



## **ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2022**

**Allie Lee Braswell, Jr.**

**Running for  
Florida House of Representatives  
District 45**

## Candidate Information

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### 1. What motivated you to run for this position?

I am running for office because I believe in helping others find their purpose and I see the potential in people from all walks of life. I was inspired to run for this office after my wife's untimely death because she and I believed this district was a great place to live, raise our children and retire. Serving in this capacity will allow me to represent our local community and continue the work she and I have been dedicated to for over 15 years.

I believe we should invest in our public schools to ensure all children have equitable access to a quality education period having helped to launch two schools in our region. I want to ensure that we never leave any community behind I am also running to ensure that all Floridians have access to financial services that promote financial well-being.

Lastly, as a Marine Veteran, I can tell you that it doesn't matter if you're a Democrat or Republican. When we serve, we are Brothers, we are family and that's what I want for this community and our state. I want Central Florida to continue to be the friendliest place for military service members, veterans and their families.

### 2. What does being an ally or advocate for the LGBTQ+ community mean to you?

Nicole Asong Nfonoyim-Hara, the Director of the Diversity Programs at Mayo Clinic, defines the act of allyship as "when a person of privilege works in solidarity and partnership with a marginalized group of people to help take down the systems that challenge that group's basic rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society."

Allyship starts with reflecting on one's own identity, and on society's dominant identities. The next step is recognizing others' identities and the ways those identities are privileged or marginalized in society. Allies are willing to see these differences and to try to promote equity -- eliminating "otherness" even while acknowledging difference. Allies do not speak for or over the communities they support -- they stand with them. It's hard, it takes practice, but it makes for meaningful dialogue that leads to better outcomes for all.

As stated above, I am and have been an active ally for equity and inclusion for members of the LGBTQ+ community and will continue to be.

**3. Please summarize your history of community involvement. This may include city boards, civic associations, non-profits, etc.**

I have engaged in the Central Florida and West Orange communities for over 20 years. I served in leadership roles and as a board member on the Valencia Institute for Peace and Justice advisory board, Leadership Orlando Alumni, Quest, Inc. And Orlando Regional Realtor Foundation. I currently serve as the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army – Florida Central, Chairman of the Orange County Citizens Advisory Committee, Chairman of the Garden Theatre Board and President of the Gamma Delta Sigma Chapter of the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. I have also helped lead two community-based charter schools – Founding Board Member of Legends Academy and Board President for Innovation Montessori of Ocoee.

**4. Please summarize any work you have performed in the past five years to further LGBTQ+ rights. This may include paid positions, volunteer work, and donations.**

In my role as the Senior Vice President for Culture, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, I had the opportunity to conceive, develop and produce two educational summits in 2021 that garnered more than 90,000 viewing minutes and attracted talent to VyStar. LGBTQ+ Empowerment was the focus of one the summits. It was important to me that our summits reflected all parts of the communities we serve. This summit has helped VyStar be recognized both internally and externally as an organization that includes people from all dimensions of diversity.

During the LGBTQ+ History month celebration, my wife and I volunteered to participate in the Orlando parade. It was truly a cherished moment. We were able to join together to celebrate members of the LGBTQ+ as allies, and to show respect, appreciation and love for members of the LGBTQ+ community. I had no idea this would be one of the last two volunteer efforts that we would volunteer and work together on. I am so glad we did. Shellie-Ann Braswell died on November 25, 2021 from a brain aneurism. This community was an important piece of who we were as allies, I will continue that connection.

## Questions

- 5. The rise in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation barreling down from Tallahassee has caused a sharp increase in discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Orange County. How would you go about reducing discrimination in your district or local community? How would you measure your progress?**

First and foremost, I believe we must recognize people from all walks of life that live in house district 45. I would be present and participate in activities that seek to educate and engage all residents within district 45 on how we can come together to know and embrace our neighbors. In this current narrative in our state, I would look to the data to understand the current population, and then seek out partners, like Equality Florida, to work together to move the needle on causes and issues specifically impacting the LGBTQ+ community.

- 6. Elected officials and office staff are still woefully under-educated on the transgender community. This means that the services their offices provide are often ignorant of the needs of the transgender community. What actions would you take to ensure that the services your office will provide will be educated on and cognizant of the needs of the transgender community?**

Education is the key. I will require that staff within my office attend training on relevant diversity, equity and inclusion topics to include topics that relate to the needs of the transgender community. I will look to ensure that not only our culture is inclusive, but also our facility and office space. Through the educational effort, I hope to inspire an "Unbelievable Service Excellence" culture that embraces all members of our community.

- 7. The Florida Republican Party is leading the country in stripping away LGBTQ+ rights, starting with our children. Students are having their lives and livelihoods placed at risk by laws such as the Transgender Sports Ban, the so-called Parental Bill of Rights, and now Don't Say Gay. These shamelessly discriminatory bills are forcing LGBTQ+ families to reconsider their future in Florida. What would you tell the parents of LGBTQ+ children in your district who feel they need to leave Florida in order to protect their children?**

I would encourage them to stand with me and oppose the laws that seek to strip away the rights of their children. I would encourage them to get involved, and where appropriate to have their children get involved in the fight for our democracy and our rights. I am strongly opposed the laws and actions that members of the republican party are embarked upon when it comes to LGBTQ+ children and families.

- 8. The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health found that 45% of LGBTQ+ students seriously considered attempting suicide and 1-in-5 LGBTQ+ attempt it. How would you lead on this issue and work to decrease these statistics over the course of your term in office?**

I believe mental health services are a critical need in 2022. This study correctly identifies a need for LGBTQ youth to have access to qualified mental health counselling. I would welcome an opportunity to learn from allies of this group to learn more about the steps that can be taken to improve our ability to reach these youth at their most vulnerable moment. I believe the key is educating our youth, their families and our communities on the resources that are available now for them to use. We must actively encourage them to take advantage of the services that are available and look to identify opportunities to extend services to our youth and their families as early as possible. I would support legislation that seeks to decrease these statistics over the course of my term.

- 9. The same survey by The Trevor Project found that nearly all transgender and non-binary students have had to worry about their access to gender-affirming healthcare, bathrooms, and sports teams being taken away from them. How would you work to take this fear off their shoulders so that they can go back to just being kids?**

I would support legislation to make these non-issues, including updating the building code to require gender neutral restroom facilities in all buildings. I would look to work with the healthcare industry to review current policy in an effort to overcome any impediments to healthcare for these students.

- 10. Far-right groups are pushing to ban books on any topic they find disagreeable, such as books on Black history and experiences, immigration, the LGBTQ+ community, climate change, etc. Do you support these book bans? If not, what is your plan to counter them and ensure students have access to a full array of age-appropriate knowledge and experiences?**

I do not support the bans. I believe we must proactively engage to educate parents on the need to tell the truth of our history and experiences and to share age-appropriate knowledge with our students.

- 11. During a town hall in your district, a constituent describes being gay or transgender as a "lifestyle choice." What is incorrect about their description? How would you constructively respond in this situation?**

It is incorrect to address someone or entire group or community as a lifestyle choice. I would constructively share that it is not a choice, and that people are expressing who they truly are. I would also share that we all should be free to love and be loved.

- 12. During a board meeting, the board chair purposely refers to a transgender woman as "he" and "him" as the woman attempts to give her public comment. The woman corrects the board chair each time, insisting that her pronouns are "she" and "her." The board chair continues to misgender the woman until she eventually leaves the chamber in tears. How would you respond in this situation?**

First, I would have objected to the chair's behavior at the onset. Second, if the behavior continued, I would object to the board chair's behavior and request that the chair publicly apologize to the member. I would also suggest that the board chair and the entire board be provided with training on emotional intelligence and sensitivity. Lastly, I would request that the governance committee investigate this matter and if appropriate, that the board chair be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in the code of conduct section of the by-laws.

- 13. A parent approaches you at an event, insisting that her son's teachers have "groomed" him into liking boys. Her son is at her side when she says this. How do you respond to the parent's statement such that the young boy leaves feeling better about himself?**

I would reassure the parent that I believe that our schools try to encourage students to be their true selves. I believe that teachers' model and are focused on protecting the child's spirit and to afford them an environment where they can love and thrive without judgement.

**14. Orange County continues to embrace urban sprawl, despite a plethora of data that links urban sprawl to severe strains on our housing, employment, healthcare, and public transit systems (to name a few). What are your thoughts on Orange County's growth? What could Orange County in terms of development that would better serve the communities in your district?**

There should be a concentrated effort to develop Central Florida's growing communities that promotes positive environmental and economic stewardship.

Smart growth solutions to reducing and eliminating the negative impacts of urban sprawl should emphasize financial incentives for construction and transportation to implement environmentally friendly practices to protect natural resources and ecosystems, restrict or limit multifamily building permits in areas that do not have the educational, employment, public transit, healthcare, and law enforcement systems to support significant increases in the community's population.

**15. Do you support the idea of constructing more multi-family homes in neighborhoods traditionally zoned for single-family homes? What impact would this have on your district?**

As I stated previously "Smart Growth or Controlled Growth" in areas that have been zoned for single family homes is what I support. Whether it is multi-family or single-family homes being built, we must ensure the infrastructure to support the growth moves at the same pace. If we do not plan and fund the infrastructure required to sustain these communities, the impact of multifamily homes could potentially lower property values.

Having more children in the area results in more children in classrooms that are already at capacity upon opening and short of highly qualified teachers. More traffic to the area creates stress upon our road systems and upon the families in my district. Public safety resources must also keep pace with our growth. With Southwest Orange County being one of the fastest growing communities within Orange County, we must have local, state, and federal officials working together to ensure that all needs of this district are met. As we grow, we must be intentional with our planning to ensure green space, as well as, living communities that support all the district's residents.

**16. Homeowner Associations often prevent homeowners from transitioning their lawns away from non-functional grasses such as turf and towards sustainable options such as native Florida plants and edible landscapes. HOAs insist that moving away from the traditional pristine green lawn would lower housing prices. What is your opinion on this issue?**

While I believe that everyone should be able to express themselves, I believe that HOA's have the responsibility to provide guidance to homeowners that uphold the tenets of the covenants that provide for good order within the community. When exploring communities to make our home, families should inquire about these concerns and make their decision accordingly.

**17. What are the top environmental concerns you are seeing in your District and what are the solutions you plan to bring forward if you were elected?**

Currently, there are two main environmental concerns facing District 45. With the influx of construction projects, the top concerns are regarding air pollution, water runoff and drainage. Central Florida is going through a construction boom period at this time; with the constant building, demolition, and renovations occurring there is an increased risk of residents being exposed to breathing in harmful toxins like mold, asbestos, lead, bird waste, and many other respiratory irritants. Furthermore, vegetation removal and environmental erosion also has lasting impacts. In fact, recent studies reflect the serious impact construction has on the environment. The construction sector contributes to approximately 23% of air pollution, almost 50% of climate change, 40% of drinking water pollution, and nearly 50% of landfill wastes.

As Florida is prone to rain showers often, and especially now that it is hurricane season, it is imperative that we are prepared and have the proper infrastructure to mitigate the water runoff and drainage hazards this brings to the district. I believe the best solution is to work congruently with the various builders and contractors' associations along with the Florida Department of Transportation to help develop and implement hazard mitigation prevention, preparedness, and recovery when needed to respond with solutions that are efficient and efficacious. It is important to not only keep the districts economic and development sector thriving, but also prioritizing the health and safety of our resident's and their surrounding environment.

**18. Contributions are typically linked to poor environmental policies being passed. Are you pledging to stay away from any particular contributions?**

I am not planning to stay away from any contributions currently.

## 19. Understanding our economic position, how do you plan to localize and strengthen our food system?

Defined by the USDA, a food hub is a “centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products.” Food hubs are an excellent way to help small and mid-sized producers access wider markets and reach more consumers. It is also beneficial for the lower-income level households as it helps provide them with an increased access to healthy food options that are usually not privy to those in underserved areas. It’s important to coordinate with support organizations that carry out research, analysis, advocacy, and education to help develop and integrate controlled, sustainable, local food systems.

As these systems play a major part in building community wealth, there’s several key beneficial aspects that could become available, such as: (1) creating and sustaining new community-based jobs, (2) establishing direct marketing channels between farmers and local consumers, (3) helps enhance the small family farmers and providers in the area who are also more likely to engage in non-harmful, environmentally friendly farming practices, and (4) urban agriculture projects. Specifically related to the last point, suburban and urban gardening is also a new trend that is starting to grow. For example, the Winter Garden non-profit garden is a community run, volunteer-based effort that has been successful. It is my goal to work with the local food organizations, farmers, and residents to utilize the land and resources available to bring fresh produce and other food markets to establish a more affordable, localized food network to constituents.