



## Mayoral Candidates Respond to The Kids Agenda

### How will you, as Mayor, make sure every child has a safe and stable home and access to healthcare?

#### **HELEN GYM**

On Council, I sponsored the Emergency Housing Protections Act, which kept Philadelphians housed during the COVID-19 pandemic by enacting a local eviction moratorium; an eviction diversion program; a temporary ban on late fees; and requiring tenants be provided the option of repayment plans to get back on track with rent. This legislation helped reduce evictions by 75 percent over two consecutive years and prevented tens of thousands of cases of COVID-19. (Co-sponsored with Councilmembers Gauthier and Brooks). We also developed and implemented Philadelphia's renowned Eviction Diversion Program, the first mandatory pre-filing diversion program in the nation requiring landlords and renters to resolve disputes with the aid of housing counseling before an eviction can be filed. The program has a 93% success rate in avoiding evictions and has been replicated by cities and states around the nation. In 2021, Philadelphia's diversion program was lauded and recommended as a national model by the White House, U.S. Department of Justice, and the Treasury Department.

While this work was critical for protecting renters struggling to stay in their homes, we also need to recommit to housing as a human right, and look at how the city can evolve in its land use to build more affordable housing – and permanent affordable housing rather than short term fixes for people in crisis that don't upend the cycle of displacement. As Mayor, I would prioritize use of public land for permanent affordable housing, a dedicated preservation fund to keep current homeowners in safe and modern housing and assist landlords to improve properties and protect renters from displacement, greater outreach on government programs, and assisting new homeowners with down payment assistance, credit support and clearing of consumer and student debt.

Additionally, I want to ensure that every child has access to quality healthcare options in their neighborhood by piloting programs that place healthcare professionals, particularly mental and behavioral health professionals, for sessions in recreation centers. I will also use my power as Mayor to work with Governor Shpairo and House Leader McClinton to get healthcare expansion, particularly expansion in CHIP, passed in the Commonwealth's General Assembly.

#### **CHERELLE PARKER**

During my time on City Council, I was known as the "housing preservation, neighborhood stabilization, and commercial corridor revitalization" Councilperson. I helped launch numerous programs to support and create homeowners (Restore Repair Renew, a low-interest home repair loan program and Philly First Home, a grant program for first-time homebuyers). I worked to stabilize neighborhoods by investing in neighborhood commercial corridors, and creating programs like PHL TCB to clean and green on and around corridors.

I also worked tirelessly to support our neighborhood assets, such as parks, recreation centers, and libraries. These assets serve as anchors for our neighborhoods, and their success determines the surrounding neighborhoods' success.

(continued)

## How will you, as Mayor, make sure every child has a safe and stable home and access to healthcare?

Also, as a result of the health and economic crisis, we've learned more than ever how crucial it is to ensure all people access to decent healthcare, housing and education. One thing that I pushed for when I was still a Councilwoman, and that I continue to push for, is for the City to draw down more quickly on the \$1.4 billion in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The City has currently spent less than half of the ARPA funds, despite the great need for these funds now. As Mayor, I would also explore using city funds (including ARPA funds) to eliminate medical debt for Philadelphians. A little bit of city funding can go a surprisingly long way. For example, Toledo used \$800,000 to wipe out \$240 million in medical debt. Philadelphians are burdened by so many different types of debt, and medical debt is just one of them. If we can help unburden many Philadelphians of a significant source of debt, it will undoubtedly improve their economic situations.

Despite our Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and other health centers, far too many use emergency rooms across the city as their primary care providers. And if they are uninsured, then the medical costs can be exorbitant. As Mayor, I would work to ensure that every Philadelphian has access to and receives health insurance coverage – via Medicaid, Medicare, the Affordable Care Act, etc. I would focus on education and outreach, targeting vulnerable communities.

### **REBECCA RHYNHART**

Families need more access to support – Social Workers, counselors, and doctors. The Rhynhart Administration would ensure that our city's health centers have the hours, capacity and services necessary to meet the needs of the communities where they exist. In addition, we must ensure parents have access to excellent and affordable daycare and that working parents have access to and training for family-sustaining jobs.