



ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2022

Anthony Nieves

**Running for
Florida House of Representatives
District 47**

Candidate Information

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1. What motivated you to run for this position?

Because I was born into activism. It is all that I know. Both of my grandmothers were advocates for the poor and working poor throughout their lives. My paternal grandmother owned, managed, and trained professional wrestlers in her gym, during the 1950's and 60's in New York City. It was definitely not a common thing for a Latinx woman to be doing, during that era. As for my parents, they dedicated 70 combined years of their life as hospital workers at St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center in New York's Greenwich Village neighborhood. During the meteoric rise of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980's, my parents worked in the hospital with the most cases throughout the nation. It was a time when universal precautions did not exist, and no widespread use of PPE's were in place. Yet my parents treated and comforted thousands of AIDS patients in their final days and hours of life. I remember as if it was yesterday, how my parents would return home each day, further saddened by the deaths of those who succumbed to the illness. They would describe the high number of LGBTQ+ deaths, many of which were homeless, and of color. My mother and father would later care for many iconic leaders within the LGBTQ+ community, until their final days. My very own pediatrician, Dr. Roccio (May He Rest In Power), whom was my doctor from birth through adulthood, died from complications as a result of AIDS. His death still tears me up. He and my mother were indeed very close friends.

I have grown tired of the same promises, made by the same politicians. I know that change can happen fast, if the community becomes informed. I intend on defending our most vulnerable, by helping everyone in my community onto the stage of genuine advocacy for all.

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

It means protecting those that I love most. It extends far past advocating for just my LGBTQ+ family members. As a cisgender male, it means embracing each member of the LGBTQ+ community, the same way my grandparents and parents did, as if they were all my family. It means fighting for a change in the mindset of Floridians, and ensuring that the future left for my children, can be void of the hatred exhibited by the far-right.

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

I served on the Bronx County Community Board 7 in New York City, and served as a student organizer in college, while at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I was also a national youth spokesperson for Ofensiva 92, which advocated and fought for the release of our incarcerated Puerto Rican political prisoners. What began as resolutions, created in local governments, escalated to final Presidential Pardons by President Bill Clinton. I am also a member of Florida Rising, Alianza for Progress, the Working Families Party, and the Organization for Cultures of Hispanic Origins. I was also a community organizer for New York State Assemblyman Jose Rivera, when he was a Bronx County City Councilman during the 1990's.

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.

I continue to forward and preach statistical referencing data from organizations like Gay Men Health Crisis (GMHC). As a Latinx cisgender male, I continue to speak to elders in my community about the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, and have been part of a growing base of concerned parents that are fighting daily against book banning and LGBTQ+ discrimination.

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?**

I would introduce and champion ANY legislation to see stricter penalties for crimes committed against the LGBTQ+ community. I would measure my progress, based on concrete statistical facts from all organizations entrusted by the LGBTQ+ community. Again, the input must come from those in my community. I will just guarantee that their voices will be heard through me and amplified tenfold.

6. **Research performed by True Colors United found that 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ+. Reasons for this include abuse and family rejection of a youth's sexual orientation or gender identity. What immediate actions would you take as an Orlando City Commissioner to reduce and prevent homelessness amongst LGBTQ+ youth?**

We must establish a diversion unit that can address these specific issues. Through proper education and guidance, we can partner with our local community groups to ensure outreach when needed, especially when homelessness is the direct result of family bias and bigotry. If needed, we must aid those that aid our LGBTQ+ community. There are many alternatives to avoiding LGBTQ+ homelessness. As a bilingual Latinx cisgender male, I intend on digging deeper into my community, especially within my Latinx constituents, to rid the cultural mindsets that are filled with generations of ignorance towards the LGBTQ+ community.

7. **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?**

I would immediately create an advisory board, inclusive of the transgender community. My office staff and I will include regular informational bulletins that will highlight the inclusivity of all members of my house district, especially the transgender community.

8. **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 immediately empower them to stay in Florida, while we amplify each others voice in Tallahassee. Florida should never be considered a chosen mistake of residency. I have seen with my own eyes, how a small group of concerned parents and families, united on LGBTQ+ protection issues, have raised their voices to the Halls of Congress.

9. 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?

As a cisgender male with several LGBTQ+ family members, this survey result saddens me immensely. I would never want to lose a family member to suicide over a lack of universal acceptance for being LGBTQ+. I would ensure that my office will continuously promote services to reverse this present reality, while introducing legislation based on direct input from the LGBTQ+ community regarding this matter.

10. 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?

By including them in the discussion of solutions! All too often, erroneous assumptions are made by biased elected officials, without consultation from the LGBTQ+ community. I will work to create an immediate safe haven in my office for all transgender and non-binary students, and serve as an additional voice for them at school board meetings. As a parent that has joined other concerned families on the frontlines against right wing extremism and hatred, I know all too well, how intimidating and extreme the surroundings of our children can be. Together, we will continue to champion the rights of all our babies.

11. 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 these book bans. It is an excuse by the far-right to selectively attack marginalized groups. We are at a crossroads in Florida. Do we succumb to the far-right, or do we fight one of the last state powers that threatens the liberty and freedom of our children and their future? I choose to fight! It is all I know.

12. 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?

The orientation or a person is not a "choice." Perhaps I would constructively respond by asking them if their own orientation was a "choice." This would not only open the discussion to a "Who's on first scenario", but allow themselves to realize just how out of touch they are with the basis of their assumption.

13. 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?

By introducing hate crime legislation against the board member. A transgender woman that has to correct a board chair more than once would raise my eyebrow, more than twice, and I would classify them as bullying.

14. 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 respond to the parent’s statement such that the young boy leaves feeling better about himself?

I would welcome the discussion in a more private setting, so as to protect the dignity of the child, while also protecting the parent, teacher, and I. A separate meeting would allow a greater and more in-depth discussion about the matter, with the child's well being being paramount in our protection.

15. 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?

I do not embrace urban sprawl. It continues to prove disastrous. Of greatest negative effect, is that it further strains our already poorly funded public transportation system. The portion of Orange County within the newly redrawn House District 47 has seen a huge rise in multi-dwelling apartment home complexes that have actually been better planned than our Osceola County counterparts within House District 47. These apartment homes are near highway intersections, with more public transportation bus stop options than anywhere else in my new house district. This can be a template to build positively from.

16. 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?

Yes! It is a necessity. Multi-family homes provide greater housing access for all, and if planned correctly, would also provide greater public transportation options with minimal to no negative effect on the environment. Additionally, multi-family homes provide a greater sense of community pride with respect to greater inclusivity of all people

17. 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?

I disagree with HOA's on this issue. Moving towards sustainable options would actually have a positive impact on the homes value. Moving away from traditional non-functional turf-like

grasses would actually improve entire communities, as they could eliminate the need for GMO induced products to be used in our neighborhoods at whole.

18. 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?

Blue-Green Algae Bloom, coal ash, horrific rise in traffic pollution, and the destruction of the Split Oak Forest are all of major concerns to district residents. Public transportation improvements must be made immediately. Had proper urban planning been conducted, the traffic pollution and Split Oak Forest destruction would not be occurring. We must engage the true will of the people and not succumb ourselves to greedy real estate developers that lack a long term vision with respect to the environment. If candidates require certain quotas on signatures for election qualifying, then we could use the same methodology with the number of citizens that need to be present for public hearings on issues that greatly affect the livelihood of our constituents.

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

Yes! I will stay clear from any person or group that do not have a full interest in protecting the environment. The sugar industry in particular is one that has decimated the environment, not only in Florida, but in many of our neighboring states and nations. I believe that to properly champion any cause, no outside influence can exist.

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

By encouraging the usage of food banks in our district. We continue to be wasteful, discarding good food that could otherwise be used by the most needy in our community. We could encourage local farmers and food merchants to enhance their food system with a dynamic, forward thinking approach that would utilize more Non-GMO and Organic cultivation. This in turn, would lessen the negative impact on our environment for generations to come.