



August 14, 2023

## Seattle City Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete the candidate endorsement questionnaire for the Washington Technology Industry Association (WTIA). Your responses will help us inform and engage the 200,000+ tech sector employees who live and work in the City of Seattle. This, in turn, will help you engage them more effectively as an electorate.

We will also offer virtual candidate interviews with members of the WTIA Policy Steering Committee for a discussion to gain a more thorough understanding of your answers. Following the interview process, we will make our endorsement decisions.

Please send your responses to Kelly Fukai at [kfukai@washingtontechnology.org](mailto:kfukai@washingtontechnology.org) by Monday, August 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Please note that this questionnaire and your responses will be published on the WTIA website and used in a digital voter guide provided to Seattle-based tech employees.**

### Candidate Questionnaire

#### **1. What are your top three priorities for the City of Seattle, and what will you do to accomplish them?**

**Priority 1:** Crime and public safety. I know first-hand that working families and communities of color like my own disproportionately feel the burden of higher property crimes, hate crimes, gun violence, and the failure of our city leaders to step-up and ensure we are safe. I will work to ensure 5-minute response times for priority one calls, a return to full staffing at pre-2021 levels, a comprehensive approach to getting drugs and guns out of our streets, collaborate with neighborhoods to address safety, take property crime seriously and invest in proven alternatives to law enforcement that reduce crime while also reducing harm for communities of color. I believe the City Council's decision to defund the police was flat out wrong and I'm infuriated that three years after thousands of Seattlites



marched for justice we have still failed to adequately invest in proven alternatives to law enforcement. This combination of reckless rhetoric and lack of leadership in actually addressing our problems is fatal for the residents of Seattle and is the most important issue that I plan to address as the next council member in District 4.

**Priority 2:** Childcare. As a parent myself, I chose to put my personal career on hold to take care of my family. After the birth of my two daughters, we did the math as a family– and it simply was not possible for us to afford high-quality child care for our kids in the City of Seattle. I feel incredibly lucky that my family had the means to allow me to take time off and care for our kids, but I know for so many families that’s just not possible. This reality is bad for families, bad for our economy, and bad for the workers who make this City what it is. There are three key steps to reduce the cost of childcare and increase accessibility.

First, we need to treat child care as essential infrastructure in our city. Ensuring families are able to go to work and have care for their children is good for business, our economy, and our city. I’ll work with regional, state, and local partners to identify funding and bonding authority to create additional childcare facilities throughout the city and expand access for families.

Second, it is flatly unacceptable that those who would provide child care for our kids are (according to Momsrising.org) paid less than \$21,000 annually in the State of Washington. There’s no wonder there are so few early learning providers in the City of Seattle, when the incentives to enter the industry and working conditions for those employed are so poor. We need to work with our labor, business, and education partners to make early learning a livable industry that people want and are able to work in.

Third, we need to reduce the cost of child care. It is simply far too expensive to build a new child care facility in the City of Seattle. We need to streamline our existing infrastructure to maximize both access and affordability for families. Currently, both Washington state and the City of Seattle assist low-income and middle-income families in need by paying for portions of their childcare costs. Unfortunately, according to Statewide data, these subsidies are only used by fewer than one third of those who need help paying for childcare. We need to close this



gap by ensuring workers have access to benefits that cover child care costs, and our subsidies are both sufficient to cover costs and applicable to all those who need it.

**Priority 3:** Government accountability. Having worked at the city in various capacities including a department and for a council member, I have also seen first hand how good stewardship of public dollars has become a lost art. I will work to restore public trust by ensuring every dollar of public money is allocated to the priorities clearly articulated by voters and residents. Bringing urgency to addressing the pressing issues facing our city also means being a tireless advocate for rebuilding trust that our government is a good steward of public dollars.

The vast majority of Seattlites support progressive taxation, but they also deserve to know that their city government is spending that money effectively to improve their lives. Unfortunately, far too often that is not the case. There are few things that make me angrier than seeing the government waste precious resources when there are so many important priorities that need public investment. I am running to be a committed steward of our resources and an advocate for ensuring new taxes are progressive because I know the burden is far too high for middle, low and no-income residents in our city. We cannot keep piling on to a tax system that disproportionately asks those with the least to pay the most, especially when our track record with the resources we have is so poor.

**0. What do you see as the role for the tech sector in Seattle's future? How would you partner with the tech sector to foster a robust and resilient community?**

When I moved to Seattle 22 years ago, I moved to a city that I considered to be the best in the world to live and raise a family in. What makes Seattle so unique is that we both have access to world-class nature, parks, and green space and incredible innovation, technology, and culture. Achieving a sustainable future for Seattle, one where the people who live here can afford to not just survive but thrive, and a city where everyone from all backgrounds and communities is truly safe- means working together with everyone in our city, including and especially our robust tech sector.



One of the main reasons I decided to run for office in the first place, is to restore good governance and responsible budgeting to our city council. We cannot keep approving new tax after new tax without first proving we are using the resources we have in a way that is actually improving the lives of the people who live here, and contributing to a robust, prosperous, and resilient economy. I know WTIA and the broad tech community are crucial allies to design responsible public policy that ensures everyone in our city shares in its prosperity.

**0. Given the importance of the tech sector's contributions to the Seattle economy, what would you do to increase Seattle's competitiveness vis-a-vis emerging tech hubs like Denver, Miami, and Austin? What initiatives would you put forward to support tech employers, entrepreneurs, and employees?**

The best way to ensure Seattle is competitive on a global stage, is to make it the best city in the world to live and work in. Ultimately, tech companies locate where there is access to world-class talent and a diverse workforce. As a parent myself, the biggest issues on my mind when I think about where to live is access to affordable childcare and community safety.

If Seattle finally lived up to its promise, to be a city where no one pays more than 10% of their income on childcare, and where every family can actually find high-quality childcare for their kids- there is no question in my mind we would be one of the most competitive cities in the world for technology and innovation. Additionally, Seattle is unfortunately quickly gaining a reputation as a city that is unsafe to live in. Whether it's the insidious grip of fentanyl on our streets, record year after record year for gun violence, the highest levels of hate crimes in at least 20 years, and property crime plaguing our neighborhood businesses- Seattle must act to ensure everyone in this city is truly safe or we will continue to become a less and less competitive city compared to our peer cities throughout the country and world.

Finally, I also believe that our City Council needs to be more focused on effectively collaborating with technology companies and other private-sector partners. The tech sector has been incredibly generous in contributing to some of the strongest labor protections in the nation, the largest tax in our city's history, and a labor



market that prioritizes working people and their families. At the same time, we have not done enough to pay that generosity back by investing in the issues that matter to small and large companies alike– to foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and effective governance that uses the resources we have effectively.

**0. How would you work toward ensuring the successful advancement of policies and programs that create equitable outcomes for underrepresented communities and BIPOC individuals in the tech industry?**

I grew up in the Bronx, on the 5th floor of an apartment building with no elevator. My parents moved from Puerto Rico in search of a better life. My dad was a proud union welder, and my mom worked at a factory. My family and the privilege I have is a testament to what is possible when good government invests in affordability, education, and union jobs. I have dedicated my entire career to public service, to ensure that the dream my family fought for is one that is accessible to everyone. I served in President Clinton’s White House as Hispanic Liaison, then as the Vice-President of the National Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and here in Seattle at the ACLU supporting Muslim communities facing xenophobia after 9/11.

What I’ve learned from my personal experience is that so many of the issues we are talking about, whether it is access to affordable childcare, public safety, or housing and transportation– it is immigrant and communities of color like my own family that are disproportionately and primarily impacted by the inequities present in so many of our systems. Take childcare for example, studies show that it is a primary driver in economic inequality for the BIPOC community, including for individuals in the tech industry. It costs more to send a kid to childcare than it does to college. Tech companies rely on world-class, talented BIPOC employees, including immigrants from other countries, that lack the support other employees have that have lived here their whole lives and have families to help take care of their kiddos. Investing in childcare is an investment in closing racial disparities in economic opportunity.

Another significant issue is access to affordable housing. Owning a home means generational access to wealth. Yet, for so many families of color, and yes for employees at tech companies this is simply out of reach. Investing in affordable housing, and a transportation system that helps workers get where they need to



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go- means creating generational wealth building opportunities for BIPOC individuals in the tech sector and all sectors. Ultimately, I know that the best policies will come in collaboration with WTIA and other partners, and I hope to be someone you can rely on as a voice committed to responsible public policy and bold action to address our most pressing issues.

Thank you again for your willingness to serve our community.

Kelly Fukai  
VP, Government and Community Affairs  
WTIA