

PFT Candidate Questionnaire

The following information was submitted to the PFT by the following candidate running for office in the May 2019 Primary Election



Candidate Name: Cherrelle Parker

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Office Sought: City Council, 9th District (incumbent)

Legislative Priorities

PFT Members have recently participated in a survey of their legislative priorities. We used the survey to formulate our legislative agenda for 2019. Please respond to areas of concern for PFT members, and comment on your experience/abilities addressing some of top issues.

On a 1-5 scale (5 being the most important), how important are the following issues to you as a candidate? In the comments, please identify any/all legislative solutions that you believe would address the issue.

7. Investment in School Facilities Funding *

How significant do you believe the \$5B in deferred maintenance for school facilities is? How central of a part of your candidacy/position in office will this issue be?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree and commit

8. Comments on Facilities Funding:

How can we teach our children to compete in a 21st century globally competitive economy, in 19th century/technically deficient buildings? When I was a State Representative and now as Councilwoman, I have and will continue to be a strong advocate for increased infrastructure and facilities' investments for the SDP. I will participate in any and all strategic planning with the PFT and SDP to address this critical agenda. I will also, as part of Council's annual budgetary process, continue to carefully scrutinize ways to increase infrastructure funding. However, there must be an intergovernmental cooperative planning strategy to be successful in this effort. Federal, State and Local government advocacy must be conducted in a coordinated manner.

9. Do you support a City moratorium on charter schools? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree and commit

As far back as 2015, when I was still a State Representative, I signed on to the Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools' call for a moratorium on charter school expansion. This is not a new position for me.

10. Are you in favor of modifying the 10 year tax abatement? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

No, should stay as
Is

Yes,
absolute

y needs to be modified

11. Comments on your vision for the 10 year tax abatement:

There are neighborhoods in the City that could benefit from some level of tax abatement for new and substantially renovated construction. The 9th Council District that I represent is one of those districts. However, I am certainly open to reviewing potential ways that the Tax Abatement could be modified.

12. Are you in favor of modifying the corporate tax structure so that wealthier businesses and individuals increase their contributions? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

No, should stay as
Is

Yes, absolutely needs to be
modified

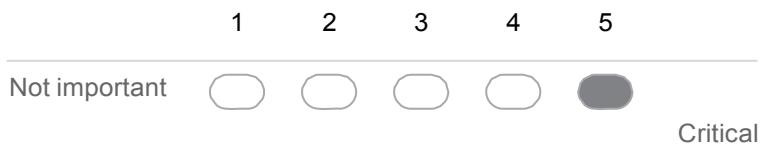
13. Comments on your vision for taxes:

I wholeheartedly support and am proud to have a track record of advocating for a more progressive tax structure in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. During my 10 year tenure as a member of the PA House of Representatives and now as the Councilwoman for the 9th Council District, I have always made advocacy for tax fairness a priority. And for the record, the most progressive tax in PA is the Personal Income Tax (PIT). While proposals to increase the PIT have consistently been torpedoed in the General Assembly, I am proud to have been able to successfully assist our city in securing ways to: increase our efforts to collect delinquent property taxes, allow Philadelphia taxpayers the ability to pay their taxes in installments to prevent delinquency, and provide Philadelphia with the enabling authority to enact the Long-term Owner Occupants Program (LOOP) as a tool to proactively ward off gentrification.

I believe that people who have more income, investments and overall wealth, should pay proportionately more in taxes. This is difficult to achieve in PA with Tax Uniformity requirements in our State Constitution; however, it is not impossible! We would need a Constitutional Amendment or total overhaul of our tax structure. In the absence of the aforementioned, I will continue to do all that I can to make sure that every tool in the local government toolbox is used to pursue tax fairness.

14. How important is it for you to find ways to reduce class size? *

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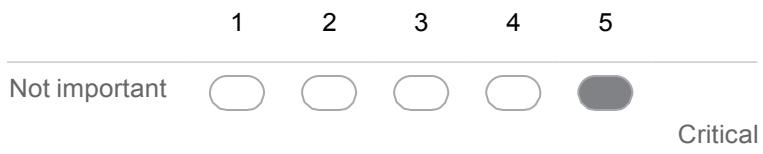


15. Comments:

As a Certified Secondary English Teacher by profession, I can affirm that children are not robots. Each may have a different learning style and needs. If the goal is mastering a body of knowledge, there are certainly many ways to accomplish this goal. However, in classes with thirty plus students, it is practically impossible for a teacher to accommodate the needs of every student. Education under the best of circumstances is labor intensive and uneven. In a school district such as Philadelphia with a disproportionate number of children living in deep poverty, adequate educational results in overcrowded classes is at best extremely difficult, and at its worse, a recipe for disaster. For these reasons, reducing class size will remain an issue of importance for me.

16. How important is it for you to find ways to increase support personnel? *

Mark only one oval.

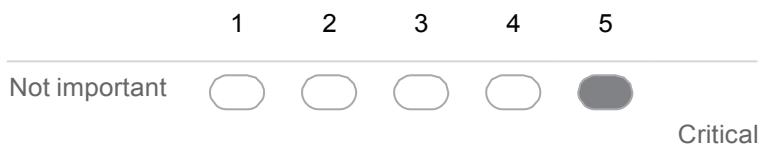


17. Comments:

See comment above on class size. Increased personnel in the form of teachers' aides, crossing guards and non-police safety staff are also necessary to address the diverse needs of our school population. I believe that support personnel are essential employees whose contributions to our educational system should be treated as such.

18. How important is it for you to improve access to services for students with special needs? *

Mark only one oval.

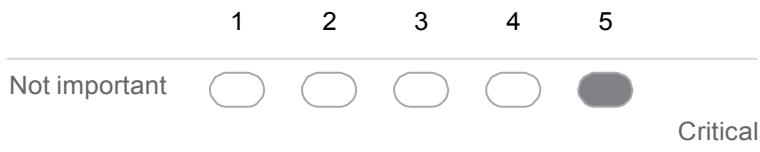


19. Comments:

With mandates to accommodate children with special needs, we need more personnel and resources so that these children along with non-special needs children can receive the education they deserve. That being said, I have and will continue to support efforts to help students come to school in Kindergarten and First Grade ready to learn through the provision of pre-K education for all our students. One of the often overlooked benefits of universal pre-K education is that it will identify children with special needs at an earlier age and allow for more effective intervention.

20. How important is it for you to improve access to services for students who are English Language Learners? *

Mark only one oval.

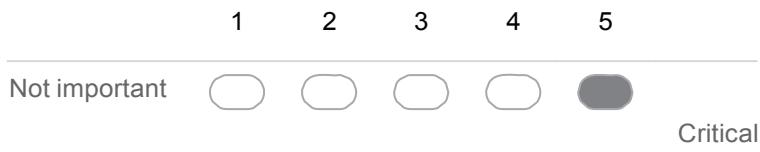


21. Comments:

As a former English as Second Language (ESL) evening school teacher, I firmly believe that our education system should not penalize students for whom English is not their first language. Furthermore, we should not only be doing our best to offer as much tutorial assistance possible to ESL learners, we should be taking a much more holistic and innovative approach in this area. Imagine how effective it would be if the parents of ESL students could also receive educational instruction, in a safe and non-threatening environment, at a convenient time and on a standard basis. We would then be empowering these parents to participate more effectively in their children's learning. Additional investments in ESL instruction can be a game-changer for public education.

22. How important is it for you to increase access to school counselors? *

Mark only one oval.

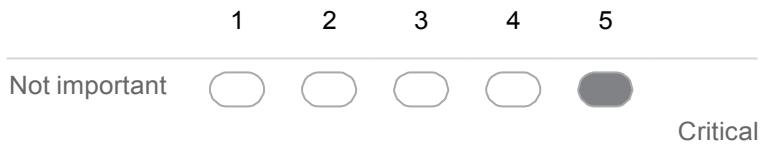


23. Comments:

In financially constrained times, school counselors (along with nurses) are the first to be cut back. But their involvement is also crucial for all children, not just those with diagnosed special needs. I believe that they are also essential employees whose contributions to the overall success of our students should not be taken lightly.

24. How important is it for you to increase access to certified school nurses? *

Mark only one oval.

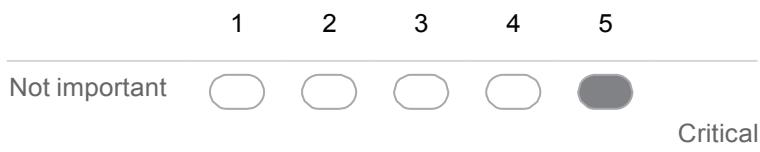


25. Comments:

See comment above.

26. How important is it for you to increase access to social services in schools? *

Mark only one oval.



27. Comments:

In a school district with a disproportionate number of children living in deep poverty, access to social/human services is extremely important. It is for this reason that I am such a strong supporter of the Community Schools model. Behavioral Health, medical/dental assistance, treatment for trauma induced by witnessing/enduring/surviving violence, domestic/child/sexual abuse, death, food insecurity and other types of life/mind altering experiences that many of our children are facing on a daily basis affirms the need for these support systems. Furthermore, with an increase in the number of students being raised in Kinship Care (someone other than the biological parent), ensuring that social service supports are available for caretakers is also of the utmost importance.

28. How important is it for you to increase access to funding for CTE programs in schools? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not important

Critical

29. Comments:

Not all students are interested in going to college. Our education system should prepare them for the many needed jobs that do not require any college or less than a four-year degree. This is not just the right thing to do, CTE should be viewed as a feeder/pipeline to economically enhance the tax base for our city, a poverty busting tool, and neighborhood stabilization/preservation mechanism. Philadelphia is an old city. So not only are our schools suffering from their aging infrastructure, so is our housing stock. Well, I believe the SDP should be preparing the next generation of skilled trades people – who will be the home and small business repair experts of the future. The wages, health benefits and retirement security afforded to those in the skilled-trades are elements that enabled many Americans to make it to the working and middle class.

30. How important is it for you to increase the number of African American teachers and educators of color in our schools? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not important

Critical

31. Comments:

I attended public school in Philadelphia during the Dr. Constance E. Clayton era. I know what it meant to me when I was growing up to see African American men and women teachers in my world. And, there were many!

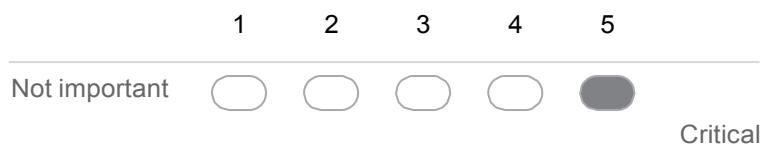
In a majority minority school district, the need for cultural competency is real. Studies from Johns Hopkins University and many other academicians/institutions of higher learning have affirmed this fact. We also know that students of color perform better academically and are less likely to drop out of school when they have teachers who look like them – as models. However, achieving this is no easy feat. We must work with HBCU's and our regional colleges and universities to encourage more students of color

to think about teaching in our public schools as a viable career option. However, this is difficult when you measure the conditions upon which teachers in the SDP are forced to endure vs. their suburban counterparts: salary, class size, reduced support personnel, disproportionate number of students with special needs, and many other issues too numerous to mention.

This is an issue that I will continue to prod the SDP about during our budget hearings. College students have so many other options to consider outside of education. We must as a society, bring back the distinction and honor that being a teacher provided in years past. And, we must not forget that the quality of life that teachers experience plays a significant role in this dilemma.

How important is it for you to protect the rights of workers to collectively bargain and for educators to have a fair contract? *

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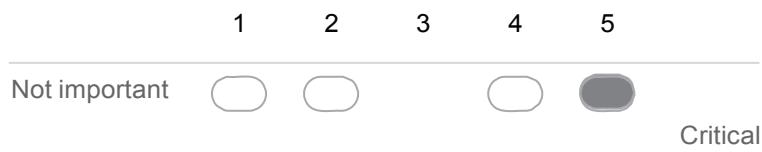


32. Comments:

I have always been a strong supporter of organized labor and will continue to do so. Currently, I am chair of City Council's Committee on Labor & Civil Service and previously served on the Labor & Industry Committee in the PA House. Collective Bargaining is sacrosanct. There is no room for discussion. I have spent my entire career fighting Right to Work and other forms of Union Busting schemes.

33. How important is it for you to expand the Community Schools model in Philadelphia? *

Mark only one oval.



34. Comments:

See #27. Community Schools not only make the school a resource for an entire neighborhood but allow the City to co-locate City services in the schools, thus providing additional financial/human service support.

35. What is your vision for public education in Philadelphia, and how have you worked (either currently in office or your current position) to promote an equity agenda in Philadelphia's schools?

My vision for our public-school system is for excellence regardless of zip code. While serving in the State Legislature, I was always a fierce advocate for more school funding and a fair funding formula. During a period of gross underfunding of the Philadelphia School District, I was the chief advocate in the PA House for the local \$2 per pack Cigarette Tax that helped ward off a shut-down of the SDP. As a City Councilwoman, I have continued to look for additional funding to assure that schools not only function adequately but excel.

36. What are other legislative issues of top priority for you?

- Supporting middle neighborhoods, aesthetically improving their neighborhood commercial corridors, and supporting small businesses;
- Preserving our deteriorating housing stock; and
- Providing retirement security for Philadelphians.

37. Is there anything else you would like to share with PFT members about your candidacy? What are ways you see yourself working with the PFT in office? Are there other items on our platform that you believe will be significant in your work?

Maintaining and enhancing the infrastructure of our schools is part of the effort to pursue neighborhood preservation/stabilization. I am ready, willing, and able to partner with the PFT in any way possible, to preserve our schools in terms of both physical and human capital. I will help to lead this effort.
