

2026 PA 3rd Congressional District 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

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: Sunday April 5th, 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: *

Ala Stanford

Campaign Committee Name & Address: *

Stanford for Congress, PO Box 4003, Philadelphia 19118

Campaign Website: *

www.stanfordforcongress.com

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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

I grew up in public housing in North Philadelphia, raised by a teenage mother, relying on SNAP, Medicaid, and public health clinics just to get by. By every measure, I was not supposed to be standing here. But a federal GEAR UP grant championed by my own congresssperson opened the door to Penn State, and that began an eighteen year journey that ended with me becoming the first African American woman pediatric surgeon trained entirely in the United States. And then I came home.

I came back to North Philadelphia because I knew what it meant to grow up without consistent healthcare, without economic security, and without someone in Washington fighting for you. I built a practice. I founded the Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium, and when COVID hit and Black and Brown communities were being abandoned, we took testing and vaccines directly into the streets and served over 100,000 residents. President Biden appointed me HHS Region 3 Director, where I helped lead the national rollout of 988, fought to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage, and proved I could navigate a divided Washington to deliver results for millions of Americans. Today I continue to practice medicine at the Ala Stanford Center for Health Equity at 21st and Lehigh, in the zip code with the lowest life expectancy in Philadelphia, providing care to every patient regardless of insurance status, income, or immigration status.

I am running for Congress because I am tired of filling gaps that policy should have prevented. This moment does not call for another politician. It calls for a physician, a public health leader, and someone who has spent their entire career proving that when you show up consistently, earn trust, and meet people where they are, you can change lives. I have done that work in this community for decades. I am ready to take that fight to Washington.

ROAD to Housing Act

Do you support the ROAD to Housing Act? *

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

Which parts of the bill do you think would be most helpful for increasing housing supply in Philadelphia and the collar counties? *

The provisions that would have the most immediate impact on Philadelphia and the collar counties are the Housing Supply Frameworks Act, the vacant building conversion pilot program, and the FHA multifamily loan limit reforms.

The Housing Supply Frameworks Act directs HUD to develop best practice frameworks for zoning and land-use reform, giving communities the tools to identify and overcome barriers to development. You cannot build your way out of a housing crisis one zoning variance at a time.

The vacant building conversion pilot creates grant funding to turn abandoned warehouses and commercial buildings into attainable mixed-income housing. Philadelphia has thousands of vacant properties representing an enormous untapped opportunity, and this program puts federal dollars directly to work on them.

And updating FHA multifamily loan limits to reflect actual construction costs unlocks financing for the mid-rise, mixed-income development that is the most viable path to adding housing at scale across this district.

Was the Senate right to include a ban on build-to-rent single-family housing? *

No. While I understand the concerns about corporate ownership of housing, banning build-to-rent single-family homes moves us in the wrong direction. We cannot solve a housing shortage by restricting housing production.

The core issue is that we have not built enough homes. Build-to-rent developments still add to overall housing supply. When we reduce the pathways to build housing, we make scarcity worse and put upward pressure on rents and prices across the board. The real barriers in Philadelphia are restrictive zoning, lengthy approvals, and chronic underinvestment. Build-to-rent is not the problem.

That said, I do support banning large institutional investors from purchasing existing single-family homes. There is a meaningful difference between building new housing and buying up existing homes in working-class neighborhoods to drive up prices. We can stop the latter without sacrificing the former.

Transportation and SEPTA

What are your priorities for the next surface transportation funding re-authorization bill? *

Growing up in North Philadelphia without a car, SEPTA was not a convenience. It was my lifeline. It was how I got to school, how I got to work, and how I discovered that Philadelphia was bigger than my block. For millions of Americans, public transportation is the difference between access and isolation, between opportunity and stagnation. That experience shapes everything I believe about federal transportation policy.

My priorities for the next surface transportation reauthorization are straightforward.

First, robust and sustained funding for public transit. SEPTA serves hundreds of thousands of Philadelphians every single day and has faced chronic underfunding for decades. The next reauthorization must reverse that trend with dedicated, predictable funding that allows transit agencies to maintain existing systems, expand service, and plan for the future without lurching from funding cliff to funding cliff.

Second, environmental justice and equity in infrastructure investment. For too long, federal transportation dollars have built highways through communities of color rather than transit systems that serve them. The next bill must prioritize investments that connect underserved communities to jobs, healthcare, and education, and must include strong environmental review requirements that protect frontline communities from the pollution and displacement that too often accompany major infrastructure projects.

Third, safety. Pedestrian and cyclist fatalities have risen sharply in recent years, and Philadelphia has felt that toll acutely. Federal transportation policy must prioritize complete streets design, safer intersections, and accountability for agencies that fail to meet safety benchmarks.

What are your thoughts on SEPTA’s Re-imagining Regional Rail vision for 15-minute regional rail service across our region? *

I am a strong supporter of SEPTA's Re-imagining Regional Rail vision and I believe the federal government has both an opportunity and an obligation to help make it a reality. Fifteen-minute regional rail service is not a transit amenity. It is an economic equity intervention. The current network was designed around a commuter model that serves downtown office workers rather than the full range of people who need to move across this region. A fifteen-minute service pattern changes that entirely. It makes transit a genuine alternative to car ownership for working families, connects workers to jobs across the region, and improves air quality in the communities that need it most.

In Congress I will fight to secure federal Capital Investment Grants funding for the infrastructure Re-imagining Regional Rail requires, and push for dedicated federal operating support to sustain it. Philadelphia's workers deserve a rail system built around their lives.

On a scale from 1 - 5, how much of a priority is winning funding for Re-imagining Regional Rail in Congress over the long-term? *

1 2 3 4 5

I will not seek funding for this in Congress This is my top priority in Congress

How will you use your position, if elected, to build long-term support within the southeast delegation for funding Re-imagining Regional Rail? (Our ideal candidate will be a leader and a strategist for this effort—not just a passive supporter.) *

Reimagining Regional Rail is one of the most exciting and consequential transportation investments this region has ever considered, and I will be one of its most vocal champions in Congress. I know exactly what is at stake. I have lived it.

When I was placed in the Mentally Gifted program at Lingelbach Elementary, it put me on a SEPTA bus to University City every single day. That bus ride changed my life. Walking the campuses of Penn and Drexel, I saw for the first time that the world was bigger than my neighborhood and that education could be my way out. SEPTA did not just move me from one part of the city to another. It moved me from one version of my future to another. That is what transit does when it works. It does not just connect places. It connects people to possibility.

That is why I refuse to treat Reimagining Regional Rail as just another infrastructure project. Turning underused commuter rail into fast, frequent, affordable service across this region is an economic transformation. It means a mother in North Philadelphia can reach a job in the suburbs in thirty minutes. It means a young person without a car is no longer locked out of the opportunities that have always existed just beyond their reach. It means this region finally builds a transit system worthy of the people who depend on it.

In Congress I will build a regional coalition around this project, fight aggressively to connect SEPTA to every available federal funding stream, and make the case loudly and repeatedly that this is not just a Philadelphia issue. It is a regional economic competitiveness issue, and the entire southeast delegation has a moral and economic stake in getting it right.

Economic and population growth

The Sun Belt states have seen significant growth in both housing and population, while Pennsylvania and other states in the northeast have experienced stagnant or shrinking populations. Does this trend concern you? *

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Please explain why or why not *

Yes, and the consequences are not abstract. Population loss directly determines how many congressional seats Pennsylvania holds and how many Electoral College votes it commands. We have already lost seats in recent decades, and every seat we lose goes to a Sun Belt state with a very different set of priorities. We are not just losing neighbors when people leave. We are losing political power, federal representation, and our ability to fight for the investments this region needs.

People do not leave Pennsylvania because they want to. They leave because they cannot afford to stay. Housing costs, stagnant wages, underfunded schools, and a cost of living that has outpaced income growth are pushing working families toward states that have made it easier and cheaper to build a life. That is not a demographic inevitability. It is a policy failure. And in Congress, I will fight to reverse it.

Pennsylvania is the only state in the northeast with a growing economy, most of which is concentrated in SEPA. Would you like to see Pennsylvania's share of the nation's population grow? *

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

Would you like to see Philadelphia's share of Pennsylvania's population grow? *

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

In your view, what should be the strategy, if any, for growing PA's population again? What can you do as a federal representative to help support this? *

The strategy for growing Pennsylvania's population is the same strategy for making Pennsylvania a place where working families can afford to build a life. Those are not separate goals. They are the same goal.

People move to where opportunity is accessible and affordable. Right now, too many Pennsylvanians are making the calculation that the costs outweigh the possibilities. Our job in Congress is to change that calculation.

That means attacking the housing shortage aggressively. Pennsylvania cannot grow its population if working families cannot find homes they can afford. A region that cannot house its workforce cannot grow. It means investing in transit and infrastructure that makes our cities and suburbs genuinely competitive. The Sun Belt did not grow because of the weather. It grew because of investment that made it easy to live and work there. Philadelphia and its surrounding region have extraordinary bones. What we need is the federal commitment to make them work for everyone.

It means building an economy with good paying jobs in clean energy, healthcare, technology, and advanced manufacturing right here in Pennsylvania. Federal investment in workforce development and registered apprenticeships at our community colleges can give young people a reason to stay rather than leave for opportunities elsewhere. It means fully funding our public schools, because families make location decisions based on where their children will be educated. And it means making healthcare affordable and accessible, because a region where people cannot afford to get sick is not a region where people choose to put down roots.

CLOSING STATEMENT

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 think about cities the way a physician thinks about patients. You do not treat symptoms in isolation. You look at the whole person, the whole system, and you ask what is actually causing the problem and what will actually fix it.

That is how I approach urban policy. Housing, transit, healthcare, education, economic opportunity, and public safety are not separate issues. They are the same issue, viewed from different angles. A child with asthma who cannot get to a doctor because transit is unreliable and the nearest clinic is three neighborhoods away is not experiencing a healthcare problem and a transit problem and a housing problem. She is experiencing what happens when we fail to build cities that work for everyone.

I grew up in that failure. I also built solutions inside it. The Black Doctors Consortium was not just a public health intervention. It was a proof of concept for what happens when you stop waiting for systems to work and start building the access points yourself. The Ala Stanford Center for Health Equity at 21st and Lehigh is not just a clinic. It is an anchor institution in a neighborhood that has been systematically denied anchor institutions.

That is the urbanist vision I am bringing to Congress. Not just better policy on individual issues, but a commitment to building cities where zip code does not determine destiny. Where transit connects people to possibility. Where every neighborhood has the institutions, the investment, and the infrastructure it needs to thrive.

Philadelphia is one of the great cities in the world. It deserves a representative who fights for it like it is.

Want any adjustments? Claude's election info may be outdated. To get reliable, up-to-date voting information, visit [TurboVote by Democracy Works](#).

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.

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