

NEW ERA COLORADO

2023 Denver Municipal Runoff Candidate Questionnaire Responses *City Council, District 10: Chris Hinds*

Reproductive Rights

Q: Will you support funding practical support for abortion, such as lodging and traveling expenses? If yes, why and how would you fund it? If no, why not?

A: Yes. This would fall under the Denver Department of Public Health & Environment. Abortion access is under threat due to the recent SCOTUS decision regarding *Roe*. Many state "trigger" laws went into effect as soon as that decision was handed down and several others quickly passed anti-abortion laws. Some of the laws are so vague that medical professionals in those states don't want to risk jail time or license revocation to treat patients. That means states with unequivocal laws like Colorado are experiencing surges of out-of-state patients who might need travel and lodging. Furthermore, trained physicians are disproportionately located in urban areas, so those seeking abortion in rural areas of Colorado might also benefit from the equity of lodging and travel expense reimbursement. Of course, the best way to enshrine abortion access is to amend the state Constitution, but that is outside Council's ability.

Housing

Q: There is a housing crisis in Denver. Do you support the expansion of publicly funded affordable housing in the city? If yes, why? And if no, why not and how would you address housing affordability and accessibility?

A: Yes. Examples of ways we've used city funds so far include funding Warren Church, a renovation of a historic church in Capitol Hill that provides 48 units for those coming directly from unsheltered homelessness. We also funded the Capitol Square Apartments at 13th and Sherman streets that provide 103 units for people between 30-80% area median income (AMI). Both are in District 10. We've also expanded what "affordable" means by redefining it from 80% AMI to 60% AMI. In 2023, the people between 60-80% AMI include teachers, nurses, and firefighters. Those who help our city be healthy, safe, and wise deserve to live in the city in which they work. I completely support expanding that affordability, and Denver's 2023 budget has more than a quarter billion dollars dedicated to housing and homeless services and supports. That is the most the city budget has ever had for housing. One other important note: in 2013 and before, Denver did not dedicate a single dollar to affordable housing. We've come a long way, but given the homeless crisis, there's more for us to do.

Q: Will you repeal the camping ban? If yes, why? And if no, why not?

A: No. There's not enough support on Council now to repeal the camping ban. It's looking very unlikely with the new Council, either. But there's good news: Denver has rarely invoked the camping ban since it was passed into law in 2012. As far as I know, we have never used the camping ban as an enforcement tool since I took office in 2019. Instead, the reasons given for the sweeps are because of public health issues: rats, feces, trash, propane tanks, hepatitis outbreak, etc. It's not humane for anyone to have to sleep on our streets, and that's why I fought to dedicate more than a quarter billion dollars in Denver's 2023 budget to housing and homeless services and supports. We need to do more to get people into housing now and off our streets, and we've never dedicated that much money to transition people into housing before in Denver. It's also why I hosted the first two SOS sites in District 10 – it's the right thing for us to get creative. And it's why I'm sponsoring the legislation to make SOS sites, tiny home villages, and safe parking sites permanent in Denver. When we allowed them first, it was just a temporary fix. Without this legislation, they will all become illegal again at the end of 2023.

Environmental Justice

Q: Will you hold corporate polluters, like Suncor, accountable to reducing harmful pollutants in our air, land, and water that disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, Latine/x, immigrant, and low income communities? If yes, how? And if no, why not?

A: Yes. Suncor is in Commerce City, not Denver. But I've been very vocal about Suncor on social media. When they "experienced an opacity event" a few years ago, their solution was to "place their systems into safe mode." I responded, surprised that a facility as detrimental to health would ever be operated outside of "safe mode." Besides, doesn't that imply they regularly operate in an "unsafe mode?" I chair the committee that oversees the airport, and I pushed them to permanently plug all 80+ oil wells on airport property. They agreed to do that as of May 2022, and they are in the process of making that happen now. I will do the same for other polluters in our city.

Economic Justice

Q: Would you tax cigarettes, alcohol or gas to help fund government programs in Denver?

A: No.

Q: Many advocates have argued that these sin taxes put the financial burden onto people who are in the lowest economic levels. How does this influence your previous response? If you answered no, how do you propose paying for public goods and services?

A: We have so many other ways to fund programs in Denver. Sales taxes are inherently a regressive tax, but only 26% of sales taxes are collected from people who live in Denver. All other sales taxes are collected from people who live elsewhere but work/play in Denver or tourists from out of town. Lodging taxes also are significantly collected from people who don't live in Denver – after all, if you live here, you don't usually need to stay in a hotel. Both are examples of how we can pay for services in Denver and ensure that we are as gentle with Denver's communities as possible.