



**2019 Municipal/County Government Questionnaire for the Steel City Democrats**

Bethany Hallam (she/her/hers)  
Allegheny County Council, At-Large

**Campaign Contact Information**

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**1. Do you identify as LGBTQ?**

No.

**2. Please briefly share your biography.**

I'm a lifelong native of Ross Township in Allegheny County. I graduated from North Hills High School and then earned my B.A. from Duquesne University. I am serving my second term on my local Democratic committee, and my first on Pennsylvania's Democratic State Committee for the 38th Senatorial District. In addition to being an office administrator by day, I've been the "Political Millennial" on John McIntire's political comedy talk show on KDKA Radio for the past year.

While playing varsity lacrosse for North Hills High School, I tore both my ACL's, one immediately after recovering from the other. At the time, the overdose epidemic was not as well known as it is today. I was over-prescribed Vicodin, and as a result, became addicted to prescription opioids. I began my recovery in 2016, and I am fortunate for the support systems that helped make that possible.

Due to my struggles with addiction, I have spent time in our county jail and have temporarily lost my driver's license. I've seen first-hand the problems in our jail, and I also understand how critical public transit is to so many Allegheny County residents, myself included. My background

would bring a unique insight to council, and that's exactly what we need in order to move council forward.

**3. Please describe in detail your experience with the LGBTQ Community. What have you done to be**

**a.) a vocal ally or**

**b.) to fight for your fellow LGBTQ Pennsylvanians?**

**Why is the Steel City Stonewall Democrats endorsement important to you?**

One way I've been an ally for LGBTQIA+ Pennsylvanians is by working to elect candidates who are also allies. By campaigning heavily for Sara Innamorato and Lindsey Williams last year, I helped elect two strong LGBTQIA+ allies who will fight to make sure Pennsylvania passes the statewide protections it does not yet have.

I have also centered a significant part of my campaign platform around intersectional criminal justice reform -- particularly around the the county jail's mistreatment of trans women -- especially trans women of color. These are issues that aren't frequently as discussed, but they're issues that are pressing, local, and harming Allegheny County residents every day.

The Steel City Stonewall Democrats endorsement is important to me because fighting for the rights of everybody is important to me, and especially now that we have that jagoff Trump in office attempting to erase trans people and ban people from the military based on their gender identity, we need to double-down on fighting for basic civil liberties and rights for everyone.

That's what makes Steel City's endorsement so important to me. Just as our mission statement states, it's about advancing equal rights for all people. That's what I plan to do on county council, but I need your support now so that I can get elected and be a councilwoman fighting for everyone.

**4. Pennsylvania has still not outlawed discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Does the jurisdiction in which you're running have a local protection for LGBTQ individuals?**

**a. If so, how will you ensure that this legislation is adequately enforced?**

**b. If not, will you commit to introducing and advocating for such legislation?**

I will commit to introducing and advocating for county-wide legislation to protect our LGBTQIA+ community.

A great resource that I think fellow Steel-City members might want to check out (if they haven't already heard of it) is the Movement Advancement Project's online map of LGBTQIA+ protections by state and county:

[http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality\\_maps/profile\\_state/PA](http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/PA)

In Allegheny County, we have some protections. One glaring omission is that at the city-level, gay conversion therapy is banned; however, there is no legislation banning conversion “therapy” at the county level.

As for enforcement, my role on county council would be limited to oversight of the enforcement mechanisms. But with the platform of the office, I will be sure to call out any lack of enforcement when I see it.

**5. Many jurisdictions have outlawed the misnomered practice of conversion therapy in which young LGBTQ individuals are tortured in an attempt to “cure” them. Does the jurisdiction in which you’re running have a law/ordinance outlawing the practice?**

**a. If so, how will you ensure that this legislation is adequately enforced?**

**b. If not, will you commit to introducing and advocating for such legislation?**

Yes, I will commit to introducing and advocating for such legislation.

As mentioned above, Allegheny County does NOT have a law/ordinance outlawing conversion “therapy”. The city, however does have a law. If elected, I would ask council’s solicitor to investigate how we can not only replicate but also strengthen the city’s law in countywide legislation.

**6. Our organization is committed to electing not only candidates who support our community, but those who commit to the core principles of the Democratic Party. How will you use your office to help solve problems like these and make your community a better place? Please share with us your top three priorities if elected.**

### **Transparency**

We need stronger transparency laws to make sure government officials can’t run out the clock to keep time-sensitive documents secret. County Council has routinely violated the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, a government transparency law, by carrying out secret meetings that are required to be public. If elected, I will make sure the public is not kept in the dark about the contents of these meetings. In addition, I believe the Amazon HQ2 bid should never have been kept secret -- the public deserves to know when billions of our taxpayer dollars are being offered to a wealthy corporation.

### **Clean Air & Clean Water**

Every Allegheny County resident deserves clean air. By using our Clean Air Fund, we can make that a reality. We can’t just waste our limited resources on things like office renovations. -

especially when children in the Mon Valley can't play outside because of the poor air quality. Dirty air also substantially increases the cancer risk in predominantly POC communities. Clean Air funds should go toward actual clean air initiatives, whether they be as small as tax breaks for those who plant trees or as impactful as solarizing our airport.

Every Allegheny County resident also deserves clean water, and it's our government's duty to make sure everybody has access to safe drinking water. It's also our government's duty to protect our natural resources and water table from the dangers of fracking. My opponent voted in favor of drilling at one of our county parks. We should focus on preserving these parks instead - it only takes one accident to ruin them forever.

### **Criminal Justice Reform**

As your councilwoman, I will work to ensure that Pennsylvania's Clean Slate legislation does not overlook the residents of our county. I will fight to make sure that the proper oversight mechanisms are implemented so that no Allegheny County resident misses out on the benefits of the initiative. I will also support initiatives to reduce our county's inordinately long probation sentences, which tend to be longer than those in most other Pennsylvania counties.

The county jail is an embarrassment to Allegheny County. Many people in the county jail only there because of inequitable cash bail policies. Warden Harper has failed again and again when it comes to preventing sexual harassment, assault, and rape in the jail, including rape perpetrated by his own staff. Because of his inaction, our jail has had one of the highest suicide rates in the nation. The county jail is over two years overdue to prove its compliance with standards of the Prison Rape Elimination Act. This is completely unacceptable. This is inhumane. This is our local jail, and we must fix it.

The county jail's misinformed housing policies also house trans women with men. As a result, these women are raped and sexually assaulted inside the jail by other incarcerated individuals. This must change. In addition, the jail must also comply with the Prison Rape Elimination Act and eliminate sexual assault in our jail.

These are three of my top priorities, but there are so many more that you can read about at: <https://www.bethanyhallam.com/platform/>

### **7. Please list any other endorsements, accolades, or achievements you have received.**

#### **Recommended by the Young Democrats of Allegheny County**

**Sara Innamorato** - State Representative

**Marita Garrett** - Mayor of Wilkinsburg

**Emily Marburger** - Mayor of Bellevue

**Brittany Reno** - Sharpsburg Borough Council President

**Jack Betkowski** - Ross Township Commissioner

**Allison Mathis** - North Hills School Board

**Sandra Kozera** - North Hills School Board

**Emily Skopov** - 2018 Democratic Nominee, State Representative

**Darwin Leuba** - Auditor of O'Hara Township