



## 2026 STATE LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

5th Square PAC — Philadelphia's Urbanist Political Action Committee

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](mailto:5thsq@5thsq.org)

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

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

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**⚠ 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:

Malcolm Kenyatta

Office sought (include district number):

Pennsylvania General Assembly State Representative (House District 181)

Campaign Committee Name & Address:

Malcolm for PA PAC

Campaign Website:

<https://malcolmkenyatta.com>

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

I've dedicated my career to fighting for working people, expanding opportunity, and making government work for the communities too often left out or overlooked. I'm running for reelection because Pennsylvania needs leaders who understand that issues like affordability, housing, transit, public safety, and economic justice are all connected — and who are willing to fight for real solutions. My experience in public service and organizing has taught me that progress only happens when you bring people together, speak plainly about what is at stake, and stay focused on improving people's everyday lives.

## 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 support making needed investments in I-95, but that support should be limited to rehabilitation and repair. I do not support adding more travel lanes, because study after study has shown that widening highways does not reduce traffic in the long term. We should focus on safety, maintenance, and smarter transportation solutions, not doubling down on an approach that has already failed many times before.

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:*

Yes, I support HB 291. Giving PennDOT the ability to design and build parking-protected bike lanes on state roads is a commonsense step that can make our streets safer for everyone.

Bike safety is also deeply personal to me. I recently lost a friend in a hit-and-run in West Philly, so I know all too well the devastating consequences of dangerous street design and traffic violence. We have a responsibility to build roads that better protect cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers alike, and HB 291 is a part of that effort.

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:*

Yes, I support HB 1504 because reckless drivers who kill or seriously injure pedestrians, cyclists, and other vulnerable road users must face meaningful accountability. Stronger penalties will not replace the need for safer street design and better enforcement, but they are an important part of treating traffic violence with the seriousness it deserves.

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 (explain below)

*Comment / Please explain:*

I would prioritize adopting Vision Zero and the Safe Systems Approach as formal agency goals, hiring and empowering a dedicated bicycle and pedestrian coordinator with project approval authority, adopting a Fix It First policy that prioritizes maintenance over expansion, using a standardized project scoring formula that weighs safety, accessibility, and equity, and removing the municipal maintenance agreement requirement that can allow a single township official to block sidewalk construction on PennDOT projects.

PennDOT has to move away from a model that treats moving as many cars as possible as the highest goal, regardless of the human cost. For me, the priority has to be safety first: preventing deaths and serious injuries, repairing and maintaining the infrastructure we already have, and making transportation decisions based not just on vehicle efficiency, but on whether they improve safety, access, and equity for the people who use our streets every day to transport themselves in other ways. That is why walking and biking need a real seat at the table in how projects are designed and approved. PennDOT should have stronger internal authority focused on bicycle and pedestrian safety,

and it should not be so easy for necessary sidewalk improvements to be blocked. Safer streets are deeply personal to me, and I believe our transportation policy should reflect the value of every life, not just the convenience of drivers.

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 am supportive of policies that expand safe, affordable transportation options and reduce costs for working people. I would want to review the details of any statewide e-bike tax credit proposal, but I am very open to ideas that improve mobility, support safer streets, and reduce dependence on cars.

## 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:

Funding Mechanism	Rank	Oppose
Interstate User Fees (statewide tolls on interstates/expressways)	4	<input type="checkbox"/> Oppose
Allow counties and municipalities to raise their own money for public transit ( <a href="#">HB 1146</a> )	2	<input type="checkbox"/> Oppose
<a href="#">Congestion pricing</a> : allow municipalities and counties to levy tolls on vehicles entering their most congested areas	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Oppose
Excise tax on third-party vehicle deliveries (e.g., Amazon)	3	<input type="checkbox"/> Oppose

Comment / Please explain:

My top priority is making sure SEPTA has a stable, dedicated revenue stream, because transit is essential to workers, students, seniors, and the broader economy of Philadelphia and Southeastern Pennsylvania as a whole. That's why last summer I walked 105 miles over 5 days from my house in North Philly to the steps of the capital to bring awareness to the mass transit funding crisis. Of these options, congestion pricing is the strongest fit because it both manages traffic and creates a recurring funding source. I would next support giving local governments more authority to raise transit revenue, followed by an excise tax on third-party deliveries. I would rank interstate user fees last because, while I would not rule them out, they are the broadest and least targeted option on this list.

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    Property tax    Land value tax     
**Parking tax**    Sales tax    Other:

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:

Yes. I support state-level action to accelerate the New Bus Network, Reimagining Regional Rail, and Trolley Modernization. If we are serious about SEPTA's future, the state has to be a partner in delivering more reliable, more frequent, and more accessible service — not the reason that critical improvements are delayed.

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 support investments that expand access to fast, reliable public transit, especially for communities that have been underserved for far too long. A Roosevelt Boulevard subway has the potential to be transformational for Northeast Philadelphia and for our city as a whole. At the same time, I believe any project of that scale has to be backed by serious planning, community input, and a credible funding strategy.

What I know for sure is that we cannot keep starving transit while pretending to care about mobility, safety, and economic growth. If we are serious about connecting more Philadelphians to opportunity, then major transit expansion has to be part of the conversation.

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    **Need more information**

Comment / Please explain:

I would be open to supporting a state tax credit for households with zero or one car, particularly as part of a broader strategy to invest in public transit and reduce congestion and emissions. We should be

making it easier and more affordable for people to choose transit and other lower-cost transportation options, not harder.

## 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:*

I agree with all of the above. We have to treat housing like the essential need that it is. That means building more housing, expanding affordability, and making sure more people can stay in the communities they call home. I believe a stronger housing supply helps bring down costs, reduce displacement, advance race and class equity, support long-term economic growth, and make our communities more welcoming to people seeking safety and opportunity.

**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** (explain below)

*Comment / Please explain:*

The biggest barrier is a lack of political will to address this crisis at the scale it demands. Restrictive local zoning is a major part of the problem. So is the lack of sufficient public investment in affordable housing. And high construction costs are real. But the reason those barriers remain in place is because too many officials have not treated housing supply and affordability with the urgency they deserve. If we are serious about meeting this goal, we need leaders who are willing to reform outdated rules, invest real resources, and make clear that housing affordability is a priority.

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

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

*Comment / Please explain:*

I support all of these proposals. Pennsylvania cannot meet its housing needs if we keep making it harder to build the kinds of homes people actually need. That means legalizing duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes, removing unnecessary parking mandates, expanding access to ADUs, allowing unrelated adults to share housing more easily, creating stronger statewide coordination through a Housing Council, and encouraging more housing near high-frequency transit.

If we are serious about affordability, we have to be serious about supply. I support these bills because they would help lower barriers to housing, give communities more flexible options, and make it easier for more Pennsylvanians to find a safe, stable, and affordable place to live.

**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 would be open to supporting expansion of split-rate property tax authority to all Pennsylvania municipalities if it helps encourage more productive land use, support housing growth, and make our communities more affordable. Local governments should have more tools to promote smart development, but any expansion should be designed carefully so it advances equity and does not create unintended burdens for homeowners with limited means.

**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:*

I support evidence-based harm reduction strategies that save lives, and I do not believe local political roadblocks should be allowed to override proven public health interventions in appropriate locations. Philadelphia's overdose crisis demands urgency, compassion, and policies grounded in what works. Any approach must include community engagement and strong implementation standards, but we cannot let stigma or arbitrary land-use barriers stand in the way of life-saving care.

## 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 would start by meeting people where they are. Not every legislator represents a dense, transit-rich neighborhood, but every legislator understands what it means for working people to need reliable transportation, safe streets, and a fair shot at finding housing they can afford. That is how I would frame this, not as an abstract urbanist agenda, but as a kitchen-table issue about cost of living, public safety, and economic opportunity.

I would also build those relationships by showing colleagues that these policies are not just good for Philadelphia, but good for the Commonwealth. Strong transit systems connect people to jobs, major institutions, and regional economies. More housing helps lower costs and support growth. Safer street design reduces preventable deaths and injuries. And I would make clear that none of this is about taking something away from other communities; it is about giving Pennsylvania more tools to succeed in different places with different needs.

Finally, I would lead with respect and with results. I have found that you move people by building trust, listening first, and then making a practical case backed by real examples, not ideology. If a legislator from outside Philadelphia can see how transit investment supports business growth, how housing supply affects affordability, or how safer street design saves lives, you can build a coalition that is broader than geography. That is the work: making the case patiently, consistently, and in a way that connects our regional needs to shared statewide values.

**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?

What I want 5th Square members to know is that I do not see these issues as separate silos. Housing, transit, street safety, affordability, and economic justice are all connected. If we want communities where people can thrive, we have to build a Pennsylvania where it is easier to get around safely, easier to find housing you can afford, and easier to stay in the neighborhoods you call home.

I also believe these issues are about values. They are about whether we are willing to invest in people, design communities around human needs, and make government work for everyone, not just those with the most power or the loudest voice.

And finally, I want people to know that I understand this work is about both urgency and coalition-building. Real progress requires vision, but it also requires relationships, persistence, and the willingness to fight for change even when it is politically difficult. That is the approach I would bring to these issues in Harrisburg.

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**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](http://www.5thsq.org) — contact/financial data will not be published.*