

SHSC 2023 Human Services Candidate Questionnaire

Seattle Human Services Coalition (SHSC) 2023 Candidate Questions

Email *

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What is your name? *

Joy Hollingsworth

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? *

I understand human services as a holistic suite of services aimed at meeting individual and community needs. Human services are critical to reaching my campaign's priorities of safe and healthy communities, affordable and stable housing, small business and economic recovery, youth enrichment and early learning and sustainable environment.

Key to my upbringing was human services. My grandparents and parents were all human services providers. My mother worked with King County Housing Authority for over 30 years increasing access to affordable housing in our region and my father working at Seattle Parks & Recreation for over 30 years ensuring that parks in both North and South Seattle were clean and welcoming for all. My grandfather was the first Black teacher at Queen Anne High School and my grandmother, Dorothy Hollingsworth, truly inspired me to act on behalf of marginalized and underserved people in our city. She was the loudest voice for the underdog and the first African-American woman to serve on a school board in the state of Washington, and helped guide our city during the desegregation of Seattle Public Schools.

Following my family's footsteps, my career has been rooted in human services ranging from youth programming to food justice to climate resiliency. I currently work for a nonprofit on the food access team which supports over 400 food banks, meal programs, and schools. Prior to that, I worked as the Operating Officer and Policy Analyst for my family's cannabis/hemp business, Hollingsworth Farms, one of Washington's few independent, Black-owned, cannabis farms.

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

Working in food access, I see daily how our policies exclude people from access to resources and stability, and perpetuate cycles of poverty. It is unacceptable anywhere, but especially so in a city as wealthy as ours. I don't believe that there is a single root cause of poverty, which is why I also believe that solutions to address poverty need to be multi-pronged and interdisciplinary. Governments have a responsibility to address institutionalized poverty and remedy their impacts which we see in today's very present disparities.

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 and its impacts are informative to my life, from the community that I grew up with in the historic Central District neighborhood to the way I run my campaign. From a young age, the importance of equity has shaped my values and commitment to strong, inclusive communities. I witnessed my grandmother, Dorothy Hollingsworth, a bridge builder and visionary, use a sense of humor to find common ground, open doors, and open minds. I am running for Seattle City Council because I see local politics as a powerful vehicle for change and progress that can make a tangible impact for my community.

I plan to continue my family's tradition of fighting for our community's most marginalized by working with organized labor to decriminalize poverty. We must invest in solutions to the root causes that help protect communities of color and provide robust resources from mental health services, food access points and substance use services to mutual-aid groups and community organizations to create a holistic approach to meet our basic community needs.

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

Over the last 39 years, I have seen how local policy has impacted our community and the people that have fallen through those gaps. I want to prioritize our basic needs for essential government and bring transparent access for District 3 residents. I will provide tangible goals to measure progress and help amplify voices that have been historically excluded from City Hall decisions.

I am an active participant in community groups like the SPD African American Community Advisory Council and am engaged with leaders from community groups like King County Equity Now, Byrd Barr Place and Africatown. I aim to be both accountable and accessible to all communities which I represent. On the City Council, I will continue to build on my record of leadership and commitment to understand and represent the needs of our city and protect the rights of BIPOC, LGBTQIA, and other communities that have long found a home in our neighborhoods and City.

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

I don't think that there is one answer to explain our housing affordability and homelessness crisis, but I think the biggest contributor is a lack of affordable housing at every level. I believe that our economy driven development policies over decades allowed developers to profit at the expense of sufficient affordable housing stock. I believe underfunding of social services including behavioral health care, substance use counseling, and permanent supportive housing, and the caring workforce required to meet those demands. For these reasons, the solutions to addressing housing affordability and homelessness also need to be robust, multi-pronged and regional.

Our city is expensive and only getting more unaffordable for renters, working people, and families looking to purchase a home and build generational wealth. To make Seattle a city we can all call home, we must support individuals and families to meet their basic needs of stable housing through policies that expand investments in permanent supportive and emergency housing, encourage pathways to homeownership for historically excluded communities, and implement more thoughtful planning of multi-family housing options.

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

There are more than 13,000 neighbors living unsheltered or in housing instability in Seattle alone with Washington's youth experiencing some of the highest rates of homelessness in the country. Whether you are renting, looking to purchase a home, aging in place or are experiencing homelessness, we have to think of different pathways to help people obtain the basic need for stable housing.

The passage of City of Seattle Initiative 135 and the King County Prop 1 Crisis Cares Center Levy are examples of successful policies that will inherently have positive impacts on our housing affordability and homelessness crisis. The Point-In-Time (PIT) count is another metric that we can use to measure success. In recent years, we have seen a reduction with veteran and youth and young adult populations that are experiencing homelessness.

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 has a responsibility to protect and seek justice for all members of the community, but especially those that are underrepresented, targeted, and overlooked, and should maintain a consistent and fair framework for accountability in response to all acts of gender-based violence. Incidents should be promptly investigated, holding offenders accountable for their actions and prioritizing the protection and recovery of victims.

The HSD Mayor's Office on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (MODVS) has established a community-based response to gender-based violence that I fully support. With a diversity of programming ranging from coordinated systems response to therapeutic services, they work with community providers and key stakeholders to improve the regional response to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other crimes of coercive control.

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? *

To address issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse, we must prepare first responders with the proper training to provide culturally-responsive and trauma-informed care. We must invest in the resources and capacity to support victims; to hear their stories and improve their experience. This includes the provision of harm reduction and strength-based approaches.

Solutions should be implemented at multiple levels including domestic violence intervention programs and those that prevent cycles of violence. The role of victim's advocates and other sources of education of the resources should also be expanded so that anyone in need can get help.

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? *

Elected officials have a responsibility to prevent poverty for older adults and economic circumstances that force them to work past retirement age. First and foremost, social security benefits need to be protected to ensure that older adults have a liveable income safeguarded beyond retirement. This alone, however, is not enough. We must also prioritize and implement policies that ensure accessible and affordable housing and healthcare. Elected officials can take action to help prevent poverty for older adults by supporting funding and initiatives for caregivers and community organizations that provide care and advocate for older adults.

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

I have prioritized outreach and connection with our older adults living in Seattle. They deserve the ability to age in place and to age with dignity. Some of the priorities that I hear from our older adult neighbors are:

- A community that encourages and supports healthy aging with community organizations that provide social support and an overall improvement in the quality of life;
- Access to quality and affordable healthcare, homecare services, and wellness support;
- Adequate infrastructure that includes easily accessible transportation and communities that are age friendly; and
- Ability to age in place.

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, I would support and prioritize funding for a seven percent increase in city-funded human services contracts to address systemic wage inequity. It is critical that we adequately fund our service providers and staff our initiatives to ensure that we meet our shared goals.

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, I will partner with SHSC and other human service funders to secure additional revenue to close the wage gap in human services.

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? *

Caregiving work is universally underappreciated and undervalued—likely because it is done largely by women and people of color—however that work is at the center of healthy and thriving communities. In order to recruit and retain more workers to the caring workforce, I believe we must invest in adequate staffing, training, family wages, and the protections to allow workers to do their jobs safely and effectively. Budgets and policies must reflect this, and support the infrastructure required including training and certification, and the spaces required for caregiving work. Finally we have to create a culture change where this work is highly valued and caregiving workers work with dignity and respect.

I am committed to ensuring that all families have access to the necessary resources for providing their children with the best start in life. I will collaborate with early learning programs in Seattle to secure more funding and broaden access in marginalized communities. Additionally, I will advocate for policies that aid working families, such as paid family leave, affordable housing, and a living wage, to tackle the root causes of the issue. Prioritizing early learning and affordable childcare is essential to improve educational outcomes for children and enhance our economy's long-term viability. If elected, I will prioritize these efforts to ensure that every family in Seattle has access to high-quality early learning programs and affordable childcare.

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

One of the top priorities in my campaign is safe and healthy neighborhoods. Behavioral health services and funding are essential to achieving that vision and play a key role in holistic responses and solutions to meet the basic needs of our community. I believe behavioral health and treatment for substance use disorder should be accessible on demand and affordable, alongside other social services including food access points, gun violence prevention programming, youth enrichment and mutual aid. Criminalizing behavioral health crises is not a solution. I was proud to support King County Prop 1 and look forward to the implementation of programming to get neighbors in crisis the care they need, while at the same time investing in our behavioral health workforce.

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? *

As someone who works in the food access space, I am intimately familiar with the increasing need for community resources to meet the growing food insecurity across our region. To continue to meet the needs of those struggling with food insecurity and ensure equitable access to healthy and cultural foods, several solutions must be considered, including:

- Increase funding to current government food assistance programs that specifically help improve outreach, reach more individuals, and provide more resources.
- Expand collaborations with more community organizations and allocate funding towards meal programs, food banks, and coalitions that support the distributions of culturally specific food.
- Coordinate support services and providers to efficiently and effectively meet the holistic needs of those experiencing food insecurity.

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