

SHSC 2023 Human Services Candidate Questionnaire

Seattle Human Services Coalition (SHSC) 2023 Candidate Questions

Email *

ballard206@gmail.com

What is your name? *

Dan Strauss

For which position are you running? *

Seattle City Council District 1

Seattle City Council District 2

Seattle City Council District 3

Seattle City Council District 4

Seattle City Council District 5

Seattle City Council District 6

Seattle City Council District 7

King County Council District 2

King County Council District 4

King County Council District 6

King County Council District 8

Other:

What is your understanding of Human Services? Which Human Service Providers are most familiar with? *

Human services were founded to help people and communities meet their needs from food security, to healthcare, to preventing or transitioning out of homelessness, or stabilizing people experiencing homelessness. I work weekly with ETS - Reach, PDA - LEAD and Co-LEAD, Vehicle Resident Outreach, DESC - HOST, and Ballard Food Bank. I work regularly with Chief Seattle Club, Phinney Neighborhood Center and Greenwood Senior Center, UHeights Center, LIHI, and Sound Foundations. I am aware of many others including Rainier Valley Foodbank, FamilyWorks, Neighborcare, West Seattle Foodbank, Jewish Family Services, North Helpline, United Way, Urban League, Roots Young Adult Shelter, YouthCare, Treehouse, and so many others which I know I have missed in this list.

.....

What do you think is the root cause of poverty? What do you think the role of Government has in *
addressing institutionalized poverty?

The root cause of poverty is the lack of basic needs, especially housing and services, education and employment opportunities. The government has a responsibility to provide basic needs and services to all residents.

What is your understanding of racism and its impacts? What do you see as your role in *
addressing systemic racism? What solutions, ideas, or examples of policies would you offer
toward ending the impact of racism and racial injustice?

Racism is permeated throughout society in different ways and fashion; from zoning, to healthcare, to education, to banking, and to the criminal justice system. I commit to continue to do the work to understand and heal the scars racism has left on our system of governance and in society. Time does not heal wounds, taking healing actions heals wounds. I have fully supported the Legislative Departments work on Race and Social Justice Initiative and am working to collaborate with the RSJI team to address institutional barriers and reduce race based disparities in our city.

As an elected official, what steps would you take to understand community needs? What is your *
approach to partnerships between communities and government?

I meet regularly with both service providers and branches of government providing services to understand the needs and work to implement solutions to meet people's needs. I host weekly office hour meetings to meet with constituents, community groups and stakeholders at times and places that are convenient for them. By meeting regularly with providers I am able to use my office to help achieve short term, day to day needs of the people they serve, and work to make policy changes to address systemic barriers to meeting people's basic needs. My approach is to create direct lines between government departments and staff with the providers and stakeholders who serve our community. When there are gaps between partners inside and outside the government, I work to resolve the issues with the focus on meeting people's needs.

What do you believe are the root causes of the on-going homelessness crisis? *

There are two main causes of our on-going homelessness crisis: not enough housing and not enough service providers with access to resources to meet people's needs where they are or to heal from past experiences.. Seattle's housing production has lagged behind demand for decades, our growing city needs more housing, and especially housing that is permanently affordable. The vast income inequality in our city has fueled increased housing costs, leaving many people behind. We need to pay our service workers living wages so that we can attract and retain people to do important and challenging work. They also need access to the resources to address the situations of the people they serve.

What would you say are some examples of metrics of success when it comes to the homelessness crisis? *

A key metric of success is the number of people moving into shelter and transitioning into permanent housing. Along the way, people and their belongings need to be respected and protected. We need to address homelessness without sweeps, get people inside and straight into permanent housing. My work at Woodland Parks resolved encampments without sweeps and helped restructure the way Seattle addresses homelessness. I have helped shape expanding the Unified Care Team in a way that helps meet people's needs and implements the requests of service providers to ensure clients are taken care of. These metrics of success include increased trash collection, hygiene stations, and pump outs.

Survivors of domestic and sexual violence frequently enter the criminal legal system due to their victimization, but criminal legal responses are problematic for most survivors for a variety of reasons. This is especially true for Black, Indigenous, and other survivors of color, refugee and immigrant survivors, and gender non-conforming survivors. What do you see as the role of the criminal legal system in responding to gender-based violence? Do you know of any community-based alternatives to responding to violence and how you would promote or support them? *

The criminal legal system regularly fails survivors and BIPOC, other survivors of color, refugee and immigrant survivors and gender non-conforming survivors are disproportionately harmed by these failures. I support community-based alternatives for reporting and recovering from gender-based violence. We also must do more to support violence prevention community organizations to build a community free of violence at all. Community violence intervention programs play a critical role in meeting people where they are and giving them the support they need and avoid conflict. Community Passageways, Choose 180, and the umbrella of Regional Peace Keepers Collective all implement prevention, response, and healing from violence. We need to support these organizations and their programs with funding and resources. Their programs should be scaled to prevent and respond to places in our city which need to increase public safety.

At least one-quarter to one-third of people in our community will experience gender-based violence in their lifetimes, yet solutions and responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking are significantly under-funded. Given this, what specific solutions would you bring forward to address this systemic shortfall? *

I added funding in this year's budget to expand gender-based violence mobile advocacy services, with priority given to addressing new or pre-existing gaps in services for survivors facing disproportionate challenges and marginalization. I continue to advocate for the solutions which organizations responding to gender based violence request.

According to the GAO nearly half of all people over 55+ and approaching retirement have no retirement savings. When individuals begin to think about retirement, approximately 50% of them will have to depend solely on Social Security as they have no pensions. This is a big factor in the reason that more older adults continue working past expected retirement. What are some of your priorities in tackling elder poverty and ensuring that our older adults are taken care of? What are some actions elected officials can take to help prevent poverty for older adults? *

I am right now working to update and improve the city's Utility Discount Program. Currently the program has a requirement to re-certify income monthly and there is a cliff of eligibility. I am working to increase the use and eligibility for the program by streamlining the process for certification and stepping down eligibility thresholds so that if you make an extra dollar over the requirements you are still served.

What do you consider as some of the priorities for older adults living in the Seattle/King County areas? *

Affordability - as prices continue to increase older adults are often priced out of the communities they have lived in their whole life. We need to continue addressing the housing affordability issues in Seattle. I was born and raised in Ballard and my neighbors were school teachers, welders, plumbers, electricians, and fishermen. The Ballard I grew up in was affordable for working families, but the family I grew up in would not be able to afford to live in the Ballard of today. This has changed because the city did not do a good enough job preventing displacement while creating the density our city needs. Affordable housing has not been focused in this area because land is cheaper elsewhere. This issue is very front of mind for me and I see many other neighborhoods that are on the cusp of experiencing this same displacement.

We need to spend the extra dollars to make our city affordable for people who have lived here their whole lives. I will focus on the equitable distribution of housing across Seattle focusing on the areas with threat of displacement and high levels of recent displacement. Preventing displacement will be the key to success for additional zoning changes in our city and I am working with OPCD now to better equip our tool box with options to keep people in the communities they have lived their whole life and ensure their kids can remain there too.

City officials and nonprofit leaders agree that wages for human service workers do not reflect the education required, difficulty, or value of their work to build well-being. A 2022 City of Seattle funded study conducted by the University of Washington School of Social Work found that King County human service workers are paid at least 37 percent less than workers with comparable skill sets in other industries. The report provides several evidence-based recommendations that the City of Seattle can implement now to begin closing the gap. *

The primary near-term recommendation in the report is an immediate seven percent increase to all City of Seattle funded human service contracts. This represents the minimum level of investment needed in the short term to address high rates of turnover and align human service worker pay with the rest of the labor market.

Will you support and prioritize funding for a seven percent increase in city-funded human service contracts to address systemic wage inequity?

Yes, absolutely. I have supported similar proposals in the past and will continue to support cost of living increases that keep wages paired to the cost of living in our city.

Over the next few years, the City of Seattle will have an opportunity to build on these investments and support the substantial wage increases recommended by this report. We call on City leaders to work in concert with other public and private funders to identify the revenue necessary to pay the full cost of providing essential, lifesaving human services to all Seattle residents. *

Will you commit to partnering with SHSC and other human service funders to secure the additional revenue necessary to close the 37 percent wage gap that human service workers face?

Yes, absolutely.

Many childcare workers struggle to afford childcare. Childcare workers in our coalition hesitate to accept promotions because they are concerned that higher pay might disqualify them from receiving a childcare subsidy that they themselves rely on. This is causing quality childcare providers to leave the profession altogether. In a recent survey of former King County childcare workers, one of the main reasons cited for leaving the field was the need to provide affordable childcare to their own children. A lack of access to affordable childcare has ironically created a shortage of qualified early learning professionals. What solutions would you offer to make childcare more affordable and incentivize childcare worker retention? *

We need to expand affordable childcare programs, and we need to make sure childcare workers are being paid a living wage and increase minimum wage. Last year Seattle and King County gave \$7 million in one-time bonuses to local childcare workers, and there have been many efforts at the state level to pass legislation to expand access to affordable childcare programs and strengthen our state's childcare workforce. I will continue to work to give childcare workers the support they need with bonuses, retention payments, and student loan forgiveness.

What are some ways that you would work to increase support available to folks struggling with mental health needs? *

I expanded funding for the Mobile Crisis Team and have regularly supported adding resources to places people need them. Before being elected I worked as staff to ensure NOVA High School had a health center in their school. Previously students were only able to access health care across the street at Garfield High School or a mile away, up a hill at the World School. By opening the health care center in the school we were able to provide these very services where students were comfortable accessing them. It is important to ask, listen, and act on recommendations from the organizations providing mental health services and from the people who use them.

Food banks and free meal providers in the region have always struggled to meet the needs of the public. During the pandemic there was an increase in resources to local food banks. As the pandemic has waned, the resources are also receding, yet the demand for food bank services has increased, especially with cuts to SNAP benefits and inflation. What solutions would you offer to continue to meet the needs of people struggling with food insecurity and ensuring that neighborhoods across the City of Seattle have equitable access to the healthy, culturally familiar food? How do you ensure reliable food support is available despite a much-varied landscape of hunger relief organizations and mutual aid groups? *

In my first year in office I expanded the Fresh Bucks program so that people can expand their food budget and choose the foods they want. This is an important program which I protect and have expanded because addressing food insecurity is a basic responsibility of the government to meet people's basic needs. I continue to partner with food banks to advocate for and expand funding for needed staffing, food, delivery, and access.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms