

# SHSC 2023 Human Services Candidate Questionnaire

Seattle Human Services Coalition (SHSC) 2023 Candidate Questions

Email \*

info@teamteresa.org

What is your name? \*

Teresa Mosqueda

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 are essential to a healthy, thriving region. Human Services provides people with the programs, facilities, staff, resources and so much more that's needed to meet some of our most basic needs. Human Services is also essential for communities that are too often pushed to the margins, including our poor, sick, elderly, and/or houseless neighbors. Human Services Providers can offer a number of services including education around free and discounted resources, food resources, and assisting elders and people with disabilities in finding programs and financial discounted programs, events, services, and more. This work is paramount and truly a vital part of the overarching work needed to create livable and affordable spaces for all.

.....

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, or causes, of poverty are capitalism and white supremacy. Capitalism creates the conditions for workers to be exploited and increases a sense of individualism and consumerism that's ultimately detrimental to everyone, including our most vulnerable communities. White supremacy maintains the racial wealth gap and plays a key role in the overall lack of access to basic services, education, and employment opportunities, particularly for folks of color, especially Black communities. There is inadequate access to food and—while our region is privileged to have clean water—often a poor or limited access to clean water. Capitalism and white supremacy create the conditions for the impacts of poverty to grow including lack of good jobs, lack of good education, interpersonal conflict, climate change, social and racial injustice, lack of access to food and water, lack of infrastructure (particularly green infrastructure), lack of robust government support, lack of good healthcare, inflation and so much more. Unfortunately, the government, particularly the federal government, has failed us many, many, many times when it comes to addressing poverty. The very institutions themselves have bred and are upheld by capitalism and white supremacy. This is why it is essential to have a strong local government that's for the people, by the people. Local government, in particular a county council, in which I hope to be elected, can help people better meet their basic needs through accessible and reliable public transportation, public safety, land use zoning and permitting to expedient the growing need for affordable housing, human services, parks, and broadband access. Increasing funding and support in these categories and more can better meet people's material needs, give them more self-determination, and give them the access and support they need.

---

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 still very much alive and present, and changes must be made to ensure the wellbeing of all community members. My approach is to make sure we are leading with the lived experiences of those affected by injustice and inequality. As a woman of color, I have rejected the status quo policy-making that lists our issues on the back burner. Policies that invest in and lift up communities of color, particularly Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, can be the catalyst of repairing centuries of wrongs. I've dedicated my career to bringing diverse perspectives to the table, building broad coalitions, and getting results. This is one way to rebuild trust among communities who have underserved and underrepresented for too long. It's also the way to achieve real and lasting results: through community-driven solutions. I am continually working to build trust by bringing people into the policy making tables, having policy ideas generated from those with lived experience, and breaking down barriers in terms of access and language used to develop the policy. Often folks fear change, especially in housing, zoning and transportation because public policy in these areas has divided communities, marginalized folks, and ignored concerns. My approach to policy making is an attempt to be restorative and bring those most often left out into the decision making process.

Serving in public office during the time of moments of racial reckoning and a global pandemic has brought even more urgency to my push for transformational policies to protect front line workers, prioritize affordable housing and stability for working families, many of whom belong to the BIPOC community, to ensure access to jobs that are not at the expense of workers' health or our environment's health. Racial justice is extremely important to me and is at the forefront of my campaign, as well as any decisions I make in office. My goal is to include Black, Brown, Indigenous communities' and other communities of color's priorities during the policy making process so no one is speaking for another community and to direct funding into the hands of those affected because they know best how to serve their needs.

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

Building coalitions has been a huge part of my work in Seattle City Council so we can tackle pressing issues by following the lead of those most affected. I am proud of the work done with community as we fought for and won statewide policy change. As our region continues to move through the impacts of COVID, I will continue to prioritize partnership in policy making and budget advocacy to make sure our most vulnerable populations, especially immigrants and refugees, have the investments and policy solutions to create a more equitable and just local economy and community post pandemic.

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

The ongoing pandemic and its lingering impacts has only exacerbated the crisis of so many residents living unsheltered in our region. This is a crisis for our community members without a home and a crisis for our entire population that requires immediate and compassionate solutions. It makes no sense to sweep people from one location to another when what they need is shelter and housing. It makes no sense to have our firefighters and first responders serving as the primary care providers for the unsheltered in our streets. We know homelessness is a housing problem; it's also an affordability problem, a policy problem, and, most of all, a problem of inaction.

I will continue to advance policy solutions that recognize most folks who are living unsheltered need holistic health care and case management services, many have experienced trauma, and that too many of us are just one paycheck or health crisis away from being unsheltered ourselves. The combination of people working in insecure jobs, the lack of affordable housing options, and the unmet need for health related services all create barriers to having safe and secure housing and those faced with homelessness have grown dramatically since COVID.

As your King County Councilmember, I will work with social service providers and case managers to invest in housing first models that provide a safe place to live, a warm bed, a shower, a place to rest and recover—and then get those who need it in treatment and case management needed. This includes supporting permanent supportive housing and shelters for individuals, women, families, and seniors who may have co-occurring disorders. I pledge to work with my colleagues in the public health and human services to enact proven best practices so we can arrive at compassionate and health-based solutions for our homeless community that:

- Redirect funding to provide additional medical providers, case managers, mental health providers, and substance abuse counselors to help get individuals the care they need;
- Create warm handoff hotlines and a 24-hour nurse line for shelters and supportive housing locations to get the targeted assistance needed: open beds, housing options, prescription refills, appointments, aftercare, wound care, etc;
- Add more Health One mobile health units to provide low-acuity treatment on demand to the unsheltered in the 5 ladder areas that our fire department serves;
- Buy apartments, hotels, and other multi-family structures on the market to convert to housing and shelter options; stand up more tiny house encampments to get folks into sanctioned encampments with services;
- Scale up sanitation services, like public restrooms, handwashing and more garbage pick up around our city.

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

The biggest metric of success would be to get folks into permanent homes. This would mean ensuring affordable housing is permanently affordable and people have the resources and job training needed to support this success. We need partners across the region and more progressive revenue to invest at the scale of need in housing, shelter, health, transit, infrastructure investments, job training, worker protections, and so much more.

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 importance and the vulnerability of the public health system is on full display since the pandemic hit our region. This includes vulnerabilities in our systems due to gaps in resources and services for behavioral health as we see more people with compounding health crises experiencing homelessness and a lack of places to care for them. King County is the jurisdiction with purview and oversight of the public health system and behavioral health.

The shadow pandemic—referring to the increase in gender-based violence following COVID-19 lockdowns—created and still creates unsafe environments for all, especially Black, Indigenous, and other folks and survivors of color, refugee and immigrant survivors, and gender non-conforming people and survivors. By addressing some of the root causes of violence, particularly gender-based violence, we can begin to truly make our communities and our region safer.

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? \*

My priorities are to:

- Increase funding and support for Public Health Seattle/King County to have a stable workforce and adequate resources necessary to address our compounding health crises today and the possible public health emergencies of the future.
- Address gun violence, youth violence, interpersonal violence as the public health crisis that they are by supporting local communities and jurisdictions to have direct and early investments.
- Increase access and expand gun awareness programming and money for dispute resolution programming that can educate youth on the severe risks and dangerous consequences of having a gun at school coupled with direct funding to community based programming for cultural and linguistically appropriate services.
- Increase access to care by investing in behavioral health services and workers, support human service providers who care for those who are experiencing homelessness or living in supportive housing by creating wage parity and creating career ladders into public health service.

These investments are more important than ever, as we see the shadow pandemic of isolation and depression compound the public health crisis of addiction and the looming global pandemic.

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've heard from our elders that there is growing concern about living on fixed incomes as the cost of living rises. We can ensure older adults in our community are well taken care of by funding programs and resources that support their livelihood post retirement. We can also ensure working folks have good union jobs so some of the burden can be relieved with access to pensions.

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

I'm going to start first with housing. We need to make sure that there is more housing, especially for our elders, especially for folks with disabilities, and for our community that is going to retire soon. We need to make sure that that housing is appropriate housing, that we have LGBTQIA+ housing especially for our seniors who we hear often are going back into the closet or having additional housing when they need to move into housing because there is not enough Queer supportive housing for seniors. I will fight to continue to make sure that seniors who have homes in more expensive areas like Seattle have the ability to stay in their homes and have the care that they need through programs like NEST and others that create community cohesion. We can have more robust food delivery programs and senior event centers like the kind I used to run at SeaMar Community Health Center; we can also support arts and intergenerational connection. We will make sure that seniors have access to food and economic security. Retirement security for our elders is something that we must do and when we do that we can decrease the cost of living in Seattle. By making sure there is accessible transit and pedestrian friendly spaces, we can increase connectivity and access. We can create a connected city with sidewalks that do not dump into streets and make our city accessible for everyone, especially our elders and those with disabilities.

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?

I absolutely would. Human service workers are frontline workers, and they deserve the right to a living wage. It's essential that these folks are compensated fairly for the work they do; this work is essential in the fight to address and better meet people's most basic needs. I will always stand with and stand up for workers and wage equity.

I will continue to work to ensure human service workers have base and equitable wages and benefits as well as access to healthcare standards that ensure a stronger community, including mental health support and fertility support. I'll continue my focus on ensuring all workers have the ability to organize and have basic protections regardless of classification. I'll look to build policies that work and that have data-driven results so we can continue to push for local labor standards that translate to state-level and national labor standards. As we work to rebuild together, I believe a better, resilient regional economy cannot exist without simultaneously lifting up our workforce.

---



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! Together, we can strengthen worker support and stability. One of the main ways to do that is to raise the living wage. Living wages are crucial for our community to allow residents to be able to live where they work. This is important for the health of our community and the health of our economy—we need to create economic viability that pulls up those who have least. When our workers prosper, we all prosper. I stood at the airport to support \$15 an hour for SeaTac vendors, I testified in support of \$15 and sick leave in Seattle. I will stand with you all for the same protections for human service workers.

I lobbied on increasing the minimum wage and passing sick leave for four years in Olympia with a broad coalition, then helped draft Initiative 1433 to raise the minimum wage in Washington State as well as providing paid sick leave. I have been on the front lines fighting for Seattle and Washington workers and wholly support a minimum wage that is a livable wage.

---

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? \*

In my role at Seattle City Council, I have sponsored funding for providing childcare at City Hall, a study the mayor objected to and continues to stymie efforts to put childcare in City Hall after it's been tried three times now. I voted to amend the Mandatory Housing Affordability requirements (MHA) to incentivize the creation of more childcare facilities on new buildings that are being created under MHA incentives. I included \$6 million in the budget for childcare provider pay and more for capital expansions during the pandemic. I have approached large businesses with retail space downtown and across the City to include childcare on site — as many of them have doggy daycare and no childcare. I worked with SEIU 925 on a career training facility — childcare HUB for innovation to recruit more childcare providers.

I plan to bring this priority to office at King County Council to ensure all residents have access to affordable childcare — especially construction workers. I support the state effort that you are championing to get childcare to construction workers and will help lead this at the county. We can invest in creating more accessible and affordable childcare if we invest in (1) childcare workers and create a career pipeline for workers; (2) increase subsidies for childcare to be more affordable; and (3) build more child care throughout our region around the county and in places where construction is happening in our downtown cores throughout the county that construction workers have access to.

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

Here are some of the investment approaches to healthier communities and more comprehensive community that I would like to continue to build on at King County Council:

- Funding for case management and supportive housing investments to ensure housing stability by addressing barriers such as mental health, substance use, or ongoing physical health;
- Funding for community of color led organizations to allocate to upstream investments through participatory budgeting and community-driven directives to address violence, housing insecurity, mental health, education, and income security;

Adding more crisis counseling to support first responders' mental health as they are often the first to show up to care for our elders and most vulnerable, and see trauma every day.

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? \*

We know that families, workers, seniors, and our kiddos need access to affordable, quality food in order to be healthy. You can't learn if you are hungry. You can't be healthy if you don't have access to healthy foods. Far too many of our communities are food deserts, and the only food accessible to many families is at convenience stores. There is much that the city and the county can do to promote the health and nutrition of our communities through local farm to table programs, community gardens, and by incentivizing grocery store placement in our communities throughout the region.

Mutual aid efforts do a fantastic job of helping meet people's most basic need of survival by providing community pantries, meal events for our unhoused neighbors, and more. However, this support should not take the place of policy aimed at combating food insecurity. One example of a policy change would be to update our land use reform in certain areas to promote access to grocery stores that provide healthy food and living wages.

---

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms