

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: *

Chris Johnson

Office sought (include district number): *

State Representative (HD-200)

Campaign Committee Name & Address: *

CHRIS JOHNSON FOR PA, P.O. 12356 Philadelphia PA 19119

Campaign Website: *

<https://www.chrisjohnsonpa.com>

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

I am Chris Johnson, a 33-year-old public education advocate and civic leader. I was born and raised in the Yorktown neighborhood of North Philadelphia, and I have resided in West Mt. Airy since 2019. I initially moved into the neighborhood primarily because I was fortunate enough to obtain a tiny-one-bedroom that I could hardly afford while working on a modest public service salary. Over time, I've come to enjoy the diverse and welcoming spirit of my fellow neighbors and I deeply value the public and common goods we proudly share. Our public schools, our playgrounds and recreation centers, our libraries and rail systems make our communities more whole – and they are worth fighting for.

For far too long, leaders in Washington and Harrisburg have neglected our public schools and public transit system, and have made it harder for working families to afford basic necessities. This is certainly true for my generation.

I'm running to fully fund our public schools, invest in SEPTA, protect our environment, lower costs for families, and ensure that the ultrawealthy pay their fair share.

West Mt. Airy is located in Pennsylvania's 200th Legislative District, which is the office I am seeking in service of my neighbors. As a public education advocate and civic leader, I am no stranger to understanding the transformative power of advancing policies, securing investments, and providing constituent services that promote opportunity and dignity for working families and communities.

I currently serve as the Director of State and Federal Government Relations for the School District of Philadelphia, where I lead legislative advocacy efforts on behalf of the Commonwealth's largest – and historically underfunded – school district. In this role, I fight for fair and adequate public school funding and for the modernization of our aging school facilities because I believe every child and educator deserves to work and learn in classrooms that are safe, welcoming, and vibrant. Prior to joining the District in February 2025, I served as a Regional Representative for former U.S. Senator Bob Casey. I was drawn to Senator Casey's office by his "Five Freedom's for America's Children" agenda which included Medicare for All Kids and the permanent expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit – poverty-eliminating policies. I was also drawn to the role due to a deep commitment to ensuring that working-class and historically underrepresented communities in Philadelphia are not only heard but empowered at the highest levels of government. In this role, I supported Senator Casey's efforts to secure funding to modernize SEPTA's trolleys, add traffic safety improvements to school zones, and Reconnect Chinatown. Earlier in my young career, I served as a District Office Director for a state legislative office in Southwest Philadelphia. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, our team worked tirelessly to meet the urgent employment, healthcare, and housing needs of more than 60,000 constituents.

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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

I am opposed to the negative externalities that an expanded I-95 and I-676 would bring to Philadelphia. However, I support rehabilitation of I-95 for transit safety purposes.

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

Any legislation to protect Philadelphia bike-riders will earn my support, especially common-sense reforms such as HB 291.

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

We, as a Commonwealth, need to start walking the walk and talking the talk with pedestrian safety. Driver accountability is a critical first step.

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

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: 4

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: 3

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

Dropdown

Rank: 2

Comment / Please explain

I think all proposals have a place in strengthening SEPTA's financial health. However, a key priority for my campaign is making the Commonwealth's tax regime less regressive. Therefore, I support prioritizing more progressive parts of Transit For All PA's proposal, such as their proposed tax on luxury vehicle rentals.

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

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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

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 envision a Philadelphia that has a larger, more robust toolbox of transit options for all Philadelphians. The Roosevelt subway is a critical part of that expanded toolbox. As a first-term legislator, the most realistic and impactful way for me to support the Roosevelt subway would be to amplify and support the advocacy of leaders like Rep. Jared Solomon. A priority for my town halls in HD-200 would be to introduce the Roosevelt subway to my constituents. In addition, I would support the hearings Northeast Democrats have held in Harrisburg in support of the Roosevelt subway. It will be a long marathon to get the Roosevelt subway actualized and I will be there every mile along the way.

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

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

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

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

I will support expansion of ADU's provided that they follow thoughtful zoning requirements, including size limitations.

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

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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

We should be in the business of preventing overdoses, but it is critical that we work with all stakeholders and partners to ensure that all communities, not just the few already impacted by the overdose crisis, pitch into harm reduction.

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?

Bottom-line, I believe in approaching other leaders through the commonwealth with humility and openness. Thankfully, the urbanist issues we care about lend themselves to building bridges. First, mass transit is an economic engine. Transit dollars have an R.O.I that will strengthen the Commonwealth, raise revenues, and allow for more investment in rural and suburban parts of our Commonwealth. Second, increased transit funding means investments in transportation projects in all Pennsylvanian communities. Third, transit safety issues affect all Pennsylvanians and a dangerous road is a dangerous road – be it a rural, suburban, or urban highway. Respectfully bringing up these three perspectives to my future colleagues will engender collaboration.

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?

Urbanism is personal for me. Growing up, I lived in one of America's most air polluted zip codes. I developed environmentally-induced asthma because of the very negative externalities that urbanists fight against. Urbanist issues aren't secondary concerns for me – they're one of the key inspirations for my run for the state house. The quality of life in Philadelphia is directly tied to housing and transit, and I would be remiss if I did not become a leader in the fight to make Philadelphia a more livable, just place.

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