

**Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People
Political Action Committee
Questionnaire for Durham County Board of Education**

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Position for which you are filing: Durham School Board – District 2
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Candidates wishing to be considered for an endorsement by DCABP PAC must submit a completed questionnaire and resume by the stated deadline, as well as participate in the interview process.

This questionnaire is due no later than Saturday, March 12th, 2022 at 11:59pm.
Please email your completed questionnaire as a pdf. file to pac.dcabp@gmail.com

1. What are your top three priorities for the Board of Education in the coming year and why?

Students First: The COVID-19 pandemic has hurt our students, especially Black and Brown students. As we begin to recover from the losses of the last two years, our policies must be equitable and prioritize student achievement above politics.

Shift Power to Parents and Community: When schools, parents, families, and communities are engaged, our students achieve more. I will work to shift power to parents and the community, ensuring that they are key partners in the decisions of our school system.

Support Teachers and Staff: We must pay our teachers and staff more than a survival wage. \$15/hour is a start, but our teachers and staff deserve to be able to live and provide for their families in the community in which they serve. We must also provide a safe working environment for all DPS employees. And we must provide for the well-being of teachers and staff, ensuring that they have the necessary physical and mental health resources and support.

2. What is your plan for attracting and retaining teachers of color, especially Black male teachers?

Durham Public Schools must have a strategic plan that does not simply pay lip service to attracting and retaining teachers of color but includes specific tactics to accomplish this goal. We must first acknowledge pay inequities that might exist in the current pay structure for teachers and other school staff. I will push for a full evaluation of pay and the development of a process to ensure equitable pay at all levels. Durham Public Schools must also develop meaningful partnerships with our state's community colleges and HBCUs to create pathways to employment for teachers of color. Creating a minority teacher recruitment and retention

coordinator to develop and lead the school system's plan to attract the most qualified and committed minority teachers. Additionally, our curriculum must be culturally relevant and inclusive for students and teachers. Teachers of color must have a voice in the strategic direction of our schools and school system. Finally, teachers of color must have consistently adequate funding for professional development, supplies, instructional resources, and other classroom materials.

3. Have you ever attended racial equity training? If yes, which one(s) and what was something that you realized about yourself? How have you taken that knowledge and applied it to your work? If not, why haven't you attended a racial equity training?

Yes, I have attended racial equity training. As an employee of the Government of the District of Columbia, racial equity training was a standard part of my management training. The racial equity training helped me realize that complexity of race and equity and the importance of applying principles of racial equity to the provision of government services. I have taken that knowledge and have consistently applied it to my professional and civic responsibilities—advocating for funding, policies, and programming that prioritizes shifting power to those that are often overlooked, underserved, and marginalized.

4. Name two specific ways you will apply a racial equity lens to district policies and/or Practices.

I will support fully funding the Office of Equity Affairs and their recommendations for increased equity across the system (from staffing to pay to curriculum). Additionally, I will work with the Office of Equity affairs to develop racial equity tools that can be used across the school system and push for the shifting of power and funding to parents and the community in order to improve student achievement and close existing racial/ethnic gaps.

5. What is your position on monitoring and addressing the mental health of students?

Monitoring and addressing the mental health of students has to be a top priority. The academic success of students is inextricably tied to the mental health of students. Mental health programming must be integrated into the curriculum, and we must provide teachers with mental and behavioral health training. The mental health of teachers should also be monitored and addressed, with mental health days being afforded to teachers as well as additional mental health services and resources.

6. What are the two greatest challenges facing Black students in Durham Public Schools?

The two greatest challenges facing Black students in Durham Public Schools are:

- Learning losses and mental/behavioral health impacts of COVID-19
- Preparation for post-secondary education, including vocational/trades training

7. The impact of covid on our school system and children is undeniable: inequities along racial and economic lines are very pronounced. Speak to some of those impacts and how would you address them as a member of the Board of Education.

COVID-19 has done immense damage to our schools and students. Students have suffered physical and mental health challenges as well as significant academic losses over the last two years. According to a recent report from the NC Department of Public Instruction, “There was a negative impact for all students, for all grades, for almost every subject.” While all students have been negatively impacted, preexisting disparities increased. This means the gap in academic achievement between Black and white students has widened and closing this expanding gap has to be one of the most urgent priorities of the school system.

It is important that the Durham School Board prioritizes equity in the school system’s recovery efforts. Students and schools that have the greatest disparities, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, must have the necessary resources to make up for the instructional losses. As a member of the Board of Education, I will advocate for innovative approaches such as “Recovery Academies” where students will have opportunities for additional instructional time (after school or weekends). Teachers that choose to work at Recovery Academies should receive recovery pay, which would be higher than normal instructional pay. The Recovery Academies could also be staffed by retired and student teachers.

I will advocate for a pause in standardized testing and look for more equitable ways to measure student achievement and progress. While this will require legislative changes at the state level, it is imperative that we use this moment to radically transform how we measure student progress.

Finally, we must prioritize mental health services and resources for students, parents, and teachers. Through public-private partnerships with local mental/behavioral health clinicians, Durham Public Schools can offer culturally appropriate mental/behavioral health services and programming that is integrated into the curriculum.

8. To non-incumbents: Name a specific policy or change you championed on behalf of Black students as a community member.

As a community member I have worked to address disparities in school suspensions and facilitated discussions on ending the school-to-prison pipeline. As a member of the Durham School Board, I will ask administrators for an updated report/analysis of suspensions and referrals to the criminal justice system in order to evaluate how effective the current school board leadership and administration have been in addressing this issue.

News article about my past involvement DPS involvement – ABC11: **Durham Public Schools seeks solutions to suspensions** ([link](#))

9. About you:

a. What would you like the DCABP PAC to know about you that is not identified in your above responses?

My commitment to the DCABP PAC has been unwavering. The Durham Committee has previously endorsed my runs for elected office and I have been committed to the organization's mission. I currently serve as a Democratic Party precinct vice-chair and member of the NC Democratic Party State Executive Committee. In each of these roles, I have pushed for policies and issues that benefit the Black community and align with the mission and values of the Durham Committee.

b. How have you collaborated with or contributed to the mission of the DCABP over the past five years?

I have contributed to the mission of the Durham Committee over the past five years by donating to the organization's political action committee and supporting voter education and turnout efforts. I have also advocated to local governing bodies for issues/topics of importance to the Durham Committee.

c. What does the DCABP mean to you?

The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People has been a part of my life since I was a child and has been instrumental in my personal and professional development. I have been fortunate to learn from and serve with many of our community's most impactful leaders who have been DCABP members. The Durham Committee has and can continue to provide opportunities for the development of Black leaders in many areas—from education to health to economic development. As long as I am able, I will support the Durham Committee and work with the organization to uplift Black people and Black communities.

d. If elected, how will you collaborate with the DCABP? Give specific examples.

As a member of the Durham School Board, I will regularly attend DCABP meetings to provide school system updates and solicit feedback on potential decisions of the school system. I also will collaborate with DCABP to host community town hall meetings on specific school system topics and issues impacting our community. The values of our school system are reflected in the school system's budget. DCABP has to be engaged in the school system's budget development process and I will commit to holding budget listening sessions with DCABP to understand the organization's funding priorities.