

## **PA PAC Questionnaire for Durham Board of County Commissioners – 2024**

**Please return the completed form along with your resume or biographical statement describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by Wednesday, January 3 at 5pm at the latest.**

***Please also include a high resolution headshot for the PA mailer in case you are endorsed.***

**Please email your responses to the PAC coordinators at [papacboard@googlegroups.com](mailto:papacboard@googlegroups.com) by**

**Wednesday, January 3 at 5pm**

**Please note that following the Wednesday, January 3 at 5pm deadline, the People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.**

**When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with each question numbered and organized as it appears here. Type your responses in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Do not use colors or shading.**

**Please try to confine your responses to no more than 300 words unless another word limit is indicated. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question.**

**If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.**

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.**

Candidate's name: Wendy Jacobs

Address: P.O Box 52023, Durham NC 27717

E-mail Address: [wendyjacobsfordurham@gmail.com](mailto:wendyjacobsfordurham@gmail.com)

Phone: 919-418-3169

Website: [wendyjacobsfordurham.com](http://wendyjacobsfordurham.com)

### **Government and the Public Good**

1. Of all the issues confronting Durham County, which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if you are elected?

*The single most important issue to me is the need for safe and affordable housing to meet the needs of people in our community. I believe housing is a basic human right and that access to safe and affordable housing is necessary for all people to thrive. This means adequate workforce housing for our teachers, public school workers, government staff and others who work to serve our community in various ways. It also means housing for our seniors and those on low or fixed incomes, justice-involved residents returning to our community and supportive housing to meet the needs of residents with mental illness, those who use substances and those with disabilities. I believe we can address many of the other pressing issues in our community like the achievement gap, poverty and violence if people have access to safe and affordable housing.*

What would you do about it if you are elected?

I will continue to prioritize investments in community housing as I have as a county commissioner over the past 11 years.

*Here is some of what I have done:*

*-Led the city-county effort to approve \$6.5 million in funding to Housing to New Hope to create Durham's first permanent supportive housing campus, Carver Creek. This will provide 125 units of permanent supportive housing and has also preserved existing affordable housing.*

*-Supported the county's partnership with the city to provide more than \$35 million in gap financing for affordable housing projects*

*-Championed the public-private partnerships that are resulting in 300 units of affordable housing being built at 300 and 500 East Main Street.*

*-Helped to form and fund joint city-county investments to innovative investments to address homelessness, eviction, and displacement of homeowners due to market forces and gentrification: the Homeless Street Outreach Program, the Eviction Diversion and Emergency Rental Assistance Program, the Low Income Homeowners Relief Tax Grant program and increased joint investments in Homeowner Repair assistance for seniors to help them age in place.*

*Here are some of my priorities for my next term:*

*-Support master planning for the Carver Creek Campus mentioned above, ensuring that residents with substance use needs, mental illness and/or disabilities have access to permanent supportive housing.*

*-Support investments in re-entry housing and Urban Ministries and St. Phillips' vision for a day center and non congregate housing for our unhoused residents.*

*-Champion the creation of a joint city-county-DPS Housing Plan. Wake and Mecklenburg Counties have comprehensive plans to meet the needs for affordable and supportive housing for their residents and to end homelessness. We can not continue our piecemeal approach. We need to bring the public sector as well as the private sector, non profits, religious organizations and foundations together to assess the resources we have (land and financial resources), understand what the needs are and have clear targets and metrics. We need a plan for how many units must be created each year to meet this goal as well as strategies to track, protect and preserve our existing and naturally occurring affordable housing. No one entity can address this issue alone. This can and must be a coordinated, comprehensive and collaborative effort for which all take responsibility. I will prioritize county investments to leverage partnerships, incentives and creative tools to build permanent affordable housing.*

*-Use my planning and transit experience to fully implement our new Comprehensive Land Use Plan and help revise our UDO (Unified Development Ordinances) which will help support more housing choices, infill and dense transit oriented development in coordination with the new Durham County Transit Plan.*

2. How can county government use its authority and its resources to direct jobs to those who most need them and to lift the wages of the lowest-paid workers in Durham?

*As a county commissioner creating jobs that pay well for all people in our community has been one of my central priorities.*

*The county can use its authority and resources to address the negligence of the state legislature in adequately funding salaries for public school employees, establish community wide expectations for fair wages and serve as a role model for all employers in Durham. I have supported and prioritized county funding in our annual budgets for Durham County and DPS employees to raise wages and ensure that*

*everyone, but especially our lowest paid workers, are receiving the pay they deserve. Over just the past three years, I have supported more than \$30 million in increased funding for DPS employees. This has increased the salaries of certified and classified staff, including teaching assistants, bus drivers, cafeteria workers and janitors. In this past year's budget, I approved more than \$10 million in increased funding for Durham County salaries, to increase the salaries of our lowest wage workers including social workers, public health workers and first responders. I am proud that the Durham County minimum wage is now \$19.22/hour. In my next term I will continue to support working toward the minimum living wage (currently \$24/hour for Durham) and towards masters pay for DPS staff.*

*Durham County's Durham PreK is another systemic approach that targets raising the wages of some of our county's most underpaid workers- our early childhood educators. As county commissioner I've championed the creation and funding of Durham PreK and want to expand it if re-elected. The Durham PreK program supplements the wages of all providers who join the program -raising their wages to the level of DPS employees. We invest in the professional development of these workers, providing funding for educators who want to pursue further certification or training. We also provide funding for the partnership between CCSA (Child Care Services Association) and Durham Tech that is creating a pipeline for well paid and highly trained early childhood educators. In my next term, I will advocate for increased funding and expansion of the Durham PreK program.*

*The County can also invest in systemic approaches to getting residents into good paying jobs who might otherwise be excluded from these opportunities. One example is the BULLS Initiative. An innovative program led by Made in Durham in partnership with DPS, the Biotech Center, Durham Tech and local employers, the BULLS initiative targets primarily young men and women of color, and provides the education, stipend, wrap around support, industry certification and then direct access to life science jobs. In this year's budget I supported more than \$1.5 million in funding for BULLS in addition to \$3 million in ARPA funding. I will continue to strongly support funding for this systemic and successful approach in my next term as well as the expansion to additional jobs sectors with employers the county partners with in RTP and Treyburn Industrial Park.*

## **Education, etc**

3. What issues do you see with school construction and student school assignment? What role should race equity play with regard to school construction and student assignment? Please address cost overruns that have reduced the reach of the last education bond.

*The issues with the needs around school construction, renovation and maintenance are rooted in the state abandoning its responsibility to provide adequate funding for both the capital and operational needs of our public schools in North Carolina. As a county commissioner over the past 11 years, I have witnessed the steady decline in funding. As a county commissioner I have strongly supported our local government doing all we can to try to help fill these gaps. Under my leadership as chair of our board in partnership with Mike Lee as school board chair, we worked together to transform the relationship between our elected bodies as well as our staff to become more collaborative. One of the results was the first ever joint capital improvement plan incorporating and prioritizing school needs. This also laid the foundation for our recent historic successful education bond referendum of \$550 million with \$430 million in funding for DPS. I have supported county funding for a new Northern High School and construction of our first new elementary schools in many years, Lyons Farm and Murray-Massenburg. The challenges around school construction have been and will continue to be about how to prioritize needs with limited local resources and how to complete projects on time and within budget due to*

*escalating material and labor costs, linked to regional and national trends as well as higher interest rates. I will work to support Durham County adopting a regular schedule of bond referendums to help fund ongoing school construction needs.*

*In terms of school assignment, I support the vision of the DPS Growing Together Plan adopted by the Board of Education that will help ensure more equitable school assignment and create excellent DPS schools throughout our community with robust opportunities for languages, arts and sciences for all children.*

*Racial and economic equity should be centered in decisions around school construction and school renovations as well as student assignment. I support the work of the Superintendent and Board of Education to prioritize this in their decision making.*

4. What are your thoughts about the expansion of the HEART program to schools? How do you envision HEART interacting with the SRO program, both in terms of funding and within schools themselves?  
*I strongly support expansion of the HEART program county wide and would be very interested in learning more about a possible model to serve our schools. Many of the challenges that students face at school with attendance, behavior and academic achievement are rooted in deeper issues within our community. I support systemic investments in programs that care for our children and families. I think the model of the HEART program which involves wrap around and peer support and trying to connect people directly to resources and services could be transformative in supporting our teachers, schools and families, in partnership with school nurses, social workers, counselors and other evidence based, holistic models like Community Schools.*

*In terms of HEART interacting with SROs, I would like to hear more from advocates, the Community Safety Department, and school staff about what the possibilities may be. For instance, similar to the current HEART program which involves four different types of teams depending on appropriate response needed, there might be a School HEART team that includes SROs. As the county currently provides direct funding for the SRO program, we can also look at the best way to allocate funding to care for children, teachers and our entire school community.*

5. Library staff have asked for an increased workforce, in part to support Sunday opening hours, but in the bigger picture, to enable one of the highest rated County services to fully function. As County Commissioner, how would you support, preserve, and grow the staff and programs of the library? How would you get input from library staff in the process of doing so?

*As a county commissioner, my goal is to advocate for the needs of our staff so that every department has the resources they need to serve our residents. Our libraries are where our entire community comes together and are a vital resource for people in Durham. It will be a funding priority for me to determine how to enable our libraries to be open and accessible again on Sundays as families have been requesting this and neighboring counties have been able to restore this service. It will be critically important that our library staff to have direct input guiding decisions that are made about how we can increase and improve our library services. The assessment process led by the county manager engaging both an independent*

*outside consultant as well as our county Office of Strategy and Performance will provide the opportunity for a comprehensive look at the workplace culture, current staffing model as well as all library services and programming and potential new offerings. Library staff will have the opportunity to provide direct and confidential input into these decisions. I look forward to our board receiving these recommendations and supporting any funding needed to help transform and improve our library so that we can provide the best possible services and resources to all Durham residents. In addition, I will continue to make myself available to meet and speak with current and former library staff to hear directly from them about their concerns, suggestions for improvement and ways to ensure we have the best library system to care for our staff and community.*

### **Housing, Planning, and Neighborhoods**

6. What planning policies and priorities do you wish to see emerge from the on-going review and revision of Durham's Uniform Development Ordinance?

*Our UDO is being revised collaboratively with planning staff, outside support and residents for the first time in 20 years, with the goal of implementing our newly adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan. I approved this plan and strongly supported its evolution. It is an expression of the collective priorities of Durham residents emerging from an extensive, multi year community engagement process. The revision of the UDO will be the actual mechanism to implement the plan.*

*I believe one of the most important policies will be the creation of "15 minute communities," ie, creating walkable, bikeable, transit oriented/accessible neighborhoods that have a mix of housing types, shopping and green space so that people can get most of what they need as well as access to jobs and education within 15 minutes. I believe another fundamental priority we must implement is around affordable housing. I advocated for the recommendation of 15% affordable housing for all residential development and 20% within transit areas, recommended by CAHT (Coalition for Affordable Housing and Transit), be incorporated into the final draft of the plan. With the revision of our UDO, we have an incredible opportunity to implement the vision of the type of neighborhoods residents want to live in and the type of place they want Durham to become. We have the opportunity to leverage our growth and transit investments to be environmentally sustainable, with better access to good jobs and education. I was fully engaged with the Comprehensive Land Use Process and will work hard to ensure our UDO revision upholds the priorities and policies of this community rooted plan.*

7. Should the County expand permanently supportive housing? What do you see as the role of PSH in community reentry? What other roles does it play?

*Yes. I am a strong advocate for the need for more permanent supportive housing (PSH) for our most vulnerable residents. Durham is lacking in adequate resources for all types of supportive housing. A study done by the City of Durham several years ago estimated that we needed about 1500 units of PSH but we currently have only about 150 units, most being provided by our nonprofit partner, Housing for New Hope. As one of only 13 elected officials in the national Familiar Faces Initiative and now leading the Durham Familiar Faces Initiative, I am focused on keeping our residents with severe mental illness and*

*substance use disorder out of our jails, homeless shelters and emergency rooms. I helped lead the effort to create what will become Durham's first permanent supportive housing campus, Carver Creek. This will eventually provide 120 units and be an important model that we must continue to build on.*

What do you see as the role of PSH in community reentry?

*The County currently operates and funds transitional supportive housing for residents re-entering our community through our Justice Services Department and Justice Services Resource Center. Some people re-entering need transitional supportive housing and others who are disabled or chronically ill may need permanent supportive housing. It is vital that we have a range of housing supports to best meet people's needs so that they can thrive in our community. One of the areas that is lacking is supportive re-entry housing for women and I have been advocating for county funding to meet this need. As a member of our Stepping Up Initiative (an effort to keep people with mental illness out of our justice system) and co-chair of Durham Joins Together to Save Lives, our county wide task force addressing substance and medication misuse, I am also working alongside staff to ensure our re-entry housing supports residents receiving MAT (medication assisted treatment) for opioid use disorder.*

What other roles does it play?

*PSH can play many roles in our community. The vision for the Carver Creek Campus is to provide housing for those being discharged from the hospital who need a place to fully recover, for re-entry residents, those with disabilities or struggling with mental health and substance use. PSH residents can benefit from peer support, on site services and wrap around case management as I learned from a recent site visit to two PSH projects in Charlotte. The data from our annual Durham Point in Time Count indicates we have a growing number of unhoused residents with mental health and substance use needs who could benefit from permanent supportive housing.*

## **County Finances, Transportation, Incentives, and Services**

8. What is your position on providing public incentives to private firms to promote economic development in Durham? How can county government use development incentives to promote more widely shared prosperity, including better jobs and higher wages for Durham residents?

*As a county commissioner I have learned that incentives are a part of our economic reality in order to both recruit and retain businesses to Durham County. But I have also learned how to leverage these incentives to try to provide the most benefit possible to the people of Durham and to structure them to protect Durham County public interests. We are competing nationally and internationally to keep and attract companies in areas such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences, bio pharmaceuticals, agribusiness and clean technology. During my 11 years as a county commissioner, our participation in incentive agreements has involved billions of dollars of investment in our local tax base to help fund our schools and other county services and the creation of thousands of good paying jobs at all skill levels for*

*Durham residents. I have supported the implementation of our rigorous public benefits criteria and rubric for which we assess potential projects that serve as a basis for contracts as well as a contracting process that requires commitments around job creation and property tax revenue generation are met before any incentives are released.*

*Promoting shared prosperity has been my goal with economic development incentives. Our policy has helped expand the number of good jobs we have in RTP, Treyburn and downtown Durham and requires companies meet strict criteria around wages and benefits. I supported the revision of our policy to ensure it will mirror the county's new minimum living wage of \$19.22/hour. We also require detailed information about types of jobs, educational requirements, salaries and opportunities for additional training and internal advancement. It is a priority for me to look for companies who provide high paying jobs for workers at all skill levels and education backgrounds, including entry level positions as well as jobs for justice involved residents re-entering our community. I also evaluate these economic agreements as a way to strengthen our education to jobs pipeline, requiring companies to work directly with partners like DPS, Durham Tech and NCCU.*

*I look forward to advocating for changes to our current policy and focusing on other public benefits that directly impact Durham workers such as provision of on site child care by employers and companies partnering in investments in affordable housing and transit service to support our community.*

9. What non-traditional programs (such as public banking, community investment trusts, community development venture capital) could Durham County implement to reduce economic inequality in our community?

*I support several ways Durham County is currently investing in systemic approaches to reduce economic inequality in our community, and I am interested in learning about other non traditional programs. I advocated for the county to directly invest in the land trust model to expand affordable housing. We will soon be issuing an RFP for \$1.5 million in ARPA funding in this area. We are using our ARPA funding for non-traditional economic investments for shared prosperity. Examples include \$500,000 to establish a community rooted grocery store in Northeast Central Durham and \$250,000 to provide community based legal services. I support the county also directly investing in the Durham Affordable Housing Revolving Loan Fund currently operated by the City, which helps affordable housing developers leverage opportunities for additional financing resources.*

*I am very interested in learning more about public banking, community investment trusts and community development venture capital. As chair of our board, I supported the intentional investment strategy the county made to partner with minority owned businesses in our 300 and 500 East Main Street public private affordable housing projects. I am interested in ways to further leverage publicly owned land at future bus rapid transit and passenger rail stations to build affordable housing and other public benefits. There may be an opportunity to integrate non-traditional public investment programs within these types of projects.*

10. What should be the principal components of a new public transit plan for Durham County?

*As a county commissioner and member of our regional metropolitan planning organization, I was deeply engaged with the creation and adoption of our new Durham County Transit Plan. This plan is the framework for how \$1 billion in county transit tax revenues will be invested over the next 20 years. I strongly support the components of this plan that are based on the recommendations emerging from an equitable community engagement process, similar to the new Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The principal components of this plan reflect the priorities expressed by transit users and residents who rely on transit to get to school and work. These include: 1) expanded, more frequent, more reliable and quicker bus service, 2) regional transit connections that are quicker and more reliable, 3) better bus stops, 4) improvements in high frequency corridors like Fayetteville and Holloway Streets, 5) an improved Durham Station and new stations at the Village, North Duke Crossing and RTP, 6) investments in bus rapid transit and regional passenger rail service. The allocation of funding in this plan aligns with the principal components identified by Durham residents with about 70% of investment in improved bus service and about 30% of investment in regional transit by 2050. I am very excited about this plan and the positive impact these investments will have on the daily lives of people in our community. I am also excited about the outcome of the governance study integrated into this plan that will improve accountability and transparency of how public transit dollars are being spent. Residents will experience this with a new public facing dashboard and website that will track the investment of transit funds and completion of projects.*

11. What, if anything, should the county do to distribute the property tax burden with greater equity and fairness?

*I believe the county has a responsibility to implement an equitable and fair property tax system. While we are limited in our authority due to state control over our tax system, as a county commissioner I have advocated for using all possible tools and approaches to address the negative impacts of gentrification, market forces and rising home values on our low and fixed income residents. These effects often push long time residents of color out of our city neighborhoods and make it difficult for our seniors to remain in their homes and age in place within the fabric of community support. As chair of our board, I strongly supported the creation of our Department of Social Services' innovative LIHR (Low Income Homeowner Relief) property tax grant program that helps to mitigate the burden of increased property taxes on residents 60 and older living at 30, 60 and 80% below AMI (area medium income). We can continue to expand and invest in this tax grant program and work with community partners like the CAHT and Reinvestment Partners to make sure eligible Durham residents know about and can enroll in this program. We must also continue to make sure that Durham residents know about state run tax relief programs for veterans and disabled residents with the help of our tax administration staff, who promote these programs and assist people with enrollment.*

*We are now in the process of working toward our 2025 property tax reevaluation. This will be the first reevaluation since 2019. It will be very important that this process is as equitable and fair as possible and Durham residents have all the tools and information they need to be able to appeal a valuation they do not think is fair. I will continue to advocate for investments like a user-friendly online system that provides real estate comparative values residents can use to understand the basis for their property value or to file an appeal. As a county commissioner I will continue to weigh issues of fairness and equity when considering approval for increased property taxes or when setting the tax rate as part of the upcoming tax reevaluation process.*

## **Justice and Law Enforcement**



12. Explain how you see the County's role in overseeing the Durham jail. Under what circumstances, if any, should the county take intervening action to improve the lives of incarcerated individuals?

*While county commissioners do not have statutory authority to directly oversee the Durham County Detention Center, we do have budgetary authority over funding for the jail. I believe we have responsibility for overseeing how public funds are being used for the operation of the jail and thus provide oversight to ensure the care and safety of residents who are in detention. The jail is under the direct authority of the Sheriff who is also an elected official.*

*As a county commissioner I have supported increased investments in physical and mental health care including mental health screening and access to mental health services for all people entering the jail, \$1 million in funding to offer MAT (medication assisted treatment) for opioid use, the creation of a mental health pod and access to programs like STARR (substance use behavioral treatment program) and resources like the GED high school equivalency program. I believe it is our responsibility as county commissioners to directly raise issues of concern about conditions in the jail with the Sheriff and also make sure information is provided directly to our staff and the office of the Sheriff when we are made aware of these concerns by community members or detainees and their family members. We can provide funding that may be needed to improve conditions for detainees, or address concerns that come to our attention.*

13. What is your position on expanding the HEART program to be county-wide, fully staffed, and available 24/7? Which of those are your top priorities? How would you work to overcome resistance to HEART from some in law enforcement?

*Expansion of the HEART program to be county-wide, fully staffed and available 24/7 is one of my priorities. I have requested this be part of the county manager's FY 23/24 work plan in preparation for our upcoming budget process. Durham County Justice Services and Community EMS have been involved in the creation of the HEART program and Durham County paramedics serve on one of the co-responder teams. From my work with the National and Durham Familiar Faces Initiative, Stepping Up Initiative, Durham Joins Together to Save Lives and national Peer Justice Learning Network, I know how important it is to make sure residents in crisis get the care and resources they need and prevent unnecessary contact with our justice system.*

*My top priority is starting by expanding HEART county wide. Similar to how the program has been rolled out in the city, I think it may take a phased approach to be fully implemented dependent on funding and staffing resources.*

*In conversations I have had with the Sheriff, he has expressed his support for expanding and partnering with the HEART program county wide. I am confident the Office of the Sheriff can provide the education and training to help law enforcement officers learn about this evidenced based program and how it will support law enforcement being able to focus on and respond to violent crime and the work they are specifically trained to do.*

## **Health Care and Social Services**

14. As profiled recently in a 3-part *Assembly/WBTV* series, Durham County has the second-slowest reunification rate in the state for children in foster care. As a County Commissioner, what steps would you propose to help families thrive in Durham County and prevent involuntary family separation?

*I believe ensuring all families and children can thrive is one of the most important responsibilities of Durham County government. This is why I have strongly supported a systemic approach to a strong cradle to career system with a focus on babies, young children and early childhood investments. Here are some of the ways I will continue to invest in the well being of our children and families and keep families together:*

*-As chair of our board, I championed the creation of our Durham PreK program. We're now investing more than \$8 million to ensure universal access to high quality PreK for all children to begin school ready to learn and succeed. I will continue to support increased yearly funding for this program.*

*-I support the nearly \$1.7 million investment in our Guaranteed Income Pilot, Durham Thrives, which will provide a monthly guaranteed income to 125 families to address systemic poverty. I look forward to looking at ways we can continue to sustain and expand this model.*

*- I advocated for Durham County's Early Childhood Action Plan, the first of its kind in our state, which we are now implementing, which is investing in upstream supports for pregnant people, children and families. This funding is going to community organizations focused on Black maternal health care, positive parenting skills, food security and mental health care.*

*-As a county commissioner and chair of our DSS Board, I will continue to support the leadership of our new DSS director, whose priority is child welfare reform and keeping families together. Our new director, Maggie Cveticanin, is prioritizing a systemic approach bringing all stakeholders in child welfare together, including parents, advocates, judges, parent and DSS attorneys, guardian ad litem and DSS social workers, in a collaborative manner to prevent involuntary separations.*

*-As a member of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Health and Human Services Steering Committee, I will continue to advocate for the state funding we need to implement the Child Welfare Reform Act, which focuses on early intervention, family preservation and connecting children and families to local supports. I will also keep advocating for adequate state funding for our children's behavioral health system. We currently do not have sufficient providers or facilities to care for our children with the most complex and challenging health issues. This is a critical need for impacted families and children.*

15. What do you think about the balance between confidentiality and transparency related to families impacted by involuntary separation in the foster care system? Should these courtrooms be open to the public? What should Durham parents do if they feel their child has been wrongfully taken from them? Would you meet with and listen to a parent in this situation?

*I believe there must be a balance between transparency and confidentiality. While we must always advocate for transparency and accountability for all parties involved, we must also respect the rights and desires of parents, children and families. We are also beholden to state laws regarding confidentiality matters.*

Should these courtrooms be open to the public?

*I think this is a complex decision where the input of parents and families should be considered as well as other stakeholders involved in this system. There are state laws that may come into play as well as consideration of protecting the identity of young children who are not yet able to advocate for*

*themselves. Again, this has to be balanced with the need for transparency and accountability regarding the functioning of our entire child welfare system.*

What should Durham parents do if they feel their child has been wrongfully taken from them?

*Parents should have the ability to address their rights and concerns at every level of the child welfare system- starting with the appointed DSS social worker and DSS director, via the court system and judge, with the assistance of a parent attorney and by filing complaints with DHHS at the state level and through redress within the state court system.*

Would you meet with and listen to a parent in this situation?

*My goal as county commissioner is to be accessible and responsive to residents—to meet with them, hear their concerns, and connect them directly to available resources or those who can best address their concerns. Though I don't have the legal authority to be directly involved in cases, I am always willing to meet with parents and hear their concerns. I think the voices of impacted parents must be elevated and heard for systemic change. One example is our recently created DSS Durham Family Engagement Committee. This advisory committee of parents with lived experience in our child welfare system has been recognized as a national model. I look forward to supporting ways to expand the role of this committee as we all work together in Durham to create a more just child welfare system.*

## **Civil Rights**

16. What are the principal issues facing the Latinx and immigrant communities in Durham and how should the county address them?

*I am a strong advocate for our Latinx and immigrant communities and believe Durham must be a welcoming and inclusive community where all people are able to thrive. I value the many ways refugees and immigrants contribute to our community economically, socially and culturally.*

*Immigrants and refugees face issues such as access to affordable housing, high-quality jobs, access to mental and physical healthcare, and access to student and family supports in our schools. Targeted crime is an issue as well. I am very concerned about recent robbery attacks targeting Latinx women. The county can address these issues in many ways. I advocated for the creation of our joint city county immigrant and refugee coordinator who is operating within the support of our Cooperative Extension Department. I will continue to support the work he is leading in partnership with many other community organizations, such as the My Durham Academy program, which helps integrate refugees and immigrants into our community. Durham County government can also continue to make progress ensuring all departments are connecting with our refugee and immigrant services and providing equitable language access within our public health, social services, libraries, Cooperative Extension and other county departments that directly support our immigrant and refugee families. With our DPS students population now comprised of about 30% Latinx students and 17% English language learners, Durham County can provide local funding support to make sure our educators and students have what they need to learn and thrive in our schools.*

*Community organizations also play a critical role. I approved our county's investments in community organizations supporting refugee and immigrant residents including \$200,000 in ARPA funding for El Futuro for mental health services, \$250,000 in funding for the Refugee Community Foundation, \$50,000 for World Relief to provide the RISE summer enrichment program for DPS students and \$360,000 to Cooperative Extension that includes funding for Juntos, a program helping Latinx youth and their families navigate the transition from high school to college.*

17. At a time when the LGBTQ community is under attack by the NC legislature, what can the County do to provide as much protection to this community as possible?

*As a Proud parent, this is a personal issue for me. I will do all I can to fight against the hate filled legislation adopted by our state legislature harming our queer and trans communities. I have supported county resolutions upholding the rights of our transgender students and our public school educators and I will continue to speak out against discrimination and hate.*

*Durham County can be a welcoming and supportive community for our LGBTQ+ residents in every way possible. Part of this is by modeling equity and inclusion as an employer. The director of our new Equitable Well Being Department is leading efforts to ensure that internally our staff have the training, education and awareness they need and policies are in place to ensure Durham County government is an LGBTQ+ friendly workplace and all departments are providing appropriate and supportive LGBTQ+ services.*

*Another way is by funding local community organizations. I supported \$115,740 in county ARPA funding to the Durham LGTBQ Center to provide mental health support for youth. I have championed Durham County and the Board of Commissioners celebrating our LGTBQ+ community with our annual participation in the Durham Pride parade. I welcome and encourage participation from all county staff and family members. I believe Durham County can and must be a place where all people in our community can feel safe, included, valued and cared for.*

*Thank you for completing this questionnaire.*

*Please do not forget to provide us with your resume or biographical statement.*