

2026 STATE LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

5th Square is Philadelphia's urbanist political action committee. Our mission is to achieve a more accessible, sustainable, and equitable Philadelphia for all residents through better mobility, public space, and planning policies.

Please refer us to any work you have done on these topics in your answers, if applicable. If you have any questions or would like clarification, please email us at 5thsq@5thsq.org

For 5th Square's positions on these issues see: https://www.5thsq.org/2026_issues

You may complete this questionnaire via [Google Form](#) or [Word Document](#) sent to 5thsq@5thsq.org

Responses to our policy questions will be published on our website -- we will not publish contact info and financial data. If you would like us to include a photo with your response, please email it to us at 5thsq@5thsq.org

⚠ DEADLINE: March 20th, 2026 at 11:59 PM. Only candidates who complete this questionnaire are eligible for a 5th Square endorsement.

CANDIDATE INTRODUCTION

Name as it will appear on the ballot: *

Sierra McNeil

Office sought (include district number): *

State Representative (195)

Campaign Committee Name & Address: *

Sierra for PA P.O. Box 18685 Philadelphia, PA 19132

Campaign Website: *

<https://www.sierraforpa.com/>

.....

.....

Candidate introduction (background, motivation for running, relevant experience): *

I am seeking office because we deserve better. Like many people in my district, I have often felt disconnected from politics and forced to choose between the lesser of two evils. I didn't see leaders who understood our communities, knocked on our doors, or spoke honestly about the daily survival so many families face, so I decided to become that leader.

As a social worker, I believe deeply in bringing humanity back into politics. We've lost the language of care, compassion, and dignity in how we talk about our constituents. These are real people whose lives are shaped by the decisions made in Harrisburg. I am running to ensure their voices, their lived experiences, and their needs are centered in state policy and to offer the type of leadership our district has been longing for.

I am the best candidate for the 195th because I bring a proven track record as a social worker, an organizer, and a systems-level problem solver. I understand how broken many of our systems are because I've spent my career fighting within them and alongside the people most impacted. I know where the gaps are, and I know how to close them in ways that center humanity, community wisdom, and lived experience.

My leadership is rooted in action. I helped mobilize nearly 700 social workers to the State Capitol to advocate for higher wages and safer workplaces. I've organized voter registration efforts at a local library to ensure our neighbors are heard. I've built pipelines, programs, and coalitions that uplift working families, young people, and marginalized communities.

This leadership experience includes being the Director of Workforce Development and Philadelphia Connections at FTAC, where I've led efforts to strengthen Pennsylvania's behavioral health workforce and build real career pathways. It also includes serving as President of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) for the past four years.

What sets me apart is that I don't just talk about meeting people where they are. I live it. I listen deeply, I show up consistently, and I bring people together to create solutions from the ground up. That is the type of leadership the 195th District deserves, and that is the leadership I'm ready to deliver.

.....

ROADWAY SAFETY & HIGHWAYS

Philadelphia had 120 traffic fatalities in 2024 — stubbornly high compared to peer cities. Some of Pennsylvania's most dangerous streets are PennDOT-owned arterials running through dense urban neighborhoods. As a state legislator, you have direct authority over PennDOT's mission, budget, and legislation governing how roads are designed and operated.

1. PennDOT has proposed widening I-95 south of I-676 through Center City and South Philadelphia, adding travel lanes and expanding ramps. Do you support this project as proposed? *

- Yes. Support as proposed
- Support rehabilitation only. No added Lanes.
- Oppose the project entirely.
- Undecided

Comment / Please explain

While I understand that some residents might see this as a solution to the traffic they experience during their daily commutes, it is not the approach we should take. As a state representative, I would work with colleagues to find a more consistent and reliable revenue stream for SEPTA. If residents had better access to well-funded, reliable public transportation, more of them would trust it as a commuting option, and we would not be spending millions of taxpayer dollars to subsidize less environmentally friendly options.

2. [HB 291 \(parking-protected bike lanes\)](#) would allow PennDOT to design and build bike lanes with a parked-car buffer on state roads, which PennDOT is currently not permitted to do. Do you support HB 291? *

- Yes
- No
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

I would be eager to support that bipartisan piece of legislation. In the 195th district, we have several state roads and a growing population of bike riders, given our proximity to Center City, Temple University, and University City.

For our neighbors near state roads like N 33rd St or Lehigh Avenue, I would love for them to have a safe bike to get to places like Mander Playground and Fairmount Park.

3. [HB 1504, the 'Vulnerable Road User' Bill](#), would increase fines for reckless drivers who cause death or serious injury to pedestrians, cyclists, or other vulnerable users. Do you support HB 1504? *

- Yes
- No
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

Fines serve as an extra deterrent for reckless drivers, and I do believe that they should be raised. I would also like to see an amendment to this bill that guarantees that extra revenue from increased fines only goes to street safety improvements.

4. PennDOT's mission is often described as maximizing the flow of cars through our streets and highways at all costs. Which of the following reforms would you prioritize to reorient PennDOT toward a safety-first culture? Select all that apply. *

- Adopt Vision Zero and the Safe Systems Approach as formal agency goals
- Create a separate PennDOT district/office serving Philadelphia specifically
- Hire and empower a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian coordinator with project approval authority
- Adopt a 'Fix It First' policy prioritizing maintenance over expansion
- Adopt a standardized project scoring formula (like Virginia's SMART SCALE) to allocate transportation dollars based on a balance of safety, accessibility (to jobs), and equity outcomes.
- Remove the municipal maintenance agreement requirement that allows a single township official to block sidewalk construction on PennDOT projects
- None of the above / I oppose these reforms
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

.....

5. Would you support a statewide tax credit for e-bikes (electric bicycles), similar to popular programs enacted in [Colorado](#) * and [Denver](#) that have demonstrably reduced automotive vehicle miles traveled?

Yes

No

Other:

Comment / Please explain

I love the idea and would like to work with state or local partners to make sure this is implemented properly.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

SEPTA faces a \$213 million operating deficit and over \$5 billion in unfunded capital needs, stemming in part from the expiration of Act 89 funding. Without a legislative solution, SEPTA faces severe service cuts with wide economic consequences for the Commonwealth. As a state legislator, you control the funding formulas, enabling legislation, and budget allocations that determine SEPTA's survival.

6. SEPTA's operating deficit requires a dedicated, recurring revenue solution. The Transit For All PA coalition has proposed several options. Please rank the following funding mechanisms from most to least preferred (1 = most preferred), or mark 'Oppose' for any you would not support:

6a. Interstate User Fees (statewide tolls on interstates/expressways) *

⌵ Dropdown


Rank: 3 ▼

6b. Allow counties and municipalities to raise their own money for public transit ([HB 1146](#)) *

⌵ Dropdown

Rank: 1 ▼

6c. [Congestion pricing](#): allow municipalities and counties to levy tolls on vehicles entering their most congested areas

*  Dropdown

Rank: 2 

6d. Excise tax on third-party vehicle deliveries (e.g., Amazon) *

 Dropdown

Rank: 4 

Comment / Please explain

I think that these are all valid ways to find dedicated, recurring funding for public transportation. I also leave my mind open to other funding solutions. Transit for All PA has done a lot of advocacy around this issue, and I appreciate their suggestions of raising the car rental or lease taxes to support public transportation. These taxes have not been raised since the early 1990s, and they are set to bring in hundreds of millions with moderate increases to the current rates.

7. HB 1146 would allow local governments to levy their own taxes and fees to fund public transit in their jurisdictions. Do you support this local revenue-enabling legislation? *

Yes

No

Other:

If yes: what local revenue tools should be permitted? Select all you support:

Payroll tax

Employer head tax

Real estate transfer tax

Parking tax

Sales tax

Property tax

Land value tax

Other:

Comment / Please explain

Allowing municipalities to levy their own taxes to support public transit agencies in their jurisdictions protects Philadelphia from future budget impasses and fights in Harrisburg.

8. SEPTA is pursuing three major service transformation initiatives: the New Bus Network redesign, Reimagining Regional Rail (more frequent service with fare integration), and Trolley Modernization. Do you support state-level actions to accelerate these initiatives? *

- Yes, accelerate all three
- Yes, some of them (specify below)
- No -- let SEPTA proceed at its own pace
- No -- I have concerns about one or more

Comment / Please explain

Our communities need to benefit from these upgrades as soon as possible. The R7 (Trenton Line) helped me get to my grad school classes at Temple. I remember hearing the news recently that it was close to getting cut as a line. I would love to see a 180-degree turn and have it run more frequently to service more riders.

The 15 trolley runs through much of my district, and I recall when they were replaced by buses in 2020 due to critical maintenance issues. Trolley lines across the city need to be modernized to avoid future disruptions in service.

9. Do you support funding and constructing a [Roosevelt Boulevard subway](#) connecting Northeast Philadelphia to Center City via the Broad Street Line? *

- Yes
- No
- Other:

If yes: what concrete steps would you take in the first two years of your term to advance planning and secure funding?

I believe that this is a project that should have been started a long time ago, and I would work quickly with colleagues in Harrisburg to see how we can create this line before labor/ construction costs rise even more. This would be a large project that would require significant intergovernmental cooperation. I would hope that our state delegation could work with our congressional partners to deliver a federal grant for part of the project. The commonwealth could match those funds if we garner a bold coalition to advocate for a wealth tax in PA. I admire the work that local leaders, like Councilmember Michael Driscoll, did to hold city council hearings in 2023 about the Roosevelt Boulevard Subway Line, and we need to continue this conversation with urgency at the state level.

Comment / Please explain

10. Would you support a state tax credit for households that own zero or one cars, as a complement to transit investment ^{*} and to reduce congestion and emissions?

Yes

No

Other:

Comment / Please explain

Households that own one or no car tend to also be economically disenfranchised. This credit helps them while also changing the culture around the "need" to own a car. More people can begin to see vehicles as luxuries compared to a daily necessity.

HOUSING & LAND USE

Pennsylvania needs 450,000 new housing units by 2035, per the state's own Housing Action Plan.

11. Which of the following statements do you agree with (check all that apply): "Building more housing..." ^{*}

...reduces rents and home prices."

...reduces displacement pressures."

...improves race and class equity."

...supports a robust, durable, and growing economy."

...is essential for providing a safe haven for marginalized groups fleeing states with oppressive laws.

Comment / Please explain

Housing is a human right! I am excited by all of the city and commonwealth budget proposals that include significant investments in housing. As someone who is the first person in their family to become a homeowner, I experienced the struggles my mother went through with landlords and the barriers I went through when purchasing my home.

12. The PA State Housing Action Plan calls for 450,000 new units by 2035. In your view, what is the single greatest barrier * to meeting this goal in Pennsylvania?

- Restrictive local zoning (e.g. single-family-only mandates, parking minimums)
- Insufficient government subsidy for affordable housing
- High construction costs
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

Restrictive zoning creates artificial barriers for the development of more housing across Pennsylvania.

13. Several housing supply bills have recently been introduced in the General Assembly. Please indicate your position on * each:

	Support	Oppose
HB 2185 – Legalize duplexes, triplexes & fourplexes in all single-family zones statewide	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B 2155 – Prohibit municipal parking minimums statewide	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HB 2186 – Remove barriers to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) statewide	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HB 2109 – The Golden Girls Law (legalize unrelated adults sharing a home)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HB 2192 – Creation of a statewide Housing Council	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) upzoning near high-frequency transit stations (memo, Rep. Inglis)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comment / Please explain

Enacting these laws solves two problems at once. It alleviates the burden of housing for many of my future constituents, while also creating more transit riders.

14. Pennsylvania currently only authorizes 2nd and 3rd class cities and boroughs to enact split-rate property tax (AKA land value tax), whereby property taxes are shifted from buildings to land. Do you support expanding this authorization to all Pennsylvania municipalities? *

- Yes
- No
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

I support this because the shift would allow for more construction of high-rise housing and mixed-use buildings across Philadelphia without the significant tax burden.

15. Philadelphia sees over 1,000 overdose deaths annually. Do you support prohibiting municipalities from using land use regulations (such as zoning restrictions or councilmanic prerogative) to block evidence-based harm reduction facilities, including safe injection/overdose prevention sites, from operating in appropriate locations? *

- Yes – land use should not be used to block harm reduction facilities
- No – municipalities should retain this authority
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

As a social worker, I can say that safe injection/overdose prevention sites do work and significantly help reduce drug-related deaths. Unfortunately, we do not have a city that believes in this harm reduction tactic, but I will work with local leaders to change the narrative around it.

CLOSING STATEMENT

16. State legislators from Philadelphia represent the densest, most transit-dependent, and most pedestrian-active constituencies in Pennsylvania — yet many colleagues from suburban and rural districts have little exposure to urbanism. How would you build relationships and make the case for pro-transit, pro-housing, and pro-safety policies among legislators from outside our region? *

I have already done the work to build relationships with elected officials and partners from suburban and rural communities. As president of NASW PA, I have worked with representatives across the commonwealth to help push legislation that supports our social workers. I am ready on day one, and I commit to building similar coalitions to bolster investments in public transit and pedestrian safety.

17. Is there anything not covered above that you would like 5th Square members to know about your candidacy or your approach to urbanist issues? *

I would like 5th Square members to know that as who has worked in higher education (being an adjunct professor at LaSalle University) I am deeply concerned about our students having proper access to public transportation. I am committed to fighting for SEPTA student fare cards (which serve K-12 students) to be made accessible to our young people for extended hours, on weekends, and throughout the summer. This way, students can easily participate in extracurricular activities, have a summer job, or simply explore the beauties of the city. I would also advocate for more colleges in Southeastern PA to be able to participate in the SEPTA Key Advantage UPass program. It gives college students more options to get to class, internships, and special events across the city.

Please click "Submit" below to submit your responses.

Thank you for completing our questionnaire! 5th Square members look forward to learning more about your candidacy.
Policy responses will be published at www.5thsq.org — contact/financial data will not be published.

This form was created inside of 5th Square.

Google Forms