

SHSC 2023 Human Services Candidate Questionnaire

Seattle Human Services Coalition (SHSC) 2023 Candidate Questions

Email *

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What is your name? *

Tye Reed

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'm most familiar with the larger, high-need service providers like DESC, Catholic Community Services, Mary's Place, etc because I have spent the last 3 years doing direct outreach to encampments in North Seattle and downtown. During my time as a Housing Stability Specialist at Wellspring Family Services, I learned very quickly about housing assistance services throughout King County. As the Operations Director at Real Change, where the Emerald City Resource Guide is produced every year, I am tasked with updating our ever-growing list of homeless resources so I am also familiar with even the smallest organization providing services. This level of familiarity means I understand the Human Services Dept of Seattle really well, and have seen dozens of co-workers leaving the field due to burnout, low pay, and lack of resources/training.

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

Capitalism. It is undeniable that the root of poverty as it exists today lies within a global system of exploitation and wealth accumulation. The government's role in addressing institutional poverty should be heavily weighted towards attempting to correct this inherent inequity through a robust social welfare programs, minimum wages that reflect a thriving wage, deeply subsidized commodities like food, housing, and childcare, and the willingness to check corporate greed through taxes and regulations.

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?

I will gently correct the premise of the question "What do you see as your role in addressing systemic racism?" to put the onus of addressing system racism where it belongs, with white people. It is impossible to divorce our racial identities from ourselves when attempting to confront racism and, as a queer Black woman, my role in this endeavor is limited by my lack of power or privelege in spaces where white supremacy and racism are being upheld. Councilmembers, of course, do have plenty of power to actually begin to undo over 400 years of racial capitalism that has led us here. I would begin by allocating funds being held by the SPD for positions they're unable to fill towards harm reduction strategies like mobile crisis teams completely divorced from the police, removing the police from traffic infractions that often end violently for Black and brown people, and ending exclusionary zoning that has directly led to our homelessness and housing crises.

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

I am deeply committed to incorporating co-governance practices into my Council office. For far too long, we've had representatives who boldly ignore the needs of communities begging for relief at council meetings while publicly showing deference to business interests. That is why I'm running on a platform that uplifts the demands laid out in the 2022 Solidarity Budget. I am proud to have advocated alongside the Black Brilliance Project and over 200 organizations in demanding that communitites most affected by government failure should have a say in what our tax dollars are spent on. We do not need politicians with their own ideas, we need someone to listen to what we've been saying for years while pushing their fellow councilmembers to do the same. As a community organizer and co-chair of the House Our Neighbors coalition, I will be the ideal councilmember - capable of lobbying government at all levels but also able to get people out in the streets and at Council meetings to apply pressure when needed.

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

Homelessness is inevitable when we simply don't build enough housing for the number of people we have. Decades of poor city planning, redlining, and gentrification have left huge gaps in our housing development. Additionally, like every city in the county for the past 60-70 years, Seattle has divested from public housing and mental health services, creating waves of people too poor or sick to afford to live inside.

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

I would measure our success in addressing our homelessness with these metrics: a drastic decrease in the number of people who are dying from exposure and drug overdoses; a drastic decrease or complete elimination of sweeps that just lead to destabilization; fewer encampments in dangerous areas like under freeways; a genuine desire to enter the shelter or housing system. All of these indicators would demonstrate that we have finally started getting people stabilized and on a path inside.

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? *

As many survivors of violence will say, the criminal legal system has very little to offer. We spend millions of dollars focusing on the perpetrators and a fraction of that for ineffectual victim services that barely meet the overwhelming need. I would ensure there is funding for violence interruption programs (like the Corner Greets with RBAC) that train and pay interventionists in communities to deescalate harm and address its root causes through restorative justice; and I would partner with key healthcare facilities, like hospitals and clinics, to identify areas for violence interruption programs at these activated and overburdened sites. Additionally, we need to invest in healing space that go beyond addressing immediate harm.

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? *

Seattle needs progressive revenue to ensure we have a sustainable source of funding for the vital programs that survivors of violence have been demanding: more low barrier housing/shelter, free childcare for those trying to flee, free physical and mental healthcare, and legal advocacy. I will push to increase, if not double, our Jumpstart payroll tax and sponsor a bill to create a capital gains tax to pay for these services.

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? *

Over the last 3 years, I have seen how the homelessness crisis, combined with service cuts caused by the pandemic, has hit our elderly neighbors the absolute hardest. Every month, the names of people over the age of 50 dominate the Women in Black's list of those who have died outside. In addition to funding targeted programs like Gen Pride's housing for queer seniors, I will fight for a Seattle Universal Income, progressive taxes to replace property levies that are pushing out our elders, and ensure a permanent line item for social housing in our city's budget.

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

As a boardmember for Be: Seattle, I've gain some critical insight into what elder folks, particulalry renters, are concerned about: lowering property taxes, fixing sidewalks and creating new ones where they don't currently exist, developing an Elders' Commssion to have direct access to the City Council.

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?

Absolutely, though I think the human services industry has the grounds to demand even more than a 7% increase. By my estimate, a person needs to make at least \$30/hour to be ok in Seattle, and most social workers I know are far from that goal. While there are many issues surrounding our homelessness crisis, one of the acute failures of our system is the inconsistent nature of case management which can be partially addressed with a living and thriving wage. That small change alone would greatly improve the ability of clients to access services and get on a stable course into housing.

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 be deeply involved in the budget process, as I am every year, to ensure the Council and Mayor create a budget that reflects our values of anti-racism, a truly compassionate response to homelessness, and urgency towards the climate crisis.

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? *

I would start by increasing the funding for CCAP and increasing the income threshold. I would also expand the funding for ECEAP to cover more families with kids in pre-K. In addition to program expansions, we need to increase the places where people are able to open childcare businesses so I would work with SDCI to decrease the time it takes to start up a childcare facility, and lobby WA state legislators to update licensing requirements to allow for more providers. The Council should also explore loan forgiveness for marginalized childcare providers to ensure we have culturally relevant services for our city's increasingly diverse population.

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

I would work to get Seattle to invest in a municipal mental health clinic. We currently rely heavily on King County for our mental healthcare needs and we're seeing exactly how limiting that can be. Even once the 5 walk in clinics are finally open, we will be dealing with a crisis that will surely exceed their capacity. Additionally, it's going to be vital to remove the police from emergency calls related to mental health crises. We know that Black and brown folks are more likely to experience violence when the police are called and we know that over half of the people killed by police have some kind of disability, particularly ones related to mental illness. We must have a sense of urgency in setting up a nonpolice alternative to these calls.

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? *

I don't think many people understand the scale of food insecurity in Seattle. I started a food distribution program with the Transit Riders Union at the beginning of the pandemic because most services shut down with nothing to fill the gaps; three years later and I believe the problem has only worsened. I speak to people every week on 3rd Ave who are in some kind of shelter or housing and yet they are still experiencing debilitating hunger on a regular basis. If you follow what's happening at the Municipal Courthouse, you can see the daily accounts of poor people being locked up for stealing less than \$5 in food. Seattle needs to increase our Fresh Bucks program to \$100 per customer, increase funding and capacity to the small neighborhood food banks that many elderly and homeless folks rely on, and ultimately invest in a municipal grocery store or food bank. The advantage of government is that it's really big and capacious. The only way to ensure people are fed even during a global pandemic is to make it the government's responsibility, rather than a network of contracted businesses. I would also like to explore a government food and emergency supply program that is low-barrier and accessible for community groups to get vital resources out to people who need them.

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