



ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2022

Tiffany Hughes

**Running for
Florida House of Representatives
District 39**

Candidate Information

Website: tiffanyhughes.vote
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TiffanyHughes.Vote>
Twitter: @THughesVote
Instagram: tiffanyhughes.vote

1. What motivated you to run for this position?

As a business owner, community advocate, wife, and mother, I am the voice I don't hear enough of in Tallahassee. Through my community organizing and advocacy, I've seen how communities rally for or against a piece of legislation but are not at the table making the decision. I don't see enough legislators who have a business background and understand the nuances of fiscal responsibility while also being deeply committed to people and community. I want to be that voice in Tallahassee.

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

It means standing alongside, in solidarity with, and when necessary standing up for our LGBTQ+ community. It also means making spaces more inclusive without placing the burden on LGBTQ+ people to create the space. As a legislator, it means fighting back against discriminatory legislation, uplifting the voice of Central Florida's LGBTQ+ advocates in Tallahassee, and ensuring that my district office is ready to work with our Central Florida LGBTQ+ advocates to introduce legislation and secure funding for causes that advance equal rights and social justice for LGBTQ+ people in Central Florida.

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

I am the immediate past president of the Orange County Branch NAACP, former Co-chair of the City of Orlando Certification Appeals Board, current Co-chair of the Orange County Community Development Advisory Board, Mentor with The Foundation for Seminole County Public Schools "Take Stock in Children" program, and member of Dr. Phillips Center For Arts "Circle" community engagement and donor group. Member of the African American Chamber of Commerce and the Apopka Chamber of Commerce.

- 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.**

As president of the Orange County Branch NAACP, I oversaw the branch's first active LGBTQIA+ committee. Under my leadership, we grew our relationship with organizations such as Contigo Fund and issued statement on behalf of the branch condemning the governors anti LGBTQIA+ legislation.

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?**

One of the greatest deterrents of discrimination is exposure. As a state legislator, I will work alongside local LGBTQ+ engaged organizations such as Hope Community Center to organize and promote events that uplift diversity and inclusion. For example, due Hope Community Center's advocacy, the City of Apopka had its first ever Pride Parade this year. As a community leader, I will ensure we continue creating space and visibility for my district's historically under-represented LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, it is my understanding that the Orange County Sheriff's office has an LGBTQ+ liaison. I will work alongside the liaison to assess and address hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community and measure progress or decrease in hate crimes through that office's reporting.

- 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?**

I will work to ensure that myself and office staffers spend time with and seek the insight of our transgender community. It is up to us to reach out to the people and departments that can better educate us on the transgender and non-binary community and follow their guidance as we craft office policies and a culture that are inclusive and supportive of the district's LGBTQ+ 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?**

We can protect our children together! As a mom, I fear for my son as well. I fear for how my little boy will one day be little no more and how the world will view him. I fear for how laws created now will affect him later. And although I have fear, I am also hopeful.

Hopeful because I can affect change. We get to make the decisions on who represents us and takes our voice to Tallahassee. We get to decide the person who shows up for our kids and creates policies to protect them. We the people have the power. We must rally together and continue pushing back against discriminatory legislation, especially when it targets our children.

- 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?**

According to the CDC, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth. As a mother, I understand how important it is to protect our youth and keep them safe. Currently, Florida has a "Suicide Prevention Certified School" designation that is acquired by meeting certain criteria. One criteria is "The school has at least two school-based mental health services providers that are qualified to conduct a suicide risk assessment using a department-approved screening instrument". Through legislation I would push for all schools to meet this criteria or to have at least 1 school-based mental health services provider on campus at all times available to support the needs of our students.

- 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?**

As a mom, I know how important it is for children to have someone to support them, to make them feel safe and to affirm the amazing person they are becoming. Our children deserve a school environment where they can be themselves, free to participate in all of the activities that school has to offer. I plan to work with parents of transgender youth alongside the students to craft policy that supports our children health and well being. I am opposed to any policy that targets our transgender and non-binary youth in a negative way and will work to repeal such policies currently in place.

- 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 book bans. The “Anti-Woke Act” is an egregious bill that attempts to limit the open access of information for our students. We must be willing to read about, learn from, and educate our young leaders on the beautiful and ugly pieces of American history. It is also necessary for children to see themselves represented in literature and is harmful to remove minority and LGBTQ+ representation from school campuses. It is our responsibility as a society to ensure students are safe, healthy, happy, well informed and prepared for global leadership with a diverse perspective.

- 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?**

Calling someone sexual or gender identity a “lifestyle choice” suggests that being gay or transgender is a choice rather than a core part of who the person is. This type of ignorance is often caused from a lack of understanding. I would encourage the person to spend time with some of their LGBTQ+ neighbors in their own community and to seek understanding. It is important that as we look to change people's opinions that we also help them identify the humanity in their fellow community members.

- 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 and foremost I would look to comfort the transgender woman and support her in whatever way she felt comfortable. Following, I would make it a point to publicly admonish the inappropriate and disgusting actions of the board chair during public comment. Such rude behavior to a fellow community member is unnecessary and mean spirited. Following that meeting I would email the board member to schedule a meeting to discuss the ordinance of that board and advocate for more inclusive language of the board’s governing documents and that of board members.

- 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?**

With the limited information provided, this does not seem like the right place to engage the parent in a political debate centered around discriminatory right-wing talking points, especially with children around. I would simply tell the parent that her son deserves to be treated with love and respect at school and at home.

- 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?**

While there is more to be done, Orange County has taken various steps to slow urban sprawl. Earlier this year the commission voted to add a 1% sales tax to the November ballot. Among other benefits, the tax will incentivize centering our urban areas and draws housing and development to the urban core. Our County is growing rapidly, and it is up to local elected officials and state legislators to taper sprawl and its negative effects on our environment.

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?

I do not. Upzoning and variance requests should generally not be approved outside of the municipality's comprehensive growth plan. Neighborhoods zoned as single family should by and large remain single family. There are opportunities in my district for denser growth, primarily in business districts outside of residential neighborhoods. But our traditional neighborhoods should be protected.

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?

I do not think HOAs should be able to limit the use of turf and native/low-water usage plants as long as replacements are visually and aesthetically pleasing.

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?

Water and the erosion of the current sewer and septic pipes are a huge concern within District 39. I plan to work with the local government to apply for county administered funding to replace the pipes with more modern pipes to meet current code. Additionally, our lakes and greenspaces are in need of State funding. I will work to secure said funding.

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

Not at this time, but I am against pay-to-play-politics and stand by my convictions, including strengthening environmental policy, regardless of who donates to my campaign.

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

We need to do everything we can to secure more domestically grown foods and goods. Looking at the state of food supply both nationally and globally, is it important that we be able to sustain by growing and investing in local agriculture. I do support the elimination of taxes on the items used in the production of agricultural products where possible with very clearly defined parameters on the types of agriculture industries that benefit, such as cattle ranchers, dairy farmers, and fruit production. It is important that we write policy that clearly identifies agricultural industries. I would also like to see more un-bought grocery store products donated to charity and will work with the government, non-profits, and businesses to see this happen.