



## *Hopkins House*

*A Learning Center for Children, Youth, and Families*

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### **Early Childhood and Education Public Policy Priorities of Mayoral and Council Candidates Running in 2021 Alexandria City Democratic Party Primaries**

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While Hopkins House does not engage in partisan politics, we do however seek to educate the public about the public policy positions of candidates running for political office and the extent to which those positions align with Hopkins House’s early childhood education public policy priorities – with the goal to encourage voter participation in public elections.

Founded in 1939, Hopkins House operates education enriched preschool academies for infants and children, summer discovery camps for adolescents, and a college and career development institute for teens and adults, that help build the foundation for 21st century achievement and success in the new global economy.

Hopkins House’s mission is to provide high quality, high impact educational programs and learning opportunities to children, youth, and their families, regardless of income, to help them achieve, in measurably effective ways, their full intellectual, economic, and social potential.

Early care and education programs have been hard hit by the economic impact of the coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, pandemic. As such, there has never been a more important moment for our local leaders to come together in support of the early education, safe-keeping, and well-being of the youngest members of our community.

Since the onset of the pandemic, 60% of childcare providers in Virginia have closed; some temporarily and others permanently. Families with young children face high childcare costs; those who are eligible for government childcare tuition assistance are often unaware or struggle to access those benefits; and, early childcare educators — who are most often women of color — suffer subsistence wages, long working hours, high stress, and considerable responsibility.

Public investment in childcare is critical not only to working parents and childcare professionals, but also to the economy. Alexandria cannot repair the economic wounds caused by the pandemic — and cannot build back equitably — without a thriving and stable early childhood education system. The city’s economic base depends on workers who, in turn, depend on childcare providers to keep their young children safe, learning, and developing.



This is an important moment in the life of the city, perhaps the most important moment in recent history. This is Alexandria's chance to build a public policy foundation for a strong and robust childcare system that endures, draws employers to our city, and leads with equity.

With this in mind, Hopkins House developed a survey and invited all the candidates running in the 2021 primary for Mayor and City Council in the City of Alexandria to respond. Both mayoral candidates and all thirteen candidates for City Council responded.

The Hopkins House Public Policy & Advocacy Committee reviewed and analyzed the responses to determine how each candidate's public policy positions align most closely with those held by Hopkins House:

- Support for increasing Alexandria's public investment in early childhood education programs;
- Support for Alexandria's investment in attracting and retaining high quality early care and education professionals;
- Commitment to ensuring that all children in Alexandria have access to high quality early care and education;
- An understanding of the importance of early care and education to Alexandria's families and the city's economy;
- An understanding of the value of a research-based early care and education curriculum; and,
- A focus on improving racial and social equity in early childhood education and throughout the educational continuum.

The fact that every candidate running for political office in the upcoming primary, along with the overall tenor of their survey responses, is clear and undeniable indication that investing in early childhood education is a shared priority of most candidates. It is the obligation of voters to hold those elected to office accountable for delivering on their promises.

The chart below summarizes each candidate's responses to the Hopkins House survey. Also included are response highlights. Each candidate that submitted answers that clearly illustrate support and understanding of the individual public policy issues listed above received a gold star in the table below.

We encourage you to use these tools to educate yourself around these important public policy issues, consider which candidates most closely align with your own views around these issues, and vote in the June 8 primary.



CANDIDATES FOR ALEXANDRIA CITY COUNCIL						
CANDIDATE	Supports increasing Alexandria's public investment in early childhood education programs.	Supports Alexandria investment in attracting and retaining high quality early care and education professionals.	Committed to ensuring that all children in Alexandria have access to high quality early care and education.	Understands importance of early care and education to Alexandria's families and the city's economy.	Understands the value of a research based early care and education curriculum.	Understands importance of focusing on improving racial/ social equity in early childhood education.
<b>Aguirre, Canek</b>	★	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Bagley, Sarah</b>	★	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Campbell, Bill</b>	★	★	★	★		★
<b>Chapman, John</b>	★	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Gaskins, Alyia Smith</b>	★	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Harris, Kevin</b>	★	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Jackson, Amy</b>		★	★	★		
<b>Lewis, James</b>	★	★	★			
<b>McPike, Kirk</b>	★	★	★	★	★	★
<b>Moran, Patrick</b>	★	★	★	★	★	
<b>Rossello, Bill</b>	★	★		★		
<b>Shiffer, Mark</b>	★		★	★		
<b>Teklu, Meronne</b>	★	★	★	★	★	★



ALEXANDRIA CITY MAYORAL CANDIDATES						
CANDIDATE	Supports increasing Alexandria's public investment in early childhood education programs.	Supports Alexandria investment in attracting and retaining high quality early care and education professionals.	Committed to ensuring that all children in Alexandria have access to high quality early care and education.	Understands importance of early care and education to Alexandria's families and the city's economy.	Understands the value of a research based early care and education curriculum.	Understands importance of focusing on improving racial/ social equity in early childhood education.
Silberberg, Allison						
Wilson, Justin						

- Candidate Response Highlights -

- **If elected, what are you to do to support early child care and education?**

Council candidate **John Taylor Chapman** said that he would champion more funding to support early childcare and education and push policies that will allow for more access to early child care, and advocate directly to our state delegation to demand more from the Commonwealth to help us achieve our educational goals.

Council candidate **Sarah Bagley** reflected on a broader approach, that would include how we think about housing, zoning, and business permitting- and press for project designs that incorporate spaces for childcare and Head Start facilities.

Council candidate **Amy Jackson** reflected on the experience of her own children, first in community preschool and then in ACPS, and how that drives her to advocate for the resources needed to ensure that our community provides a strong, progressive educational foundation for our children, including public/universal pre-k education.

Council candidate **Bill Rossello** believes the City has moved in the right direction on this issue and he would support continued efforts, particularly in the area of securing grant funding during this window of opportunity with the current Biden Administration.

- **If elected, what would you do to ensure that essential workers and others have access to childcare and early childhood education, so they can successfully remain in the workforce?**



Council candidate **Bill Campbell** responded that he would make sure Alexandria takes full advantage of the state and federal government efforts regarding universal pre-K, along with any additional grants that could be secured, and he wants to over-communicate to all city residents about the how critical high quality pre-K is.

Council candidate **Kevin Harris** would make sure that we do whatever we can in our power to increase the wages of essential workers so that they can pay for childcare—including the right to collectively bargain and organize—and he wants to have universal Pre-K and universal after-school care available to all families.

Council candidate **Kirk McPike** was of the mind that we cannot fully restart Alexandria’s economy until childcare and early learning facilities are able to provide essential workers with safe and educational places for their children during working hours, and that even when the pandemic is fully behind us, the need for childcare and early education programs will be essential to allowing frontline workers to succeed at their jobs and support their families.

- **What role should city government, in your opinion, play in eliminating racial disparities in investment, discipline, and access to quality learning in preschools and k-12 schools?**

Mayoral candidate **Justin Wilson** (who is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Hopkins House) shared his belief that intentional public investments in early childhood education is one of the most significant ways the City can narrow racial inequities that exist in educational attainment in our City. But he went on to say that even when public resources are invested in early childhood education, the systems that administer those investments must be reformed to ensure access. This means review of registration processes, how public subsidy can be applied, where services are provided, the hours services are provided and more. The City, as the largest public financer of early childhood services can also drive quality in the system, by ensuring its investment is applied in quality, curriculum-based programs that rigorously measure efficacy.

Council candidate **Patrick Moran** hopes to equip our public school students with the skills and information that informs their understanding of how to better value themselves in society and the workplace.

Council candidate **Alyia Gaskins** committed to working with the City’s Race and Social Equity Officer to help all of our departments and partners operationalize equity, including: evaluating the burdens, benefits, and outcomes to underserved communities of all proposed policies, programs, and investments; fully understanding what it is like for families navigating the child care system step-by-step, from how they find child care to how they travel to and from their provider; and ensuring data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and geographically.



Council Candidate **Meronne Teklu** wants elected officials to listen to the voices of community members and continue to educate themselves about the history, causes, and consequences of systemic racism in the United States and how this impacts our youth and students. She thinks it is even more important for the city to work with Black, Indigenous and people of color given that systemic racism in education is a root cause of so many other inequities that BIPOC communities face, it's important to stand shoulder to shoulder to create changes in our education system.

- **In your opinion, what resources and conditions lead to an excellent preschool, and how will you make sure that students—especially those from historically marginalized communities—have access to these schools?**

Mayoral candidate **Allison Silberberg** reflected that she thinks teachers are the heart of all educational experiences, and she wants to ensure that all preschools and schools have equal resources to hire and retain high quality educators for their students. Her aim would be no disparity in the physical facilities nor the quality of teachers in any of our schools, and seek to ensure that all school facilities are well maintained, while creating equitable learning opportunities and environments for all our students.

Council candidate **James Lewis** likewise saw strong, committed leaders, educators and staff—coupled with a safe space—as being the most fundamental resources needed for excellent preschools. He thinks that as a City, we need to ensure that we have varied and robust programs, within “APCS”.

- **If elected, how would you make sure that educators and support personnel in schools and preschools are paid a professional, living wage?**

Council candidate **Canek Aguirre** pointed out that one of the consistent items placed in the City's legislative packet to Richmond includes support for a living wage, and that he has advocated for that going back to when he was Chair of Alexandria's Economic Opportunities Commission. He acknowledged that while the City can only directly impact our own employees and the contracts the City enters into, he thinks it is important that localities continue to lobby those at the state and federal level who do have the ability to move passage of a living wage.

Council candidate **Mark Shiffer** said that if the city is funding Universal Pre-k, we can attach conditions on schools that accept that funding and he would support doing so to ensure educators and support personnel are receiving a viable professional, living wage.

- **Do you commit to demonstrating civility in politics and not engaging with groups that are the antithesis of this; using evidence in decision-making and communications with the public; and, calling out misinformation in public**



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**forums that could hinder a clear understanding of the important issues  
Alexandria needs to address?**

**All thirteen council candidates and both mayoral candidates** answered “yes” to this question."

Hopkins House is grateful to every candidate in this race for participating in this public engagement process and for lending their voices in support of Alexandria’s early childhood education community.

We encourage all Alexandrians to educate yourself about the upcoming elections and vote.