

Metro DC DSA

CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

(approved by the General Body, August 2021)

Basic information

1. Name: Dr. Oye Owolewa
2. Current Occupation (if applicable): Registered Pharmacist, US Representative
3. Party Affiliation: Democrat
4. Have you been a public servant before? What positions and when? Yes. ANC Commissioner 8E01 (2019 to 2020). US Representative (1/2/21 to present)
5. How long have you lived in your jurisdiction? 7 years
6. Which office are you seeking? US Representative
7. Why are you seeking this office? I am seeking re-election to continue what I do best. Fighting for statehood and bringing resources and experiences to DC residents.
8. Why are you soliciting Metro DC DSA's endorsement for this office? I'm a member of the DSA and my values align with the DSA
9. Please list other significant endorsements you've received for this position or for prior races: Ward 5 Democrats, Capital Stonewall (formerly Gertrude Stein) Democrats, DC Young Democrats, NAPAC, DC Voters for Animals, TENAC

DSA and democratic socialism

1. Are you a member of DSA? If not, would you join? Why or why not? Yes, I joined in 2020 because I believe in the mission and values of DSA.
2. How does the campaign you are planning and the office that you are considering relate to your theory of social change? I believe that our country should reflect the values of the 99%, and not just the top 1% of wealthiest Americans.
3. Do you identify as a democratic socialist? Why? Yes. Every American deserves healthcare, opportunities and elected leadership that's not beholden to special interests.
4. Are you willing to run publicly as a democratic socialist? *[Yes/No]* Yes
5. Will you be willing to run with other DSA-endorsed candidates as a slate? *[Yes/No]* Yes
6. Will you publicize DSA's endorsement? *[Yes/No]* Yes
7. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from for-profit corporations or for-profit corporate PACs? *[Yes/No]* Yes
8. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from real estate developers, corporate lobbyists, and landlords? *[Yes/No]* Yes
9. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions or endorsements from organizations in the carceral system (such as law enforcement unions)? *[Yes/No]* Yes
10. Are you open to working with DSA when developing your platform? *[Yes/No]* Yes
11. Will you allow Metro DC DSA to create campaign materials to distribute during its work on your campaign? *[Yes/No]* Yes

12. DSA has a large and active volunteer base. Will you support DSA training our own volunteers, running our own canvases, and campaigning openly as DSA members? [Yes/No] Yes
13. Will you allow DSA to collaborate with you on your field plan and program? [Yes/No] Yes
14. Will you allow DSA to keep copies of all data we collect through voter contact, if legal in your jurisdiction? [Yes/No] Yes

Goals of your campaign

15. What is your estimated number of votes needed to win? 40,000
16. What are your plans, beyond what Metro DC DSA can bring to the table, for obtaining the number of votes needed to win? I plan on leveraging the relationships I've made with advocacy groups and tenant associations to create a solid base. My community involvement has led me to meet the right people and create the opportunities needed to raise the bar within my office.
17. What are the issues that will distinguish you from other candidates? How are those issues popular with the electorate? I not only discuss statehood, but I bring tangible value to the DC community. I was involved with increasing DC resident access to COVID vaccine access to locations outside of the District when other elected officials weren't able to. I've also traveled to other states like West Virginia to discuss statehood and legislation that affects DC residents. I've also written numerous op-eds and articles to speak on the behalf of DC residents.

Lastly, I'm moving the DC statehood conversation beyond a charity case to a value proposition where Americans from all 50 states understand how their lives will improve with DC becoming the 51st state.

- 17.1. If you are challenging an incumbent, what distinguishes you from the incumbent?
Why would you be an improvement over the incumbent? N/A
18. How much money will you need to successfully compete in this race and what is your plan to raise it? \$60,000. I raised over \$50,000 as a challenger and hope to raise more funds next time. I plan on doing more consistent fundraisers. I'll also incorporate more small dollar campaigns.
19. What relationships do you have in your district that could form a base of support, through activism, organizing, work or personal networks? My membership and involvement with the Metro DSA, DC Democratic party, Brookland Manor Tenant Association, DC Voter for Animals, Capital Stonewalls and the greater Nigerian community has built me a strong base of folks of all backgrounds who fight for equality.
20. What endorsements do you have from elected officials, political organizations, unions and community leaders? What other endorsements are you seeking and why? This is my first endorsement opportunity I'm seeking for reelection. I'm seeking endorsements from all those who share my views and values
21. How will you use your campaign to build Metro DC DSA? Democratic socialism in DC/Maryland/Virginia? I plan on holding panels that not only feature DSA values, but also include leaders from the DSA.

22. How do you strike the balance between your positions as a socialist and your ability to appeal to the broader electorate? I won't need to. "Socialist" positions like \$15/hr, universal healthcare and a fair immigration system are already popular with the American people. I'll work on advocating for policies that we already agree on and go from there.

Goals in office

23. Would you be open to having DSA members as staff in policy positions and/or to collaborating with our working groups on policy? Yes
24. Will you agree to appear periodically at DSA meetings in your district? Yes, I already do
25. Will you endorse and campaign for other DSA endorsed candidates in the future? Yes, I already have (Ward 4 Council Member Lewis George)
26. How will you use your office, if elected, to build socialism and working class power? I'll bring people together by focusing on what we agree on first, and then build from there.
27. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities? DC Statehood, Getting big money out of politics, Medicare for all
28. How will you implement those priorities, given that you will likely face opposition from other elected officials? Go straight to their voters. In DC, we don't fight with bad service, we go straight to their bosses. So when Senator Joe Manchin announced his opposition to raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr, ending the filibuster and supporting DC statehood, I went straight to West Virginia. Rather than chum it up him in his office, I pulled up to his constituency in Morgantown, WV. Washingtonians aren't afraid of this type of confrontation, and neither am I.

Questions for incumbents

1. Tell us about a success/political win you championed/led that created material wins/improved conditions for the working class in your district? In early 2021, there was a news report that showed 40% of covid vaccines in DC went to healthcare workers who lived in Maryland and Virginia. At the time of the report, both states only allowed their residents to receive vaccines. The lack of reciprocity left many DC residents without options. Ward 3 Council member Cheh even demanded MD and VA return thousands of vaccines to DC, which was ignored.

As a healthcare worker, I recognized the best option for DC residents was providing us with reciprocal opportunities to get vaccinated in Maryland. I reached out to elected officials in DC, MD and VA and didn't receive much support, let alone responses. However, I did get a response when I reached out to Maryland's State Department of Health. Within 2 weeks of that response, a covid vaccine clinic opened in Maryland's Greenbelt Station where DC residents were allowed to get vaccinated. Even in a limited role, I'm very proud to play a role in increasing vaccine access for DC residents, especially those in the working class.

2. What obstacles did you face in office and how do you plan to address these obstacles if re-elected?

The biggest obstacle I face is visibility. Politicians who create controversy often get the most spotlight. Those who get the job done are often left alone. With more endorsements and opportunities, I'll continue to increase my profile and contribute more to the community.

Metro DC DSA Priorities

In February 2021, Metro DC DSA voted to approve four priority campaigns: Defund MPD, Stomp Out Slumlords (housing justice), Green New Deal and Labor. These priorities are subject to annual changes.

Defunding MPD and abolition

MDC DSA's Defund MPD Working Group is organizing in coalition with Black-led and racial justice organizations to defund the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, remove police from schools, and free our neighbors from occupation and incarceration as a path towards abolition — a world without cops and prisons. As part of our vision for racial and economic justice, we demand that the funding removed from police and prisons be reinvested in real public safety: housing, schools, jobs, healthcare and mental health services, community-based support programs, violence interruption, and other public goods and services. This aspiration is a core part of our vision of socialism.

MDC DSA has endorsed the [demands](#) of the Defund MPD coalition, including reducing funding for MPD by 50% over the next three years. In Montgomery County, MD, Metro DC DSA participates in the Defund and Reinvest Coalition (see demands [here](#))

1. Do you support defunding the police in your jurisdiction? Why? Yes. Those funds can be better spent on summer camps for children, wrap-around services for the homeless and educational opportunities that will make the neighborhood safer for not only the residents, but also the police themselves.
2. What actions would you take in office to shift power away from the police? Yes, there needs to be more balance of power to ensure the best outcome for all involved.
3. What actions would you take in office to end mass incarceration? We must end the war on drugs. It failed to reduce crime and created mass incarceration. We also need to reinvest those funds to make our cities safer and more prosperous.
4. Do you support removing school resource officers from schools? Yes
5. Many local police departments participate in training with Israeli military and/or police in what opponents of such programs call the "Deadly Exchange," furthering practices of surveillance, militarization and racist violence and policing. Would you support ending these police exchanges? Yes
6. Which demands of the Defund MPD coalition do you support? Why? I agree with the reinvestment of funds into healthcare and mental health services. As a healthcare professional, I understand the consequences of the lack of quality healthcare. When

these issues are fully addressed, the community will actually be safer and would improve the jobs of the police force.

7. Do you disagree with the ideas behind the demands of the Defund MPD coalition? Why? No. Reinvestment is needed.

Stomp Out Slumlords and housing justice

Stomp Out Slumlords (SOS) fights evictions and supports tenant organizing throughout the Washington metro area. The group began in 2017 as an effort to canvas tenants threatened with eviction to educate them about their rights and encourage them to defend themselves in court. Since then, SOS has gradually focused more and more on organizing tenant unions and going on the offensive to demand concessions from major landlords and developers.

During the pandemic, SOS committed to the movement to cancel rent and expanded their organizing efforts into more than 25 buildings in and around DC and supported rent strikes in most of them. Since the spring 2020, they have mobilized hundreds of people to protest politicians and landlords and stop illegal evictions through direct action.

SOS is now one of the largest and most militant tenant organizations in the region, and they have won rent forgiveness plans from big developers and played an important role in getting and defending some of the nation's strongest emergency tenant protections.

Metro DC DSA is also a member of the [Reclaim Rent Control coalition](#), which seeks to expand and strengthen current rent control laws in DC.

1. Do you believe guaranteed housing is a human right? Yes
2. What steps would you take to expand renter protections in your jurisdiction? I'm currently working very closely with Ward 5's Brookland Manor Tenant Association. They are being mistreated by the landlord who's allegedly trying to push them out. The tenants speak on the security harassing them, closing down recreational space and disturbing their peace. I've reached out to organizations like TENAC to bring support and share the resources that these tenants (mostly seniors), are unaware of.
3. What steps would you take to expand rent control in your jurisdiction? Similar to the previous answer, I'm working to bring the existing resources to the folks who need them the most.
4. What will do to increase affordable housing in your jurisdiction? I plan to work on increasing and strengthening tenant and civic associations across all 8 wards. Strong tenant associations are key to prevent displacement, gentrification and slumlord takeovers.
5. Do you support ending exclusionary zoning? Yes

Green New Deal

Metro DC DSA's Green New Deal campaign organizes to fight the existential crisis of capitalist-driven climate change and environmental racism in the DMV area.

As a grassroots movement, they build and exercise power through labor and tenant unions, electoral campaigns, diverse coalition-building, political education, and policy change. Their vision is to decommodify and guarantee human needs, democratize and decarbonize the economy by 2030, and repair the generational effects of oppression and displacement of Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Metro DC DSA is a member of the [We Power DC](#) (WPDC) coalition. WPDC's goal is to replace Pepco with a democratically-run municipal utility rooted in the principles of energy democracy. This coalition launched in October 2019 as the #NoPepcoPledge, which asked DC Council candidates to reject donations from Pepco and support a feasibility study on alternative utility models. The group's current demands include utility debt forgiveness, a permanent ban on utility shut offs and union wages for all Pepco contractors.

1. Do you support municipalizing utilities in your jurisdiction? Why or why not? Yes, the people, and not million dollar companies, deserve the right to determine our energy options in 2021.
2. Do you support ending utility shut offs and forgiving utility debt in your jurisdiction? Why or why not? Yes. Shutting off utilities, especially during a pandemic with massive layoffs and economic hardship, is cruel and inhumane. I support forgiving utility debt because right now is the time to catch people up while the country is going through economic hardship. If the federal government can bail out billion dollar industries in 2008, then we can forgive utility debt.
3. Will you accept donations from energy utilities? no
4. What steps should your jurisdiction take to decarbonize the economy by 2030? How will you ensure that this happens? We should move towards solar energy and move towards electric vehicles. I'll ensure this happens by utilizing my network to advocate for a greener future.

Labor

The Labor Working Group organizes with workers, including DSA members, from across the region to fight bad bosses, build new unions, and turn out for solidarity actions. Organizing the working class in their workplaces, whether through traditional collective bargaining and unions or other types of organizations, is central to socialist thought and practice. Especially here in the DMV, unions are diverse working-class organizations that build multi-racial solidarity through collective action for community transformation.

1. How will you support public sector unions in your jurisdiction? I'm producing virtual panels that will include union reps to discuss the importance of unions. In my role, it's important to educate the community and bring progressive issues on large platforms.

2. How will you expand union density in the DC area? Same answer, I'm producing virtual panels that will include union reps that discuss the importance of unions. In my role, it's important to educate the community and bring progressive issues on large platforms.
3. How will you support collective bargaining and the right to strike in your jurisdiction? I'll utilize my contacts and resources to support and bring attention to collective bargaining.
4. Do you support increasing the minimum wage in your jurisdiction? yes

Other issues

Palestine

In 2017, the Democratic Socialists of America adopted a resolution at its national convention in support of Palestinian civil society's call for a global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement until Israel ends its illegal colonization of Palestinian lands, ensures equal rights for Palestinians living within Israel, and guarantees the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

Maryland Governor Larry Hogan [issued](#) an executive order in 2017 prohibiting executive agencies from entering into procurement contracts with business entities that engage in boycotts of Israel or territories occupied by Israel. The Maryland General Assembly has also debated and passed bills declaring that it is the policy of the state to oppose public institutions' support for boycotts for Palestinian rights.

In 2016, Virginia lawmakers [passed](#) a non-binding resolution that officially condemns boycotts for Palestinian rights. Two other measures, which would have become binding laws, have failed. These measures include a 2016 anti-boycott bill and a 2017 effort to redefine antisemitism under Virginia's antidiscrimination law to include advocacy for Palestinian rights.

Metro DC DSA expects that any endorsed candidates and public official would oppose anti-BDS legislation and vocally support Palestinian rights.

1. Do you support the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) to pressure Israel until it complies with international law by ending the occupation, instituting equal rights for its Palestinian citizens and respecting Palestinian refugees' right to return? *[Yes/No] yes*

Would you like to expand on your answer? We must use our collective power, including money, to create change.

2. Do you pledge to refrain from accepting any invitation from the Israeli government or participating in any event sponsored by it, until it fully complies with its obligations under international law? *[Yes/No] Yes*

Would you like to expand on your answer? As a Nigerian-American, black, progressive, muslim, I don't plan on ever getting that sort of invitation.

3. Do you pledge to oppose any official adoption of a redefinition of antisemitism to include opposition to Israel's policies or legal system, or support for non-violent measures meant to press for changes in Israeli policies or laws? *[Yes/No] yes*

Would you like to expand on your answer?

4. Do you oppose state legislative and executive efforts that penalize individuals, universities and entities that boycott Israel? *[Yes/No] yes*

Would you like to expand on your answer? Such efforts to penalize us from doing so are a violation of our freedom of speech, and thus un-American.

Racial justice

1. How would you use your office to combat racism in the educational system? Since 2014, I've volunteered in elementary schools to get young kids interested in science careers. I've mostly volunteered in Ward 8, where most students look like me. When young kids are engaged, you can inspire them to learn and achieve. In black communities, we need more volunteering opportunities for professionals living in the area. In ward 8, we have doctors, lawyers, officers and other professional careers who can inspire young people to achieve greatness.

In addition, we must end the school to prison pipeline by removing officers and increasing mental health specialists.

2. How would you address racism in access to employment and the racial wealth gap? In addition to my volunteering, I've also mentored folks. I encourage them to enter the medical profession, where there's less of a wage gap. I also collaborate with organizations and programs that promote financial literacy.

Health justice

1. Do you believe that healthcare is a human right? What actions would you take to support universal healthcare? YES. I'm an advocate for universal health care/ Medicare for all
2. How would you support ending medical debt? Along with our fight for M4A, I support any legislation that ending medical debt
3. How would you support expanding abortion rights? I support passing legislation that permits nationwide access to abortion. Every woman must have the right to terminate a pregnancy.

Migrant justice

1. Do you support classifying and publicly announcing your jurisdiction as a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants? Yes
2. Do you support the unconditional abolition of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE)? Yes
3. Do you support prohibiting local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE or participating in deportation activities? Yes
4. Will you oppose the operation of any migrant detention facility in your jurisdiction (whether run by ICE, another government agency, or privately run), and oppose the transfer of any migrants in your jurisdiction to such facilities? Yes