

# King County Democrats 2023 Endorsement Questionnaire

**Name**

Girmay Zahilay

**Email address**

[electgirmay@gmail.com](mailto:electgirmay@gmail.com)

**Phone number**

(206) 349-5979

**Candidate name**

Girmay Zahilay

**Candidate pronouns**

he/him

**Candidate name pronunciation**

Grr-my Zah-hill-ai

**Campaign Filer\_Name**

Friends of Girmay

**Campaign email**

[electgirmay@gmail.com](mailto:electgirmay@gmail.com)

**Campaign phone**

(206) 349-5979

**Campaign website**

<https://electgirmay.com>

**Campaign Facebook page**

<https://facebook.com/electgirmay>

**LinkedIn**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/zahilay/>

**Instagram**

<https://instagram.com/councilmember.girmay>

**Twitter**

<https://twitter.com/girmayzahilay>

**Link to candidate headshot**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UtLCKL65Wv9CTDNN8yr6zSlj3TdBWxGA/view?usp=sharing>

**Treasurer name**

Josie Olsen

**Treasurer email**

[josie@bluewave.com](mailto:josie@bluewave.com)

**Treasurer phone**

(760) 301-4158

**Consultant name**

Michael Charles

**Consultant email**

[michael@ulstrategies.com](mailto:michael@ulstrategies.com)

**What type of position are you running for?**

County

**What position are you running for?**

Metropolitan King County Council

**Are you a Democrat?**

Yes

**Have you ever been a member of another political party?**

No

**Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission, or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?**

No

**Do you have a code of conduct for campaign staff and volunteers?**

Yes

**If you have campaign staff, do you support them joining a labor union?**

Yes

**Do you support employees of your jurisdiction (e.g. your city's employees, the Port's employees, etc.) exercising their collective bargaining rights without fear of retaliation, including the right to bargain and strike for better working conditions and pay?**

Yes

**Are you willing to have yourself, your staff, and your peers undergo training to understand and combat institutional racism, implicit bias, and sexual harassment?**

Yes

**Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate fossil fuel PACs?**

No

**Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate pharmaceutical PACs or corporate health insurance PACs?**

No

**Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate building industry PACs, including the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW) and the National Association of Home Builders?**

No

**Will your campaign accept contributions from law enforcement or sheriffs' organizations?**

Yes

**Will you return contributions from companies or PACs who are aligned with the organizations listed above and others that conflict with Democratic Party values?**

No

**Have you made any donations to Republican candidates or Republican Party organizations in the last 5 years?**

No

**Have you previously participated, or will you be participating, in a candidate training program like Institute for a Democratic Future or Emerge?**

No

**Please describe your background (education, employment, community and civic activity, union affiliation, and political activity).**

Girmay Zahilay is a King County Councilmember, an elected position governing 2.3 million people in King County, Washington. Girmay was born in Sudan to Ethiopian refugee parents and was raised in low-income public housing in the "South End" of Seattle, Washington. After graduating from Franklin High School, he received degrees from Stanford University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and worked in the Obama White House. His experiences growing up in public housing and going to public schools inspired him to pursue anti-poverty work through the Congressional Hunger Center and also to found Rising Leaders, Inc., a nonprofit that equips underserved middle school students with mentors and life skills training. Girmay ran for King County Council to offer bold solutions to problems that need immediate regional leadership. He has worked to build affordable homes for communities experiencing displacement, create treatment centers for neighbors in behavioral health crisis, invest more in youth opportunities, expand public transit options, reform the criminal legal system, and make the political process more inclusive across communities and generations.

**What motivated you to run for this position and how would you evaluate your success?**

I ran for this office to use it as a platform to improve people's lives through good public policy.

**What are the top three issues of urgency that you will address if elected?**

Housing, behavioral health, and community development.

**How will you involve all residents and engage all communities in the decision-making process?**

Through relationship building, town halls, social media, workshops, transparency, honesty, integrity, collaboration, proactivity, and intentionality.

**How have you promoted an enduring environment of inclusivity, diversity, and equity?**

By being thoughtful and proactive about seeking out and including communities most impacted by a policy decision and supporting their ideas and leadership.

**If elected, how will you address inequalities experienced among BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, or other marginalized communities and advance an agenda of equality?**

By being thoughtful and proactive about seeking out, building trust with, and including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and other marginalized communities and supporting their ideas and leadership.

**Do you support the Growth Management Act's goals of focusing development and population growth in existing urban centers to protect rural land use in rural King County?**

Yes

**Do you support increased funding for the King County District Court Regional Mental Health Court?**

Yes

**Do you support shifting law enforcement budgets in support of social and behavioral health services?**

Qualified

**Will you advocate for the use of harm reduction models in the county's legal system?**

Yes

**Will you support allocating public safety budget dollars to the LEAD and CoLEAD programs of community-based intervention and diversion?**

Yes

**For any Yes/No questions you answered "qualified", please explain:**

King County's law enforcement budgets are largely built on contracts wherein other governments and agencies pay King County for sheriff's services. In this context, re-allocating budgets toward other causes structurally doesn't work since ending a contract would mean those funds are no longer available to re-allocate elsewhere.

**King County's 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) lays out a path to 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050. How will you use new funding and incentives from the federal 2022 Inflation Reduction Act to improve results, and how will you update the SCAP in 2025?**

I will support robust investments in housing density, public transit, green infrastructure, and walkable neighborhoods.

**The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated and highlighted the economic and mental health disparities across our communities. How will you expand access to services to reduce these disparities and what is your plan for funding?**

I was the prime sponsor of the crisis care centers levy, which I just helped to get passed on the ballot. This measure will raise \$1.25 billion over the next 9 years for more mental health and substance use disorder care. I will advocate for providing these services in accessible and culturally relevant ways.

**King County has committed to pro-equity contracting with minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBs) and reported that 7% of total 2021 contracting dollars went to MWBs. What actions will you take to reduce systemic discrimination against MWBs and expand the participation of MWBs in county contracts of all sizes and across our communities?**

I was the prime sponsor of the contracting equity motion last year which commits King County to contracting equity goals and also advocated for statewide changes.

**CERTIFICATION: I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.**

Yes

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