



ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2022

Cynthia Harris

**Running for
Orange County Board of Commissioners
District 6**

Candidate Information

Website: electcynthiaharris.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cynthiaharris4OCCommissionerDist6>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Harris4OCDist6>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/electcynthia/>

1. What motivated you to run for this position?

I have spent most of my life in Orange County and have seen the drastic changes that have been a detriment to my community. We expect representation that will be our voice and that has not happened. I am running because I am tired of still fighting for the things that we should already have.

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

We are all human beings first and classification comes next. No one understands discrimination and under representation than a Black Woman. We are all in this fight together for equality and fair treatment.

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

I serve as an Addition School Volunteer for 35 years, President of the Greater Malibu Groves Neighborhood Association, Mental Health Guardian Advocate, Member of VCC (Valencia) Black Advisory Committee, League of Women Voters, Government Committee (LWVO), Voters League, Urban League, NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Council (former Chapter President), FL NOW (former State President), AFSCME (former shop steward), Community Partner (for Ivey Lane Elementary, Eccleston Elementary and Carver Middle), former Housing Program Manager for Homeless Services Network

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 have lobbied in Tallahassee with Equality Florida and donated to Out of Closet

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?**

If elected I would continue to Lobby with State Officials to change laws that would reduce discrimination and work with local organizations that can provide more insight to formulate solutions to specific problems that affect 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. Funding is essential in providing the Education needed to ensure that the needs are addressed. Transgender Volunteers are essential in providing insight as no one knows their plight more than those who experience and are affected on a daily basis

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 them not to sit in Silence, You are only as strong as your weakest link. If you only complain amongst yourselves nothing gets done. We must openly work together to weaken these systems of discrimination by electing officials that are our True Voice and Representation and will fight for what is right.

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?**

Mental Health is something that affects us all in any community and does not discriminate. There should be some State Legislation to provide a safehaven for those who think, believe or experience a mental crisis. I would work with our representatives to affect change

- 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?**

You won't be able to change the mindset of all but you can provide education to the community, However, just like Blacks are given training for over policing and racism we must not shelter our children by not providing information on what to expect from others who are not as sensitive.

- 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?**

No I do not support these bans on books. History has taught us that prohibition leads to violence and crime. I think that there should be a safe space in a Center or Library for people to read these books if they can't afford them.

- 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?**

My response is being Black (which I am) is not a lifestyle choice so why would being gay or transgender.

- 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?**

I would respect all pronouns when being corrected. To continue to be intentional is nothing but malice and hatred

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

I would ask the parent if anyone groomed them in their feelings of "liking boys/men" or was this a conscious decision made of their own free will in which resulted in this beautiful human being she calls her son

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?

Housing has been a detriment in Orange County and all you hear on the news and by this current administration that we don't have enough inventory. We have inventory and some of the main slumlords are our local government Orange County currently has 5,118 houses in their inventory that could be sold to working poor they are in the real estate business, The City of Orlando has 1,178. There are 13 municipalities in Orange County imagine how many they have. The rental assistance program process has been a nightmare and it is almost a year later and a majority of applicants have been evicted because the County has not paid the approved applications.

When I was a kid the buses ran every 30 minutes and were broken down. Now they run every hour and still the same. The buses are dangerous. lack connectivity and most people who have to use them spend 5 or more hours to get to their destination taking time from their families and making them late for work.

30 years ago full time employment consisted of 40 hours with the availability of health insurance and 401k's, Minimum wage is at an all time low that is not consistent or competitive with the rising cost of food, housing and transportation. We are living in a community of taxation without representation. Tax the poor and make the rich richer. It's not right and it's not fair to citizens who work hard everyday to live in this community.

We need Medicare/Medicaid expansion in order to function. Last year I was paying \$900 a month for basic health insurance. My insurance went up \$200. I couldn't afford the payments and now I no longer have insurance. We should and we must do better. The ACA act became a detriment to working poor because of the loopholes created to keep working poor unhealthy and poor.

With that being said. We must fight for more funding and elect officials who really represent our true voices.

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?

In my district we don't have land to build more affordable units in District 6. Developers get multiple tax breaks and credits and the cost are passed on to the renters. Homeownership is key in my Community. Local government are the biggest slumlords next to out of State Predator investors. If the inventory is available and affordable to working poor it would assist in reducing some of the homeless families who are living in hotels. Building more apartments that we can't afford leads to more gentrification and homelessness

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?

A large portion of District 6 is not under these restrictions because their HOA's are not mandated but may be subjected to the codes under their municipality. Because of gentrification, some municipalities are violating environmental laws and restrictions by building on protected lands for the bottom dollar. District 6 is a food desert, most families have to travel 3-5 miles for basic necessities. Utilizing these green spaces for gardens reduce household cost and reduce the profits of greedy corporations who gouge the working poor for food.

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?

Building in environmental protected lands cause the problems we see in District 6 such as flooding. We are redlined based on zipcode which causes us to pay higher prices for food, clothing and shelter. Higher car and health insurance, electricity and entertainment. No other District pays more than District 6. I think what could offset these cost are special assements placed on entertainment such as events that bring tourist to College Football games, Soccer, etc.

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

Not sure that I understand your question completely. If I understand correctly there are some good policies in place however, the people who are supposed to be our voices have manipulated and disregarded the policies that have become a detriment to us all. We must change that by electing real voices into office

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

I would use the Biblical principle if you give a man a fish he will eat for a day. but if you teach a man to fish he will eat for a lifetime. I personally am learning how to grow things. I will be the first to admit I don't have a green thumb (I will kill plastic) but through trial and error I am learning. Charity starts at home if we have more Community gardens and make them available to the public, it will reduce the deficit of living in a food desert. I we teach families how to make their meals at home for those who have one it will create a healthy balance to reduce food cost, create more healthy environments and create jobs. A person who is healthy can go to work and a person who is healthy and can work to provide for their families.