, those funds can be allocated elsewhere. However, if the issue is efficiency, then we need to work with those organizations so that they do not use valuable funding.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a "central kitchen" where meals for DC's schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

A. I support the creation of "central kitchens" in DC. In addition to the kitchens, we also need to have mobile food units like the food trucks we see across town. If we can have ice cream trucks drive through every neighborhood, why not healthy food trucks? Even if children don't buy from them, parents and guardians who have difficulty getting out to buy food can access this food without having to leave their block. It would also be great to have the food prescription programs be connected to these truck programs. I would make this a reality by looking at areas where money is being left on the table and fight for budget increases to make this happen.

Q. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food, however, access to food isn't enough. Residents need to be educated about how the food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the City?

A. Nutrition education has to be tied into the curriculum. Nutrition education cannot just be an elective of some sort. We need to be innovative with a healthy curriculum. For example, there have been music literacy courses that have been integrated into science, English, math, and social studies curricula. Beyond music, I have seen many innovative programs in my work as an educator across the country in public, charter, and private schools. The key is to weave food literacy into the education in ways that do not make it look like extra work. Students respond best to integrated assignments that they can also relate to. I've seen it done and have conducted these programs successfully.

Marcus Goodwin

Q. If elected to Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. Today in Washington we don't provide all of our citizens equitable access to high quality food. Our city has largely ignored the needs of our 155,000 residents east of the Anacostia river who struggle to get to full service grocery stores to feed their families. This reality forces people to either settle for lower quality nutritional options or cross the invisible line and take their money to Maryland. We're losing socially and we're losing economically. We have a social obligation to ensure that all of our residents have immediate access to healthy and high-quality foods. There is also an economic case. The dollars that people spend on their foods are leaving our city's borders to stores that are paying taxes to Maryland and Virginia. Working in commercial real estate I've learned that nothing adds more value to a property than access to grocery stores: we're missing out on the economic development potential.

As a member of DC Council I am committed to introducing tax relief legislation that will dramatically incentivize grocery store development in communities that are currently food deserts. By focusing on the economic case for equitable access to grocery stores we will compel local property owners to build instead of sitting on their land and speculating. Furthermore, I am committed to investing in urban farm collectives. We need to involve the next generation of leaders in Washington to start to learn how to grow food in the urban context so that we don't solely rely on food from outside the city. By doing this we also create an eco-system of entrepreneurs who will help neighborhoods address their food insecurity and empower communities with food backed capital.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents? What will you do in your first year in office?

- Short term: Economically incentivize the development of grocery stores in economically disadvantaged communities through tax relief legislation.
- Long term: Invest in the creating of training and urban farm collectives that will empower local farming entrepreneurs. It would also have an educational element to include our young leaders in the process of finding

- First year: Passing grocery store tax relief legislation and fast casual tax to fund nutritional food option education.

Q. The use of federal nutrition programs in the form of SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, senior and childcare meals bring in over \$350 million dollars to the District of Columbia, yet money is still left on the table. What will you do to make sure that every program that can take advantage of this federal funding is actually doing so?

- More oversight from the Council ensuring that our local government is effectively drawing upon Federal funds to support our citizens.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a "central kitchen" where meals for DC's schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

- Yes. I would commit it to the upcoming budget and final capital by taxing fast casual food establishments.

Q. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food, however, access to food isn't enough. Residents need to be educated about how the food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the City?

- Raise money through a fast food tax to fund nutritional education in communities struggling from poor nutrition and negative health effects associated with poor diet.

**Ambrose Lane, Jr.**

Q. If elected to Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. I would contribute to the continued building of an equitable and healthy District of Columbia food system in several ways. First, as a Councilman, I would advocate for and seek to impact more robust funding for support of existing District programs, known to positively impact poverty, hunger, fresh and healthy food access, restaurant and retail business development, and agricultural growth, production and distribution for residents. That means continued and growing the funding support for programs and efforts like community and school gardens, Produce Plus, farmer's markets, Joyful

Food Markets, grocery store initiatives and other efforts that positively contribute to DC's food economy.

Secondly, I would seek to partner with food equity and justice advocates and the DC Food Policy Council to highlight the urgent need to address and fund solutions to the inequitable grocery store gap, the funding of a "food Hub or central kitchen" as described and enacted in the Healthy Schools Act, and use additional tax incentives and capital investment to seed more food retail establishments in targeted communities.

Lastly, I would create, with Council colleagues, new and innovative initiatives and revenue sources, such as a Grocery Store Investment Fund, initially funded at \$15 million, to seed more mid-sized grocery stores and cooperatives in communities known to be food deserts. This sustainable funding would come from supporting a sugar sweetened beverage (SSB) excise (import) tax, possibly generating \$24 to \$52 million dollars. Monies would be used to sustainably support chronic disease prevention, community health and nutrition education, Health Empowerment Zones and programs like Produce Plus, SNAP, TANF, etc. I would bring the knowledge that I have gained through my known food justice advocacy to the Council to be a strong voice continuing to help build a strong, sustainable and more equitable food system in the District of Columbia.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents? What will you do in your first year in office?

A. I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits." –MLK, Jr. Norway 1964 Like Dr. King, I have THAT audacity. I believe in that right. I would support a "Zero Hunger" law, similar to Brazil, that ensures healthy food to any DC citizen

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A. Provide strong oversight over the agencies that are responsible for the distribution of federal dollars for these programs and seek to pass legislation that shifts unused funds to stronger outreach and education efforts regarding the programs.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a "central kitchen" where meals for DC's schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

A. The building of a "central kitchen" has been an unfunded mandate from the Healthy Schools Act. Every year, the District has unspent funds in federal dollars, from many agencies, including DOES. I would seek to reclassify the building of a "central kitchen/hub" as a "workforce development" project, apply federal dollars to it and leverage those dollars with private and philanthropic efforts.

Q. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food, however, access to food isn't enough. Residents need to be educated about how the food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the City?

A. There are nutrition education programs that are both conducted by and funded by DC Health as well as OSSE. Unfortunately, neither agency nor most of the programs they fund have the capacity to take a "population health" approach to community nutrition education. I would encourage partnerships with organizations like the Anacostia Coordinating Council, the Health Alliance Network and the Ward 8 Health Council that have strong convening power as well as broad outreach capacity. I would also encourage use of train-the-trainer models to inform, train, and empower residents by decentralizing nutrition and health education, thereby reaching more residents.

Jeremiah Lowry

Q. If elected to Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. As a former member of the DC Food Policy Council, Emerson National Hunger Fellow, policy organizer at Restaurant Opportunities Center- DC, blogger for Food Tank, and organizer at Common Good City Farm, I have had the opportunity to personally and professionally work on different areas that cover our food system.

If elected, I would introduce legislation that would push us to have a food system that ensures food service workers are treated with respect and dignity on the job, our small businesses are able to grow and survive in a changing city, all youth are able to eat healthy meals while also learning about our complex food system, no adult goes

hungry at night, we have walkable affordable community-oriented grocery stores in every part of the city and we have the opportunity to source food for producers in our city.

Within my first term, I will work to ensure we have full implementation of the Good Food Purchasing Program in all schools, universal high quality childcare system for all parents who work in the food service sector, a comprehensive plan to eliminate senior hunger, the necessary funding to for completion of a grocery store east of the river, funding for job training and placement programs in the food sector for returning citizens in DC, and I will have a staff member attend every food policy council meeting to work ensure we are working with them to use legislation to achieve their goals and priorities.

I believe D.C. can have the most equitable and transformative food system in the United States, and it is something that I have been fighting for over a decade and I look to continue to fight for it on the D.C. Council.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents? What will you do in your first year in office?

My first year in office I would:

I will work with small food businesses on rent stabilization measures and I will work with the administration to ensure implementation and expansion of the our cottage food law.

I will work with advocates on the oversight and expansion of the DC Urban Farming and Food Security Act in DC to create more community gardens in DC. I will also look for funding to ensure there is proper outreach to inform DC residents of the law.

I will continue to work with advocates to ensure the Good Food Purchasing Program is being implemented in DC Public Schools.

Will work with advocates and small businesses to ensure we have money in the budget for enforcement and implementation of the paid family leave law.

Work with advocates on the implementation of the Women, Infants, and Children Program Expansion Act of 2018.

I will work with advocates to ensure the implementation of the "Universal Free Lunch for All Amendment Act of 2017 and I will couple it with legislation to create a city-wide school composting program.

I will work with the council to find funding for job training and placement programs in the food sector for returning citizens in DC.

Will work with advocates and community members to secure additional funding and potential tax breaks for the creation of grocery stores in wards 7 and 8.

Will work with advocates to ensure the produce plus program for low-income residents is being funded. I will work with advocates to find any additional funding to improve the program or increase the number of people who benefit from the programs.

Short term solutions:

I would like to create an Office of co-op development, whose mission would be to work on the development of more food co-ops in Washington, D.C.

I will work with senior advocates on finding funding for the creation of city-wide farm-to-senior center programs that would aim to address senior hunger.

I will work with advocates to find a funding source to being the creation of the central processing facility that would make it easier to include more local ingredients in the city's school meals, and a city-wide composting program and food waste management system.

Long term solutions:

I will work with my colleagues to being the process of implementing the Good Food Purchasing Program in our whole school system (traditional public schools and charter), prison system, senior centers and childcare centers.

I will work closely with the DC Food Policy Council to ensure the Food Policy Council amendments are adopted the next time the comprehensive plan is up for review.

I will push DC to come up with a comprehensive plan to eliminate senior hunger.

I will work with the Council and Mayor's office to use community land trusts to use public property for the create of vertical farms.

Work with OSSE on the development of a food policy course for grades K-12.

I would push for the creation of a universal child care system (including the creation of more oversight childcare centers) that would greatly benefit food service workers in DC.

Q. The use of federal nutrition programs in the form of SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, senior and childcare meals bring in over \$350 million dollars to the District of Columbia, yet money is still left on the table. What will you do to make sure that every program that can take advantage of this federal funding is actually doing so?

A. I will ensure that these questions are raised during the budget oversight years and I will continue to work with the DC Food Policy Council and advocates to pursue every legislative measure to push the administration to utilize our dollars for D.C. residents.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a "central kitchen" where meals for DC's schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

A. I have voiced my support for a "central kitchen" for a number of years. If elected, I plan to work with advocates on a timeline and campaign plan to create the central kitchen from start to finish.

Once I have created a plan with advocates and the administration on the structure and funding for the central kitchen, I will then work to ensure that there is funding in the budget for the full creation of the kitchen.

I will conduct proper oversight of the project during the budget oversight hearings to ensure its doing what advocates have intended for it to do.

Dionne Reeder

Q. If elected to Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. I am running for a seat on the DC City Council because it is time to have a Councilmember who will step up to invest in every Washingtonian. Two years ago, I opened a restaurant in Historic Anacostia— Cheers at the Big Chair, in one of this City's food deserts. I opened Cheers because I believed that Ward 8 deserved more than two sit-down restaurants where residents could get freshly prepared food. Running a restaurant has not been easy, but it has been worth the effort when every day I can see families get the fresh and nutritious food they need to thrive. I am proud of the impact that we have had in Ward 8, but I know that Ward 8 does not have the only food desert in our City. According to recent statistics, our City has approximately 6.5 square miles of food deserts, which is about 11 percent of our total area. Beyond Historic Anacostia, food deserts exist in Barry Farms, Mayfair, and Ivy City, as well as other locations. However, let us be clear—more than three-quarters of the food deserts in our City are located East of the Anacostia in Wards 7 and 8. We need a Councilmember who recognizes that these unconscionable disparities exist and that they are deeply connected to other drivers—poverty, income inequality, and lack of access to transportation. I will fight to build a healthy and equitable food system across the City, but one which also begins to address the root causes of this issue. If elected, I will make sure that community members who join me in the fight for food access and availability have a reliable and consistent voice that can be counted upon. Together, we will make certain that restaurants serving underserved communities can grow and thrive; that farmers markets are available in every part of the City; that more grocery stores are located in areas where the need is the greatest; and that our youngest residents learn to love healthy food from an early age by serving food that is truly nutritious and delicious in our schools. However, equally important, we will also look for solutions to address the socioeconomic and racial dynamics that have and continue to contribute to the development of food deserts.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents? What will you do in your first year in office?

A. I would be the first Councilmember elected to the Council from the food industry. I will be able to provide leadership and lend expertise in championing this issue. From day one, I will invite my colleagues on the Council and the Mayor to spend time in Wards 7 and 8 so that they can learn firsthand by speaking with residents— as I do

every day, what it is like to have to live in a food desert. The more personal that this issue becomes for my colleagues, the more support we will have in developing policies and enacting legislation that will improve people's lives.

Within the first year, I will convene a Food Justice and Equality Task Force of diverse stakeholders – many of whom are the organizing partners of this event and who have already laid important groundwork. We will work to introduce “Food Deserts No More” legislation within the first six months of my term with the goal of passage, followed by full funding within the NEXT budget cycle.

Q. The use of federal nutrition programs in the form of SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, senior and childcare meals bring in over \$350 million dollars to the District of Columbia, yet money is still left on the table. What will you do to make sure that every program that can take advantage of this federal funding is actually doing so?

A. As the Principal Director of the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative, I worked to bring together local and federal resources to solve complex problems facing some of the most at risk communities in the City. Responsibility and accountability must be required in our Government and in our partners as we serve our most in-need and vulnerable residents. I will ensure the review of all available audit data to identify instances—program by program where any underutilization of resources has occurred, and to determine the nature of system failures. Where nonfeasance exists, I will assert that the appropriate action be taken. I will utilize the talents, knowledge and experience of the Food and Justice Equality Task Force to identify solutions to ensure full and aggressive utilization of all Federal dollars; and I will continue to engage with them as a citizen-empowered oversight group in the ongoing review and monitoring of select programs.

Q. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food; however, access to food isn't enough. Residents need to be educated about how the food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the City?

A. As a small business owner in the food service industry, I enjoy the direct connection with my customers and the confidence that I have in direct quality control and oversight of all phases of my operation. There are undoubtedly economies of scale that can be achieved with larger operations. However, I believe a decentralized approach in providing food services to various constituencies should be our first option. It will be good for our economy and good for our people. This strategy will provide opportunities for local and small businesses that have a stake in our City and allow

them to serve residents—their friends, their neighbors, their elders, their children in a responsible and meaningful way.

To have a good system, does not mean that it must be a large one. What is required is that the quality and standards for performance must be rigorous and uniform for all service providers and that the same level of resources must be available and delivered in an equitable matter across the city.

Our young residents need to learn from the earliest age possible to love healthy food. My 5 year old granddaughter, like many of her peers, can sometimes be a picky eater. But when we get her to try something new or to help prepare the dish, she often approaches eating it with an open mind and ultimately loves it.

As a member of the Council, I would introduce legislation to fund nutrition education programming in all of DC Public Schools so that children can learn the love healthy food and prepare meals for their families at home. I would also call upon a broad and diverse base of restaurants and chefs from across the City to become part of a social responsibility initiative and partner with our schools to promote nutrition, and to also “pay it forward” and mentor students interested in the culinary arts as a possible career option.

David Schwartzman

Q. If elected to Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. My vision is the implementation of the Human Right to Food, namely, the right to food guarantees freedom from hunger and access to safe and nutritious food. Several key human rights principles are fundamental to guaranteeing the right to food: Availability, Accessibility, Sustainability and Non-Discrimination. As the nation’s first Human Rights City, we must hold our elected government fully accountable for its official commitment to make political, social, economic and environmental human rights a reality in our community (see Reports at: <http://afsc.org/resource/report-state-human-rights-dc>, <https://www.afsc.org/document/2017-dc-human-rights-city-report>). We must confront DC’s very high income inequality and racial wealth disparities, shockingly high child poverty level, and the failure of our Mayors/Council to tap into the sizable tax base of wealthy residents and the corporate sector, to use this revenue, along with curbing the tax subsidies for gentrification and displacement, for funding budgetary programs targeted to the needs of low-income residents, including of course their right to a

healthy and equitable food system. Specifically, the following goals should be priorities for the next four years: 1) Lead free water must be provided for our residents, especially to students, those living in public housing (this is not the case now!); 2) Maximize the Double the Value option of SNAP (Food Stamps), by promoting purchase at farmers markets, especially east of the river. All SNAP recipients should be made aware of this opportunity with DC providing convenient transportation to farmers markets; 3) Establish a Public DC Central Kitchen, with preservation/storage capacity for year round services to schools, community centers, etc.; 4) Make cooperative ownership the foundation of organic urban food production and community supply, thereby providing employment for Returning Citizens, especially in Wards 7 and 8; 5) Terminate child poverty and chronic homelessness in DC, by raising the TANF income support to above the federal poverty level, and expanding rapid rehousing coupled with increase rental assistance.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents?

A. Short term solutions include: Lead free water must be provided for our residents, especially to students, those living in public housing (this is not the case now!). Following the inspiring examples initiated by the UDC College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES), make cooperative ownership the foundation of organic urban food production and community supply (model legislation: D.C. Cooperative Business Ownership and Development Act; Democratize the Enterprise). Establish a Central Kitchen (see later question). Long term solutions include: To be addressed initially in the short term: make the Target Goals of Sustainable DC more ambitious, as a guide for program design, e.g. Sustainable DC 2013 Food Goals (hopefully revised for Sustainable DC 2.0) now read: "By 2032, put 20 additional acres of land under cultivation for growing food; By 2032, ensure 75% of residents live within ¼ mile of a community garden, farmers' market and/or healthy corner store; By 2032, produce or obtain 25% of food within a 100-mile radius." Integrate the cultural history of food into the production and supply of organic food, by tapping into the traditional cuisines of African America, Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America and Asia.

Q. What will you do in your first year in office?

A. First, I will address the short term solutions outlined in the previous question. Food justice and equity cannot be separated from the harsh realities of life in DC for our low-income residents. Therefore, I will make my legislative/budgetary priority the

virtual elimination of child poverty and chronic homelessness, by raising the TANF income support to above the federal poverty level, and expanding rapid rehousing coupled with increase rental assistance.

Q. The use of federal nutrition programs in the form of SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, senior and childcare meals bring in over \$350 million dollars to the District of Columbia, yet money is still left on the table. What will you do to make sure that every program that can take advantage of this federal funding is actually doing so?

A. First, the DC Council should fully fund and ensure implementation of the Food Access, Equality and Justice recommendations of the Fair Budget Coalition for FY 2019. Headline: "Here is SNAP Gap: District Food Stamp Recipients Rarely Redeem Benefits at Farmers Markets, District recipients spent less than 1 percent of the city's \$224 million SNAP budget at farmers markets in 2015."

<https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/food/young-hungry/article/20978116/snap-gap-district-food-stamp-recipients-rarely-redeem-benefits-at-farmers-markets>). Hence, immediate action must be taken to maximize the Double the Value option of SNAP (Food Stamps), by promoting purchase at farmers markets, especially east of the river. All SNAP recipients should be made aware of this opportunity! DC buses/vans should be made available for Saturday visits to farmers markets. I will collaborate with the DC Food Policy Council, use existing and if necessary introduce new legislation to make implementation sooner rather than later. I will make this part of my action agenda for the first year of my office. I will strongly advocate for critical Public Oversight Hearings to find out why "money is still left on the table" and how to resolve this issue. In addition, see answer to next question.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a "central kitchen" where meals for DC's schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

A. Yes, I will vigorously support this goal, if necessary by using my office resources to bring outside grassroots pressure to bear making this a reality. The central kitchen should have processing opportunities, which will enable local food to be saved for consumption during the winter, be centrally located and offer community meals. The record of subcontracting food services is shockingly flawed, but should we be surprised, given the longstanding policy of prioritizing privatization of social programs instead of using our local government's resources to use for social good, a critical part of the neoliberal agenda of the Federal City Council, the lobby of the big developers and banks, which has dominated the policy thinking all too long of our Mayors and

Council. How to fund such a facility? I am confident that research will demonstrate this approach will require less revenue than the overpriced subcontracting services for inferior outcomes, funded by our revenue stream.

Q. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food, however, access to food isn't enough. Residents need to be educated about how the food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the City?

A. First, make available adequate staff and funding to make this outreach a reality. Nutrition education services should be provided in community centers, with staffing of nutritionists, and by mobile food vehicles going into the most nutritious food-deprived neighborhoods.

Elissa Silverman

Q. If elected to Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

I will continue to introduce and support public policy that makes food equity a reality in our city.

I have a track record as councilmember of advocating for food equity, starting with our schools. Good nutrition is fundamental to learning, and that's why I was so vocal about our school food contracts. I think we have an opportunity in our schools to not only serve our students healthy meals, but expose our students to healthy eating habits. Chartwells, our former school food contractor, was serving rotten, unhealthy, unappetizing food and that was clear from both feedback and the amount of food waste being generated. I remain concerned about Sodexo, though I am seeing some improvement. I am very supportive of programs like FoodPrints, which teach our youngsters about the food ecosystem and healthy eating habits. I am also very supportive of programs like the Joyful Food Markets, which give families access to fresh vegetables and fruit at no cost.

We need to eliminate the food deserts in our city, and we can do that by using economic incentives to bring healthy food markets to areas of our city where they would not go without some additional help. I think what Philip Sambol is doing with the Good Food Market on Rhode Island Avenue is a good example, which is why I was supportive of a tax abatement for the market, as well as the programs we have to incentivize corner store owners to carry fresh fruits and vegetables.

As chair of the Labor and Workforce Development Committee, I have been very supportive of culinary programs like DC Central Kitchen. In fact, in next year's budget, my committee is recommending the District give a \$1 million grant to DCCK so it can move into a new facility which will allow them to expand not only its culinary training program but its ability to provide healthy food to our schools and other institutions that serve our residents.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents? What will you do in your first year in office?

A. I support funding the current programs that address the food equity gap like FoodPrints, Joyful Food Markets, the Corner Store program, and grants to businesses like Good Food Market. I also support larger economic incentives to bring larger supermarkets in our food deserts on the east side of the city, particularly east of the Anacostia River. It is unacceptable that there are only three supermarkets for 150,000 residents east of the River when the residents of H Street NE have three markets within 10 blocks.

Q. The use of federal nutrition programs in the form of SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, senior and childcare meals bring in over \$350 million dollars to the District of Columbia, yet money is still left on the table. What will you do to make sure that every program that can take advantage of this federal funding is actually doing so?

A. The Council needs to do much better oversight. Every federal dollar left on the table is a misuse of funds. I have made oversight fundamental to my work on the Labor and Workforce Committee. As a result, we aren't seeing federal funds being left unspent anymore in workforce agencies.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a "central kitchen" where meals for DC's schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

A. I want to bring school food production in house, and I support the effort in next year's budget to have a pilot program to do this in up to 10 schools. My understanding is that many of our neighboring school systems have brought school food production in house, and it has made the meals served to our kids not only healthier but cheaper as well. Culinary arts is a major economic driver in our city. We need more infrastructure to support it, which is why my committee recommended the grant to DC Central Kitchen.

Q. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food, however, access to food isn't enough. Residents need to be educated about how the food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the City?

A. As I mentioned earlier, we need to start with our schools. For many of our kids in poverty, the meals they eat at school are the most nutritional they get. We have the opportunity to embed healthy eating habits in them that will influence them throughout life. We also have an opportunity to teach nutrition as part of our workforce development programs, such as TANF, SNAP E&T, and Project Empowerment. There is an economic benefit to families, as well as a health benefit. We know when people eat healthier food, they have more energy. That makes them better students, better parents, better workers.

### Candidates for Council Chair

Ed Lazere

Q. If elected to Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. Access to affordable and healthy food supports our health, the ability of children to succeed in school and of parents to succeed in their jobs or job search, and the well-being of people with disabilities and older residents. Beyond that, no one should suffer the indignity of being unable to afford to feed themselves or their family adequately. One in 7 DC households faces food insecurity, which is unacceptable.

Building a healthy and equitable food system starts with ensuring DC families have resources to meet their food needs, with government programs to fill gaps. I will invest in affordable housing -- so that all of a family's income doesn't go to rent -- and public benefits like TANF, and will take steps to raise the wages of low-income DC residents. I will work to maximize DC's use of federal food programs, such as simplifying the SNAP application for older residents and wider use of the CACFP program. I will support local food programs like Produce Plus, Joyful Food Markets, and nutrition programs for medically vulnerable residents (like Produce Rx).

An equitable food system must create easy access to healthy and affordable food. I want my first term to be judged on bringing healthy grocery options to Ward 7 and 8, expanding the Healthy Corners program, and supporting fresh produce in schools.

I will support the ability of DC families to grow their own food through community gardens, and help students learn the pleasures of growing food through school gardens.

An equitable food system nourishes not only our bodies but also our economy. From maximizing federal food dollars coming to DC, to supporting urban agriculture, to helping residents work in growing and processing food, a healthy food system is part of a healthy economy.

Q. Food justice and equity for all is a core value of many DC residents, what short term and long term solutions will you propose to ensure that healthy food is a human right for DC residents? What will you do in your first year in office?

A. Making food justice a reality starts with ensuring DC families have resources to meet their food needs, with support from government programs to fill any gaps. I commit to doubling DC's investment in affordable housing, which will not only support family stability but also help ensure that families are not forced to devote nearly all of their income to rent, which contributes to food insecurity. I also will work to raise the wages of DC residents, including eliminating the very low wage for tipped workers (just \$3.33.hour), helping part-time retail and restaurant workers get more hours and predictable schedules, and turning DC's mix of job training programs into a comprehensive system.

I also will work to strengthen DC's use of federal food programs, such as simplifying the SNAP application for older residents, better outreach for SNAP and other programs, and pushing for better use of the CACFP program. I will work to improve access to healthy food, by working to bring more grocery options to Ward 7 and 8 and supporting expansion of the Healthy Corners program.

I will support and expand programs to bring fresh produce to DC families, including Produce Plus, Joyful Food Markets, nutrition programs for medically vulnerable residents (like Produce Rx), and community and school gardens.

Q. The use of federal nutrition programs in the form of SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, senior and childcare meals bring in over \$350 million dollars to the District of Columbia, yet money is still left on the table. What will you do to make sure that every program that can take advantage of this federal funding is actually doing so?

A. As Chair, I will push the District to address the enormous problems in its DCAS computer eligibility system, which is overseen by the Department of Human Services. Serious flaws in DCAS system are making it hard for residents to apply for SNAP and to maintain their eligibility. I also will support SNAP outreach and simplifying the SNAP application for seniors, as well as outreach to working families, where SNAP participation in DC is especially low.

I also will work to get more child care centers and afterschool programs to take advantage of CACFP. This can include technical assistance to providers to help them navigate the program's paperwork and procedures. The goal should be to have every child care center and afterschool program participate in CACFP.

The District is a leader in providing school breakfast, with free breakfast as an option for all schools. The next step in ensuring that all students have access is to work to make sure every charter school LEA offers breakfast. In addition, DC is a leader in providing meals during the summer, yet the number of summer meals served is far lower than the number of meals served during the school year. I will work to make sure the transition from school year to summer is easier in DC schools.

Finally, I will work to support participation in WIC by making sure the transition to electronic benefits happens as soon as possible.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a "central kitchen" where meals for DC's schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

A. Bringing food service back into DCPS is an important goal. The District's experience with contractors has been troubled and costly. A DC kitchen could help the District provide better meals and create opportunities to train DC residents to work in food service. DC could partner with nonprofits like DC Central Kitchen to operate the facility. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food, however, access to food isn't enough. Residents need to be educated about how the

food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the City?

Helping all residents understand nutrition and how to prepare nutritious meals and snacks is an important part of making our city healthy. I will help make sure the District support nutrition education across the city and across the ages. This includes robust nutrition education in schools, ideally connected to school gardens. It includes use of nutritionists to work with older residents, in their homes or in senior wellness centers. It includes taking advantage of the opportunity provided by federal programs like SNAP and WIC to offer nutrition education to recipients seeking it.

**Phil Mendelson**

Q. If elected to the Council, how will you contribute to building a healthy and equitable food system in the District for the next four years? We hope that your response will address both food access and food as an economic driver.

A. I am committed to improving access to food – especially fresh food and produce – across the District and eliminating food deserts in the next four years. To that end I have supported several strategies: establishment of a Food Policy Council; budgeting for fresh food/produce programs (e.g., Produce Plus, Grocery Plus, Joyful Food Markets, Healthy Corners, and Produce Rx); adoption of the Grocery Store Restrictive Covenant Amendment Act of 2018; and, later this year, moving Bill 22-207 (East End Food Desert Elimination Act) which was introduced to bring grocery stores to Wards 7 and 8. Over the past year I have had numerous discussions with the Ward 7 Economic Development Council about what the District can do to attract grocery stores to East of the River, and I believe that government has an important role it can and should play through economic incentives. As a long term strategy, I intend to incorporate food policy issues into the city's Comprehensive Plan. Food justice is not just about equity, but public health, and access to healthy meals has a correlative effect on public education. Food deserts perpetuate poverty; conversely, attracting grocery stores (large or small) to these areas will stimulate economic development.

My history regarding food access dates to my first term when, working with DC Hunger Solutions and the Washington Food Bank, I forced a turnover in the Office of State Education because the District was worst in the nation in utilizing federal food supplement programs for school breakfasts and lunches.

Q. The use of federal nutrition programs in the form of SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, senior and childcare meals bring in over \$350 million dollars to the District of Columbia, yet money is still left on the table. What will you do to make sure that every program that can take advantage of this federal funding is actually doing so?

A. This is an opportunity for the Council to provide tougher oversight, by holding agencies accountable for underspending federal dollars. This is also an opportunity for the Council to partner with the Executive to assist in finding policy solutions or programmatic inefficiencies to maximize the utilization of federal dollars in the future. I strongly believe in working with the advocacy community – a councilmember cannot, on his/her own, know all the deficiencies across the breadth of government. I have an open door and am ready to work with the advocacy community (as I have done since my first term) to ensure dollars are not left on the table; federal nutrition programs are too important to public health and education, as I noted above.

Q. For years, there have been conversations about building a “central kitchen” where meals for DC’s schools and other institutions could be prepared. Would you support the creation of such a facility, and if so, how would you make it a reality?

A. Yes, I support the creation of such a facility. As I write this, the Council is considering inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2019 budget \$1.5 million for DC Central Kitchen related to its plan to build such a facility. As a matter of policy, it has been a mistake for the DC Public School system to have shut down its in-school cooking facilities. While I would like to see them return, a central kitchen is an important option because it would serve more than schools.

Q. We all agree that every DC resident has a right to access to healthy fresh food, however access to food isn’t enough. Residents need to be educated about how the food they eat impacts their health. Specifically, how would you increase nutrition education services in the city?

A. I’d start with the schools, because not only can students press their families to pursue healthy food options, but they will grow up with this knowledge. There are government programs, and many non-profits that already exist in the District that do

fantastic work in this area. However, often these programs are undercapitalized and need more resources to scale their services. I support increasing existing local grant dollars that can assist more community programs like DC Greens, DC Central Kitchen, Common Good City Farm, Martha's Table, and Capital Area Food Bank. Indeed, we are increasing funding for some of these programs in the pending budget. I also support putting local dollars into government programs such as Senior Nutrition Counseling (DCOA) and Healthy Tots Wellness (OSSE).