

JEW'S UNITED FOR JUSTICE

The Jews United for Justice Campaign Fund is a grassroots community organization that is working toward a District of Columbia where **everyone has what they need to live and be well, where all our residents live in dignity and have a voice in democracy, and where our government focuses on the well-being of all residents and prioritizes eliminating racial and economic inequities.**

The JUFJ Campaign Fund is the sister organization to JUFJ, which has been engaged in the region for over 20 years. JUFJ works in coalition with trusted partners to advance key issue campaigns informed by our commitment to ending all forms of oppression and making real improvements in people's lives. JUFJ works with elected officials to craft policy, and with our grassroots community to hold those elected officials accountable to their commitments. **The JUFJ Campaign Fund endorses candidates aligned with this vision who are ready to win elected office and take bold leadership.**

You can learn more about us at jufjcampaignfund.org. If you have questions regarding our process, please contact Hilary Klein at hilary@jufjcampaignfund.org.

Please return the completed questionnaire to the JUFJ Campaign Fund DC endorsement team to Amy Lieber at amy.lieber@jufjcampaignfund.org by August 12, 2022.

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Investing in Kids and Families

Family is absolutely central to Judaism, from the commandment to honor our parents to centuries of law and wisdom on raising our children to ancient guidelines for respecting our elders. No matter our family structure, family is where we celebrate, nurture, mourn, learn, and more. Jewish family values are the foundation of JUFJ's belief that all children should have the resources they need to thrive, and nobody should ever have to choose between their job and caring for a relative, welcoming a new baby, or healing from a serious personal illness.

1. The District's children experience major racial and economic disparities in their health and education because of cost; access; and patterns of government, non-profit, and private business under-resourcing Black and brown working-class communities. The Birth-to-Three for All DC Act of 2018 was crafted to ensure all young children have their needs met — including high quality, affordable early child care — while supporting equitable compensation for early childhood educators and strengthening the quality, affordability and availability of early child care. As a member of the Under 3 DC campaign, JUFJ supports fully funding and implementing this law. This is a sizable task (\$200 million or more to fund equitable educator compensation and child care subsidies) in the coming years, but the impacts of our city's investments will be positively felt for generations to come. **Do you support progressive tax increases to ensure that this groundbreaking law is fully funded?**

Yes, if the Council is unable to fund the program through additional savings or increased efficiency in the existing \$20B government operating budget.

Will/do you make Birth-to-Three a top priority in your budget advocacy with the Mayor and will/do you prioritize Birth-to-Three in Council budget deliberations?

Yes. When our daughter was born, it became clear that the inequities in access to early childhood development that existed in my childhood still persist today. . The District government has systemically failed to ensure opportunities to all families in DC, particularly those in Ward 7 and Ward 8. No child, especially during those critical early-development years, should be denied access to high-quality care because of their ZIP code. As a father, DC native, and next At-Large Councilmember, I will work from day one to eliminate barriers to accessing quality early childcare through advocating for a fully funded Birth-to-Three program.

2. Thanks to the work of the DC Paid Family Leave campaign, of which JUFJ was a leading member, in 2016 the DC Council passed the Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act, which provided 8 weeks of parental leave, 6 weeks of family medical leave to care for a sick family member, and 2 weeks of personal medical leave. In July 2020, DC workers began receiving these life-changing paid family and medical leave (PFML) benefits. The Budget Support Act (BSA) of 2021, approved by the the DC Council in August of 2021, significantly strengthened the DC Paid Family Leave Program by expanding medical leave benefits from 2 to 6 weeks and by adding a new category of paid pre-natal leave, which provides 2 weeks of leave for pre-natal medical care. The BSA of 2021 also laid out a plan to expand PFML benefits, depending on how much money is available in the DC Paid Family Leave fund. In accordance with this plan, PFML benefits will be expanded to 12 weeks each for parental, family medical, and personal medical leave beginning on October 1, 2022. **As a councilmember, would**

you commit to investing any surplus in the PFML fund into benefit expansions for working families rather than cutting the PFML tax rate?

I support the Paid Family Leave Program. It provides an opportunity to give many families the chance to meet the needs of changing family circumstances. Though the program started after my daughter was already born, the program affords other parents an opportunity to spend those pivotal early weeks after birth at home recovering and bonding. I am also well aware of the life changing potential of PFL when adjusting to major life changes, such as handling medical conditions, caring for loved ones, or other circumstances. I would have taken a different approach to the program which would have made it easier to navigate for workers, such as making a consistent number of weeks of leave available without creating categories of leave.

We also believe that PFML benefits must be portable, meaning workers should be able to access benefits they have earned even if they are between jobs. **As a councilmember, would you support legislation to make PFML benefits portable? Yes.**

Pursuing Racial Equity

Racism against residents of color, particularly structural and institutional racism in the form of oppressive policies, practices, and laws and in inequitable investments across communities, is a key element threading through every challenge our city faces. As Jews, we are called by our history and the teachings of our tradition to not stand idly by as these injustices persist, but to be actively engaged in changing the dynamics of power to create equitable opportunities and outcomes.

3. As a member organization of the DC Initiative on Racial Equity, JUFJ advocated for a strong and robust Racial Equity Achieves Results (REACH) Act. In November 2020, the DC Council unanimously passed REACH, which looks to end all socioeconomic disparities that are endemic in DC, including those disparities experienced disproportionately by DC residents of color in housing, income, health care access, food access, and the criminal justice system. The Act requires that most new permanent legislation receive a [Racial Equity Impact Assessment \(REIA\)](#) before the Council takes any votes on the legislation. To this end, the Act established a Council Office of Racial Equity (CORE), which is tasked with conducting REIAs to determine how proposed legislation may affect Black residents, Indigenous residents, and other residents of color in the short and long term. CORE has begun implementing this mandate and has issued 14 REIAs since its inception. **Will you commit to oppose any legislation that has a REIA that will or is likely to harm Black residents, Indigenous residents, or other people of color or will or is likely to exacerbate racial inequity?**

YES and as the next At-Large Councilmember I would support applying the REIA analysis to all legislation like the Fiscal Impact Statement. As of now, REIA only applies to a subset of Council legislation and no executive branch regulations. I believe all

Councilmembers have a responsibility to write legislation that affirmatively reverses the deliberate dis- and underinvestment in Black communities. The goal of racial equity is to heal these past harms.

The Council has had decades to make meaningful changes and improve the lives of Black and brown residents, yet they have consistently failed to protect those residents who most need government to work. With my combined legislative and executive experience, I will work to mandate racial equity as the focus of all work done in the District – from bills created to construction on our streets. This is evident from my work as Legislative Director and Environmental Justice Coordinator for the Department of Energy and Environment. In that role I worked with the Department’s Air Quality and Enforcement divisions to ensure that historically marginalized communities such as Ivy City and Buzzard Point were provided with targeted additional resources to offset the air quality impacts they experienced. Later, as a Development Manager in DMPED, I wrote the legislation and designed the plan to reclaim East Capitol Gateway in Ward 7 from an irresponsible developer. This project will bring the first grocery store to Far NE in place of what was once a vacant parcel in a food desert. I stand as the only candidate with the combined heightened awareness of how to craft solid legislation and deep knowledge of the city’s operations that will ensure the Council keeps the executive accountable, but also provides the resources necessary to get the job done.

If elected, will you use CORE’s tool to design legislation that makes progress towards racial equity?

YES. I plan to use CORE and as Councilmember, I will hire legislative staff that is well-versed in identifying issues of racial equity and direct my team to act in affirmative ways to research solutions that will make transformative change. I will lead an office with a legislative team that is well versed in using tools such as the Environmental Protection Agency’s EJ Screen, the Local and Regional Government Alliance Race and Equity Toolkit, and supplements the resources of the DC Council with research from national, regional, and local institutions to implement approaches which will improve the lives of Black and brown residents.

If not, why not?

Transforming Community Safety

The concept of *tzelem elohim* — the idea that all people are created in the Divine image and therefore are equally precious and worthy — is so central to Judaism that our sacred texts declare that destroying even one life is akin to destroying a whole world. Unfortunately, in DC, lives are destroyed every day, especially Black and brown lives, by our system of policing. Especially amid the ongoing pandemic and associated mental health crises, we turn to Judaism's ethic of mutual care that calls us to boldly rethink policing and transform public safety in our region.

4. In 2020, the Council established the DC Police Reform Commission to help the Council better understand how to improve or find alternatives to policing in the District. In April 2021, the Commission issued its full report, entitled “Decentering Police to Improve Public Safety.” In the preface to the report, the Commission noted, “Not only is policing inadequate on its own to keep people safe, it too often causes undue harm in the precise communities it is nominally meant to protect. Much of what has been normalized and accepted as necessary in policing does not answer genuine public safety needs but rather reflects the often-unthinking perpetuation of a system designed to control and exploit, rather than empower and nurture people — especially Black and Latinx people.” [The Commission made a series of recommendations \(summarized on pages 15-28\)](#) to ensure that everyone in DC could be safer and allowed to thrive. **If elected, which recommendations from the Police Reform Commission report would you work to implement?**

I strongly support the recommendations of the Police Reform Commission. I am well-versed with their report and recommendations and I have spoken with some of the authors.

One of my reasons for running in this race was to bring a spirit of cooperation to our public policy. I was disappointed to see that the Council, Attorney General, and Executive were not able to create a joint effort to take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity to reimagine public safety. We still have a chance to create meaningful reform and ensure we are building a community where safety emanates from the members as opposed to being imposed by force.

For any effort of this magnitude to be successful, all areas of the government should be working together to define the problem and the solution. As an early (Class 4) alumni and current board member of Operation Understanding DC, I learned about and found a strong affinity for the concept of *tikkun olam* as a teenager. I believe we must model that approach as a government. We must work together to identify solutions which improve the lives and conditions of our residents, and we have to be relentless in our desire to make a fundamentally good world a better place.

Housing Security

DC's history of racist housing policies, including redlining, housing covenants, and exclusionary zoning, have deeply segregated our communities and displaced many Black and brown residents. Sacred Jewish texts recognize that having safe, stable housing is key to a healthy society, and we know that it is key to reducing racial inequities. Our texts are full of conversation, laws, and traditions about the obligations of landlords and tenants, about how homes should be built safely, and about making sure that people can remain in their homes.

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened DC's existing housing crisis, endangering safe, stable affordable housing for thousands of residents. The financial impact of the pandemic is far from over, especially for residents who are not able to

make their rent. **How will you work with or push the executive branch to do everything it can to prevent and limit the number of evictions?**

6. The purpose of rent control is to ensure that tenants can continue to live and thrive in homes they can afford. Currently, over 90,000 families and individuals in the District live in rent-controlled apartments, making this tool one of the single largest sources of long-term affordable housing in the city. In addition, rent control is a racial justice issue, potentially helping to curb the displacement of Black and brown residents who could otherwise no longer afford to live in the District, preventing further housing segregation citywide. However, significant loopholes in the law leave low-income tenants vulnerable to unfair rent hikes and displacement. Last year, when the Council had the opportunity to improve and expand rent control, the Council failed to act. **Do you fully support [the Reclaim Rent Control platform](#) and would you co-sponsor legislation to implement it?**

If not, what provisions of the platform do you support?

I agree with the fundamental notion that everyone should be able to afford a safe, clean, and dignified home. However, we can and should go farther than the Reclaim Rent Control approach. We can take steps to reverse the decades of racism, discrimination, and reinforcement of unearned privilege that has led to the segregation of low-income residents (who are disproportionately Black) and led to concentration of poverty in substandard housing. The notion that only certain buildings are subjected to price controls encourages underinvestment in the maintenance of those buildings as they age. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development considers a family cost-burdened if they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. However, housing affordability should be measured by the available assets and income of a family, not an arbitrary rate of growth or projected profit margin. This method would protect low-wage earners and truly desegregate communities.

7. When Mayor Bowser took office in 2015, she committed to a plan to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring by 2020. Unfortunately, that goal has not been achieved. In July 2021, the Mayor announced [Homeward DC 2.0](#), the District's updated plan. **Will you commit to allocating the funding to implement the updated plan? If so, how? If not, why not?**

Most of the portions of Homeward DC are programmatic so the key to success is making sure that each of the agencies identified in the implementation plan are adequately resourced. I am committed to working with each of my colleagues to make sure that the relevant operating lines are properly funded and provide the necessary position numbers to staff implementation. However, section 3.1.1 will require a sufficient allocation of capital budget authority. I will also work with the relevant Committees overseeing DGS and DMPED to ensure that the capital budget has been allocated and that the responsible agencies are properly resourced to be successful.

Do you support progressive tax increases to ensure that Homeward DC 2.0 is fully funded?

[YES, if we cannot find additional savings or increased efficiency in the existing \\$20B government operating budget.](#)

Will you make funding Homeward DC 2.0 a top priority in your budget advocacy with the Mayor and will/do you prioritize funding Homeward DC 2.0 in Council budget deliberations? YES.

8. Mayor Bowser established “no-tent zones” and pursued a campaign to clear tent communities of unhoused people and move these people into permanent housing. However, the Mayor and her administration have not successfully moved all unhoused residents to permanent housing before clearing encampments, treating the people living there without the dignity and respect all people deserve. Earlier this year, the Council voted to allow Mayor Bowser to continue to evict homeless encampments through hypothermia season. **Do you agree with the decision made by the Council?**

If so, why? If not, what would you do to humanely address the needs of unhoused District residents who are living in tent communities?

[My guiding principle is preserving the health, safety, and dignity of persons experiencing housing instability or homelessness. Homelessness is frequently a visible symptom of other causes and we should be focusing on attacking the core issues that lead to housing instability: affordability, safety, untreated or undiagnosed mental health issues, or addiction. Our city needs actionable systems that quickly provide housing with dignity and comprehensive counseling or treatment resources. My first priority is to empower our on-the-ground case workers to identify and connect each individual experiencing homelessness with safe, clean, and accessible housing to provide stability. Residents forced to live in tents are often met with aggression and violence on our streets. As I work with this community, it will be my charge to ensure housing is simultaneously paired with the necessary evaluation, treatment, and guidance to put them in a position to be stable and successful outside of government care.](#)

Workers’ Rights and Economic Justice

According to Jewish tradition, work must be pursued ethically, both by workers and by their employers. Our sacred texts tell us that when we are in the employer role, we must give our employees fair and timely compensation and maintain workplaces that offer true dignity and respect. Judaism recognizes that when we do right by working people, families, communities, and our whole region are more likely to thrive.

9. Domestic workers are excluded from DC’s Human Rights Act, which provides protections against workplace discrimination and harassment, and from DC’s occupational health and safety law. A Domestic Workers Bill of Rights would 1)

eliminate those exclusions, 2) require written employment agreements between domestic workers and their employers about job responsibilities and other workplace conditions, and 3) establish a Domestic Work Outreach and Education Program within the Department of Employment Services that would work with community organizations to provide education and training on labor standards in the industry to workers and employers. **If elected, would you co-sponsor a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights that includes these goals and work to see that legislation funded and fully implemented?**

YES. I believe we need to stop looking at any type of worker as an “other” and recognize that anyone who uses their energy to produce value in exchange for wages is entitled to the same workplace protections.

If not, please explain why.

10. In 2018, DC voters overwhelmingly voted to raise the minimum wage for tipped workers to match the minimum wage for other workers, but the Council overturned the voters’ decision. Currently, there is an effort to collect the signatures necessary to put Initiative 82, the District of Columbia Tip Credit Elimination Act of 2021, on the ballot in the 2022 election. The Initiative would increase the mandatory base wage paid to tipped workers from the current \$5.05 per hour to \$15.20 per hour in 2027, matching the minimum wage established by District of Columbia law. In addition to that increased wage, workers would keep their tips. **If on the ballot, will you vote for Initiative 82 to eliminate the two-tiered system of wages among workers? YES**

If voters have the opportunity to vote in favor of Initiative 82 in 2022, and they once again support raising the minimum wage for tipped workers, will you pledge not to overturn this ballot measure? YES

Feel free to explain your answer if you wish. I support this, but I have been told by several tipped wage earners that they are concerned that they are going to see a net decrease in their wages as prices go up and customers stop tipping. Public discourse would benefit from more information from Initiative 82 supporters on how they plan to encourage customers to continue to tip and allay the concerns of tipped workers.

A Robust Local Democracy

Jewish tradition teaches us that wisdom comes through learning from everyone, and that we must consider all perspectives of an issue before reaching a conclusion. We are guided by the principle that all people, no matter their race, faith, age, or zip code, have the right to a powerful voice in democracy. Government must respond to the needs of poor and working people, whether Black, brown, or white, who have been systemically barred from resources and power.

11. Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) ensures that candidates are elected to public office when they win majority support of the electorate. Data increasingly show that in all

jurisdictions that use RCV – including New York City, Minneapolis, and San Francisco – voter turnout is increasing, and races are more dynamic and collegial, with genuine policy debates supplanting negative campaign tactics. Jews United for Justice has signed on to the Rank the Vote DC campaign, which aims to pass the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act of 2021 introduced by Councilmember Christina Henderson. In addition to implementing RCV, the bill establishes a voter education campaign to be implemented by the Board of Elections.

Do you support the VOICE Act?

YES, however as an Independent candidate for an At-Large seat, I know that most Independent voters are Black and brown and are excluded from primaries. RCV does not expand access to the ballot for immigrant residents or reduce the difficulties of those experiencing homelessness to be able to vote in elections. I want every DC resident to be able to vote in every election and ensure that their political power is not diminished.

If not, what are your concerns about the bill, and how do you suggest the bill be changed to address them?

I co-led the passage and oversaw the implementation of Ranked-Choice Voting at my law school. I have seen instances where Ranked Choice Voting can work, when it is based on legitimate grassroots support and preceded by increased voter participation and ratified by the will of the voters. The real measure of the success of a voting system isn't the person who is elected, it is the belief of the voters in the validity of that system.

Voters abstain for several reasons, but the one I have heard most frequently is that they believe the process is rigged. Many think their vote doesn't matter because the voters in the rich part of town make all the decisions. My driving principle is to open access in elections and give all residents a more significant voice in the selection and accountability of their government. To advance that goal, there are several other options that have not been examined and could have a more impactful outcome than RCV. The failure of advocates to advance or consider these options has eroded the credibility of this current push for RCV. For example, true Independents and supporters of smaller parties are fully disenfranchised in the current primary system. Open primaries or a "top-two" primary system would encourage the same outcome of winner with more than 50% of the vote but would be more accessible and less likely to yield undervotes particularly in communities that already undervote at proportionally higher levels.* The problem is not just the voting system, it is also the accountability of the government. Implementing RCV under these conditions would further disenfranchise Black voters and lead to lower faith in the electoral system and the government as a whole.

*In the 2018 General Election for At-Large Member of the Council where residents were afforded two votes, the disparities in voter participation in instances where voters have multiple choices are clear: Comparing Wards 3 and 6 with Wards 7 and 8, the wealthier, whiter parts of the city have nearly double the number of participating voters and undervote at rate 10 points lower than the less affluent, Black parts of the city.

Your Vision

12. What are the top three issues facing DC, and what will you do to address them in ways that advance racial equity and economic justice?

I am a Black third-generation Washingtonian and I have always loved my hometown. I am a proud product of DC Public Schools because that education gave me the foundation to attend and succeed at an Ivy League College then return to DC to attend American Law School and serve my city for more than a decade as a public servant

One of the things I loved about DC, I didn't realize until I was an adult and visiting other cities was the normalization of Blackness that occurred because we were Chocolate City. I was able to grow up as a Black man, with a non-minoritized view of himself. And that normalization has significance. I know that I have as much a right to the prosperity in this city as anyone else and I demand that the benefits of the last twenty year's economic growth be shared equitably.

I remember leaving for Dartmouth College and hearing all the promises about what great things were in store for the District of Columbia. More than two decades later, I see that much of those promises came true, for parts of the city. Most of our schools have been fully modernized, large portions of the city have been renovated, and before COVID-19 we had a thriving downtown as our economic core. But, that prosperity was not shared evenly. There are still large parts of the city that cannot safely bring a new life into this world at the nearby hospital, sleep through the night without the sound of gunfire, or trust in their neighborhood school.

The issues that are center of mind for me are public safety, education, and housing. What makes me unique as a candidate is that my 12 years of executive branch experience under three mayors gives me a unique and unmatched understanding of the interconnectedness of these issues. I know what our government does well, and I know where it falls short. I know that it is a cruel farce to expect comparable performance on a standardized test from a child that worries about safely getting to school or having a consistent place to sleep. I know that despite these barriers, our children in under-resourced communities defy the odds and still manage to succeed. And I know they shouldn't have had to overcome these barriers and our government has failed at ensuring that opportunities were widely provided over the last twenty years.

Our **public education system** is the most impactful mechanism we have to provide opportunities to our students and as a Councilmember, I would support the development of an education system that works for all of our learners. We should make sure that our learners that want to attend College are prepared to compete for admission to the most competitive schools. But, if a student wants to pursue a career in trades, coding, or as a business owner, they should be provided with the skills

necessary to earn a living and the business knowledge necessary to maintain and grow their success.

Education and **workforce readiness** are deeply connected. It is important to ensure that our recent graduates are ready for the workforce, but I would also prioritize workforce readiness and literacy training for young adults, particularly in the growing Green-job and clean energy sector for our residents. Many of these positions have low barriers to entry and workers can be quickly introduced to these careers.

As Councilmember, I would also prioritize increasing the volume of **housing** to drive availability and affordability at all income levels. There is simply not enough housing to meet the needs of our population. The workers who keep our city moving suffer the most from the consequences of unaffordability. I will work to make sure that DC is a place where our teachers, critical workers, and emergency responders can afford to live where they work. There are more than 10,000 vacant lots or homes in the District. I have a thoughtful plan to encourage my fellow Councilmembers and the Executive to make changes to the tax and estate titles to facilitate the activation of vacant and bank-owned properties to encourage their use as affordable housing. I would also prioritize developing tools that give tenants in buildings a faster way to have substandard conditions fixed by the landlord or a responsible third party instead of waiting years like the residents of Marbury Plaza.

I would also prioritize **public safety**. I think it is important to start by acknowledging that people are rightfully worried about their safety. But, I also want to move away from the illusion that the number of police officers on the force determines whether or not crimes occur. I would prefer to have a real and honest conversation about the society we are building and how we can shape accountability to be rehabilitative instead of solely punitive. The best way to reduce crime is to make sure that all residents believe they have a chance at a bright and dignified future.

Further, while I know JUJF focuses on issues around economics, housing, and employment conditions, I hope to be able to persuade you to make **environmental justice** a core part of your platform. Black and brown communities in the District are disproportionately made to suffer the health and economic consequences of adverse environmental impacts. Our neighborhoods and our building conditions are less healthy in the aggregate. This spring, I will teach a class on Environmental Justice at American University's Washington College of Law and I fully intend to use the resources of this law school and neighboring law schools to identify substantive policy solutions to remedy these past inequities.

As a government employee I worked hard to incorporate equity and justice into all my work. As a candidate, I have made it a point to be courageous when speaking to voters. I don't retreat to soundbites, and I give full answers about my thoughts when asked. **And my central thought is that our politicians have not served us well.** Our public discourse has been reductive, and that oversimplification has harmed the people who

most need our government to be thoughtful and thorough. None of our important issues can be answered with just a yes or no, and it is important that we have the integrity and courage to answer and explain. As a Councilmember I will be able to bring a level of attention to detail and quality of legislation that is forward-looking and inclusive to address the needs of all our residents, but most especially the residents that don't have the connections, time, or resources to directly lobby the Council.