

Denver Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire - Jamie Giellis

This questionnaire is presented on behalf of the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition and the Refugee Action Coalition of Colorado to better understand the candidates' positions on key issues impacting the immigrant and refugee community.

Email address *

Jamie@Jamiefordenver.com

1.a. Do you support citywide policies or strategies to protect and assist Colorado's refugee population? *

Yes

No

1.b. Briefly explain your response. If you do support policies or strategies to protect Colorado's refugee population, what specific policies would you implement? *

I believe that we have a duty to protect refugees and those lawfully seeking asylum. Colorado has always been a state that welcomes people from all over the world, and we are stronger because of it. I would put forth initiatives that assist refugees with integration into the Denver community. Job training, English language acquisition, and assistance with access to city and social services are important objectives to ensure a successful transition for refugees into the state of Colorado.

2. Federal funding is being cut for refugee resettlement and integration programs and the State of Colorado currently provides no funding for such efforts, despite reports that show refugees provide net economic benefits to our communities. Would you consider the use of City/County of Denver's funds for integration efforts to assist Denver's refugee population should federal funding continue to be cut? *

Yes

No

Comments

3. Under the previous administration, the Legal Defense Fund for immigrants was created. Right now, it is supported only through amendments from the city council and donations. Do you support additional financial assistance from the City/County of Denver's general fund to continue the Legal Defense Fund at the amount of distribution from the first year (\$380,000)? *

Yes

No

Comments

4.a. Do you support additional protections/policies at the city/county level that would ensure individuals confronting the deportation process have access to the justice system and immigration courts? *

Yes

No

4.b. Briefly explain what policies and protections you would support. *

Immigrants currently have no right to a court-appointed attorney in the deportation process, so they must pay private attorneys or find a nonprofit organizations to help them. This is one reason why the Legal Defense Fund is so important and I support it. Immigrants also need to feel comfortable accessing the justice system. We don't want victims of crime to fear coming to court to testify or seek a protection order. When immigrants can't or are afraid to access our justice system, it makes our entire community unsafe. Denver has taken some important steps in the right direction in this regard, such as the Public Safety Enforcement Priorities Act.

5.a. Do you agree with using family separation as a deterrent for undocumented immigrants coming across the Mexican border? *

Yes

No

5.b. What do you believe can be done at the city/county level to support families who have faced separation? *

I believe that we can assist these families with access to legal counsel through things like the Legal Defense Fund. We should also be providing other support services to help these families reunite and be able to survive and thrive while their legal immigration cases are being resolved.

6.a. In August 2017, Mayor Hancock signed the Public Safety Enforcement Priorities Act prohibiting city/county officials from participating in federal immigration enforcement activities. Do you believe this policy has been effective? *

Yes

No

6.b. Please briefly explain your answer. *

To the extent that the policy helps ensure that immigrants are less fearful of participating in the judicial system, it has been successful. The goal is to make sure that Denver residents, including immigrants, feel safe accessing police, courts, and other city and county services that are necessary to create a safe community for all.

7. Data shows that underemployment of refugees and immigrants costs the city in terms of tax revenue and economic activity. What would you do to decrease barriers for refugees and immigrants seeking suitable workforce opportunities? *

I would support initiatives that encourage and assist with integration such as job training and language classes. In my administration, Office of Economic Development (OED) will take a more active role supporting refugee and immigrant small businesses.

8. Barriers to childcare, affordable housing, and transportation can be amplified in communities of color and communities where English is a second language. How do you propose to ensure equal access to these vital family supports? *

Childcare and housing costs are too high for many of our residents, and the lack of attainable housing has reached crisis levels. My plan for housing includes, increasing housing inventory by buying back units before they go to market rate and keeping them affordable and building affordable housing where it's needed most especially in historically marginalized communities. If we are to be a city for every generation and all of Denver's diverse communities, it's critical that we elevate attainable housing oversight and action to the highest level within the City of Denver. I will hold myself and my administration accountable to turn allocated funding into actual housing. I support implementing a network of transit and supportive mobility that is affordable and moves people to where they want to go. I support RTD eliminating fares for youth 18 and younger and support increased funding for pedestrian improvements to ensure safe first and last mile connections to transit.

9. Will you commit to ensuring immigrants and refugees are hired among your appointee selection? *

Yes

No

10.a. Do you support an Office for New Americans at the state level? *

Yes

No

10.b. If elected mayor of Colorado's largest municipality, how would you support the formation of such an office and how would you involve the refugee and immigrant community in the process? *

I would like to meet with other state leaders where these offices have been established, like New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo, to learn more about the formation of the office and the challenges and successes they have encountered. A committee to investigate the feasibility and means of establishing such an office should be formed and that committee should of course include immigrant community members who will most keenly be able to identify the needs of the community.

11. If elected, would you be willing to meet with members of the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition and the Refugee Action Coalition of Colorado to discuss these issues? *

Yes

No

By typing my name below, I certify that I am authorized to answer these questions on behalf of Jamie Giellis for Denver. *

Sheila MacDonald sheila@jamiefordenver.com

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