

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire 2020

Submission Note: The submission deadline for this questionnaire is ten days prior to the membership meeting where the candidate's endorsement will be considered. Please refer to the questionnaire deadline and meeting date here: [HYPERLINK](#)

"<https://waprogressives.org/endorsements/endorsement-policy-and-timeline/>"
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This questionnaire must be submitted to [HYPERLINK "mailto:waprogressives@gmail.com"](#)
waprogressives@gmail.com to be considered.

Explanatory Note: Our endorsements (and sometimes donations) are generally made to people running for the state legislature, municipal and county offices, public utility commissioners, etc. If you are running for such an office, you may wonder why we are asking questions about state-wide or national issues. The reason is that local officeholders are tomorrow's senators, representatives and governors. Even if you have nothing of the sort in mind now, you may easily feel differently in a few years. We want to put people into the pipeline from, as Howard Dean once put it, "the Democratic wing of the party." We are old fashioned enough to think that the New Deal and the Great Society were good ideas and modern enough to be up to speed on all the latest organizing methods and apps. If you have reservations about answering any of these questions, please explain why.

Candidate Name: Sherae Lascelles

Position Sought: 43rd District State Representative - Position 2

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Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes

Labor

Do you support raising state and federal minimum wages? To what level?

State and Federal minimum wages should meet the needs of workers everywhere. I pay workers in my business \$22/hour at entry. That seems like a good start.

Seattle and King County have banned sub-minimum wage for disabled folks/ people with disabilities. However, efforts to ban sub-minimum wage at the WA state level have not been successful due to systemic ableism and lack of understanding. If elected, I would also fight to abolish subminimum wage at the state level, and hopefully set a model to be followed at the Federal level as well.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

All workers should have access to simple and accessible ways to organize themselves and provide for each other. It is not a right to work, but a privilege for employers to have workers. I will work to ensure that workers can empower themselves and find agency to create models that fit their own needs, as I have been facilitating for years already.

Education

What is your opinion of high stakes testing? How would you change the way students and teachers are evaluated?

We must meet students where they are at. While a portion of students excel through testing metrics, so many more talented students are left behind through the high stakes systems that drive today's education field. Standardized tests are not an accessible option, so carefully crafted competency evaluations that allow students who learn and process in all ways, especially neuro-divergent humans, should be implemented in order to ensure educational equity.

I view teacher evaluations through a restorative justice lens. When harm has been done to a student because of the failure of a teacher, that teacher must be held accountable for their own failings, and they must work to better themselves in the classroom in order to mitigate further harm. This can be done through robust support of our teachers by way of increased compensation for continuing education, increased staffing, funding smaller student to teacher ratios, and supporting diversity of curriculum as well as broad consultation with the community the student belongs to in order to shed light on the processes that might benefit that student in a way that does not result in failure.

During the covid epidemic, we have an unfortunate, yet unique opportunity to reimagine the current model of testing and performance and performance; we can move from an antiquated model that requires students to jump through arbitrary hoops, and move to a model that allows all students to work on individual learning plans that leverage their strengths, support their needs, and supports the family systems that are now excessively burdened with at-home education in a manner that

disproportionately impacts full time working parents, single parent families, and families that economically underprivileged families. We must address these unique issues first. As students, families, and teachers are centered in this reimagining, we can then build equitable assessment tools for our education system.

Overall, the education system should be set up to be able to pivot in a manner that creates the most beneficial environment for success for each and every student, no matter their demographics, class, or abilities.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

One of the pillars that I have built my lifework and campaign platform upon is the ideal of community empowerment, an ideal that theoretically would align with the concept of the charter school. In theory, communities should be able to work locally to build programs and schools that meet specific community and educational needs. However, the way that these schools are currently set up do not allow for basic protections of students, such as LGBTQIA+ student population, oftentimes do not have the same resources as public schools to meet specialized learning needs for students of all abilities, and can even cause irrevocable harm, such as when students are not able to learn about basic sex education due to religious strictures.

I have personal experience attending a charter school in my hometown of Spokane. The charter school in Spokane was marketed to me and my guardians as the alternative to the alternative school when I needed that alternative because of issues attending school due to my home (or lack of home) life. They said I could go to this charter school for one hour a week and work at my own pace; I went.

I breezed through years of curriculum in a week. They had an extremely outdated curriculum and non engaging coursework that was essentially years below my aptitude level as I had come from all AP classes. Although it was billed as an alternative, I was not given work that matched my abilities. Further, when I went back into my public high school, none of the classes were standardized, so nothing could be picked up at the other school system. I had to take all the Junior Year AP classes again if I wanted them on my transcript when I took my Senior Year AP classes. Even at the time, it felt like I was being used for funding-- I was dollars to them, and they had no interest in my academic success.

The initial idea of charter schools was to siphon off public school funding to private schools that have their own standards. People can have their own education systems if they want, but call them what they are: private schools. All the marketing/ideas put into charter schools could and should be

resources and ideas that are invested into innovation for the public school system, that is, innovate the public education system so that it is better for everyone. We need to keep public funding for public education, and even expand public education funding into the higher education system.

Environment

How would you promote development of alternative energy and prevent privatization of natural resources?

We need a green revolution. If it were possible to have 100% renewable energy by x date, I would support it. However, until a system is established that would allow all people in all economic circumstances to meet requirements of green legislation by the state, we cannot push forward. The state must take on the responsibility of the climate crisis so it is not pushed on the consumer. Funding must go directly into the community as well as the research to build sustainable energy resources.

I will continue to work directly with affected populations — with emphasis on Black and Indigenous, First Nations communities — to provide the resources needed to clean up environments, restoration, and support access to food sovereignty. I will increase State funding for green infrastructure projects, including green union jobs, and work within communities to establish the necessary support mechanisms to allow for hyper-local responses to the climate emergency.

At the municipal level in Seattle, as well as at the federal level, there are powerful coalitions forming Green New Deal Initiatives. I want to be the bridge to connect these larger movements with more local movements so that Washington state can lead the nation in what is possible when we empower communities through green economic investments.

What are your plans for increasing investments in renewable forms of energy production? What types of renewable energy do you favor most?

As above, I will center the needs of BIPOC communities, and increase the funding to the scale of need. It's not my place to say which types of renewable energy are most beneficial within those

communities, but through authentic community engagement, I will ensure the needs of the people are met.

Finance/Taxation

What would you do to facilitate implementation of public banking and monetary reform?

I will work to ensure Washington State creates a public bank to help fund community entrepreneurs, public infrastructure projects, and reduce the debt-burden on local governments. I will not hold back on holding finance accountable for racist and discriminatory protocols and barriers, as I have experienced many of them myself.

What solutions do you propose to fix WA State's highly regressive tax system?

Tax the rich. They feed on us like leeches, and it is time for them to contribute to the health of this ecosystem through capital gains, income, and wealth taxes simultaneously.

Health Care/Retirement

Explain your position (for or against) Medicare for All (aka single payer health care) in terms of the effect on local citizens, service providers, and government.

I am for medicare for all; it is the first step to access to equitable care. Access to healthcare is a human right. Whatever work we have to put in to make that right a reality for everyone in the state, there should be no qualms to jumping through every hoop to do so, immediately.

I will work to provide reproductive rights and care for people of all gender and sexuality, address and repair racial disparities in healthcare, including reproductive care, and prepare and provide the pathways to help Washington easily move to a federal single-payer system, keeping our healthcare running smoothly as it transitions to something more just and equitable.

What policies do you oppose and what policies would you promote with respect to Social Security and Medicare?

Black and Indigenous People of Color have been existing in multi-generational homes and providing community care for our elders since time immemorial. Lessons borne of these practices are required when considering elder care. It is harmful to bind our elders to spaces that are similar to the carceral system. Any cuts to social security and medicare are antithetical to ensuring our elders are treated with the respect they deserve in our communities.

Security/Public Safety

How would you act to stop the militarization of local police forces and establish civilian oversight of law enforcement?

Simple. Divest in policing. Invest in Black and Brown Communities. Free them all. See my work.

I am currently working alongside members of community within the [Decriminalize Seattle Collective](#) in order to ensure that the health and well-being of BIPOC communities are centered in the discussion of how society moves forward without a militarized police presence, and will continue that work in Olympia.

I am an abolitionist first. I seek to Decriminalize Sex Work and revoke harmful Nordic Model based laws. I will leverage Washington's political power to advocate for an end to SESTA-FOSTA, and I will push for the requirement mandatory, statewide police trainings on how to interact with the sex worker population in a way that doesn't treat autonomous professionals as sub-human and criminal.

How would you preserve national security while protecting American's right to privacy?

It is best practice to utilize end-to-end encrypted software for communication. Under current federal laws, no American citizen is ensured privacy. Adopting security culture within community is the only way to provide a modicum of privacy. Federal agencies that can monitor citizens are a harm to community, and only exacerbate the inequities within. Surveillance culture must be abolished.

The state should leverage its position to fight dangerous legislation at the federal level such as SESTA/FOSTA and the EARNIT Act--- which seek to violate our first amendment rights under the guise of protecting vulnerable populations.

General

Do you consider yourself a Democrat? Do you consider yourself a progressive? Why?

I have been a paying member of the 43rd LD Democrats. I do consider myself very progressive.

I am a Seattle People's Party Candidate, and my actions speak for themselves. I have put my life on the line in order to ensure vital services to the most marginalized communities time and time again. Bandages will never be the answer to systemic oppression. I have and will continue to work within the frameworks of harm reduction, mutual aid, and community care regardless of party affiliation.

What parts, if any, of the [HYPERLINK](https://www.wa-democrats.org/sites/wadems/files/documents/Washington%20State%20Democrats%20-%20Platform%20-%2020180616.pdf)

"<https://www.wa-democrats.org/sites/wadems/files/documents/Washington%20State%20Democrats%20-%20Platform%20-%2020180616.pdf>" [Washington State Democratic Party Platform](https://www.wa-democrats.org/sites/wadems/files/documents/Washington%20State%20Democrats%20-%20Platform%20-%2020180616.pdf) ([click link to view](https://www.wa-democrats.org/sites/wadems/files/documents/Washington%20State%20Democrats%20-%20Platform%20-%2020180616.pdf)) do you disagree with? Why?

The Washington State Democratic platform does not go far enough. We can do more.

If this is not your first election, what other offices have you run for? If it is your first campaign, what other campaigns (candidate or issue) have you participated in? What did you learn from those campaigns?

I applied for the Seattle City Council District 4 vacancy after Rob Johnson left. I learned what matters.

Have you ever been a precinct committee officer or held other Democratic organization offices?

No.

What single issue is the most important motivator for your run for office? What proposals do you have for dealing with it?

Decriminalization of survival and poverty and its intersection with disability justice is my most important motivator.

Why am I doing this? Because my communities are barely surviving, and no policy alone can change that. We don't just need new leadership; we need a culture shift. My communities cannot afford to be ignored any longer just because their existence makes us acknowledge uncomfortable truths. In a district in which both multi-millionaires and a growing homeless youth population exist side-by-side, Sherae's platform champions the values of mutual aid, harm reduction, and representation of the most intersectionality marginalized.

As a survivor and an abolitionist, I've witnessed first hand the failures of our institutions, watching as the system traps people in poverty, and destroys low-income communities. I know how these institutions allow young folks to drown in debt and slip into homelessness; the ways they create barriers to higher education; their active criminalization of those on the precarious edge of survival. I have a long history of successfully building organizations and structures, culminating most recently in the founding of two crucial nonprofits: People of Color Sex Worker Outreach Program (PoC SWOP) and Green Light Project (GLP). PoC SWOP is an advocacy and community building organization for sex workers of color, and Green Light Project provides direct outreach harm reduction at the intersection of sex work and drug use. I will bring this experience of creating beneficial systems of community care to my work in Olympia.

Are there also important secondary issues? Describe your approach to implementing solutions?

We are in a time of crisis.

Despite the region's wealth, there is unbelievable suffering in our district. Countless folks are unsheltered, many are barely making rent, and others are criminalized for their attempts to survive. Human services are inadequate and inaccessible; cultures and communities are being uprooted to make room for investors; adults are sharing small studio apartments so they can afford to keep the lights on.

This isn't acceptable, and frankly, it never has been. That we have gotten to this point is an indictment of our current officials and a clear sign of how broken our systems are. Instead of empowering communities to create solutions using their local knowledge of their actual needs, the State spends taxpayer dollars paying wealthy consultants to draft policies that have largely served to increase harm, reduce equity, destroy lower-income neighborhoods, and leave us with a city and region only accessible to the privileged.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

At the core of our politics is the belief in harm-reduction; the idea that part of solving any problem is first stopping the problem from getting worse, and that includes ensuring that the communities most impacted have a real voice in the process toward solution.

This is a vision in which policy is written with the guidance of those most affected by our broken systems. Ours is a vision which views social justice as more than just asking marginalized communities to provide representation at photo-ops, but actually giving them political power, a platform, and a megaphone. We understand that people know their own lives and problems better than anyone, and they should be supported, not sold-out or lectured. People don't need more 'incentives'; they need resources.

Our campaign believes that the role of government is to empower, not constrain. That means dismantling the structures that keep us from thriving and that criminalize our very survival. That means acknowledging the actual scope of our crises and bringing to the table the voices of the intentionally ignored (working class folks, those with both hidden and visible disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, QTPOC, our undocumented neighbors, sex workers, and more). Our cities are full of hidden stories of love and loss, desperate survival and raucous laughter, never heard because they're from lives that don't fit within the discourse of 'civil' society. Radical authenticity is about acknowledging the world as it actually is, not as the gatekeepers want it.

People over Profit. Equity and Accessibility. Mutual Aid and Community-care.

If you are running in a heavily Republican area, do you have a reasonable chance at winning? If not, how do you plan to use your candidacy to build ongoing connections among local people who share progressive values?

N/A