1. For which position are you running?
My name is Kshama Sawant and I am running for re-election to Seattle City Council District 3.

2. What do you know about the unmet basic human needs in the district you would represent?

The single biggest challenge for District 3, and for Seattle as a whole, is the acute affordable housing and homelessness crisis. At this point, a majority of working people are being adversely affected, and people of color and the LGBTQ community are disproportionately impacted. Tens of thousands of renters are extremely rent-burdened (paying more than half their income on rent), and therefore, are vulnerable to being made homeless. We also have chronic underfunding of homeless services, mental health services, youth jobs, public education.

The last decade shows the for-profit housing market has failed us. Seattle has had the nation’s largest number of construction cranes four years running, yet the crisis of affordable housing remains among the worst in the country, with the average one-bedroom rent now over two thousand dollars a month.

Studies show that when the average rent in a metropolitan area increases by $100, homelessness increases by at least 15%, often higher. We need universal rent control to stop Seattle’s skyrocketing rents and hemorrhaging of affordable housing. That’s why my office, alongside Be:Seattle, the Tenants Union, and the City of Seattle Renters Commission, has launched a campaign to win universal rent control - free of corporate loopholes - that would go into effect the moment the state ban on rent regulation is lifted. Rent increases should be limited to no more than the rate of inflation, with no corporate loopholes. Winning this legislation in Seattle will create tremendous momentum to push the State Legislature to lift the unjust, statewide ban. But we will need to build a movement to win, which is why our coalition has gathered already nearly 10,000 petition signatures in recent months for rent control and are organizing a mass “Rent Control Rally” on July 20.

We also need a massive expansion of social housing - publicly-owned, high quality, permanently affordable housing. Seattle needs to build new affordable housing numbering in the tens of thousands of homes, to provide a real alternative to the for-profit market, which has failed the majority of us. The only way to fund such a dramatic expansion is to tax big business and the super-rich. That is why I was a proud fighter for the Amazon Tax in Seattle, and opposed its shameful repeal when Mayor Durkan and seven of the nine councilmembers capitulated to Amazon and big business, and reversed this progressive tax less than a month after it was unanimously passed.

We need a major expansion of tiny home villages in Seattle. They have proven to be the most effective way to transition people out of homelessness, by providing the safety and dignity
necessary to start the work of finding jobs and permanent affordable housing (if it exists). On May 24, I hosted residents and organizations living in and operating Seattle’s tiny house villages to my Council Committee, the Select Committee on Homelessness. They talked about how a tiny house can be a very good interim solution for people with no shelter, providing safety, security, and privacy. They are insulated and have electricity, with plumbed toilets and showers, washer dryer facilities, and kitchens. They have caseworkers helping the residents get access to jobs, services, housing. Also importantly, in Seattle’s self-managed tiny house villages homeless residents are empowered to democratically manage their own communities, which is important for human dignity and allows people to begin to overcome the trauma, isolation, and alienation of unsheltered life. Seattle should significantly expand the number of tiny house villages.

I also support the placement of Community Health Engagement Locations (aka safe-consumption sites) in my district. Our People’s Budget movement fought for and won a budget amendment I sponsored to fund a community health engagement location (CHEL) in November of 2017. Unfortunately, Mayor Durkan has left those funds unused, so last fall, I proposed and won a budget amendment requiring the mayor to announce her progress using those funds. Once again, the response from her office indicated no progress.

Seattle must also stop the homeless sweeps. Forcibly removing homeless people from encampments is inhumane and ineffective. Without affordable places for people to go, the sweeps only move people from one street corner to the next, only with fewer belongings and greater desperation - to the tune of approximately $10 million annually in city funds. Seattle has conducted over 1,000 sweeps, with the only tangible impact being an increase in human misery. Last fall, I proposed redirecting the all funds budgeted to conduct the sweeps to instead go toward funding more affordable housing to actually reduce homelessness. Mayor Durkan has recently announced a doubling down on and further expansion of these sweeps, proving once more that we need more elected representatives who will stand with working people and the marginalized, not fewer.

We need full funding for mental healthcare and the LEAD program, which my office have fought to expand and has won funding for.

The common thread in all of these issues is that there will be no solution to homelessness without a major expansion of affordable housing, and without bold solutions like rent control to end the rapid displacement from currently affordable homes. And as I have said, to end the homelessness crisis we need a major expansion of affordable housing, paid for by taxing Amazon and big businesses.

3. What has afforded you the privilege and power to run for office, and how will it impact your role in this position?
I grew up in an ordinary middle-class family in Mumbai, India. My mother was a public school teacher, and my father was a civil engineer, before he was killed in a road accident when I was 12 years old. I have a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from the University of Mumbai, and later earned a PhD in Economics from North Carolina State. I worked as a part-time economics lecturer at Seattle University and Seattle Central College and struggled as an underpaid adjunct teacher, before my election to Seattle City Council. I am a member of the American Federation of Teachers 1789, and was previously its delegate to Martin Luther King County Labor Council. I was part of the Occupy Seattle movement.

My husband, Calvin Priest, previously worked in information technology at a local school where he made a reasonable, middle-class wage, but together we never earned more than an average Seattle household's salary prior to my election.

My “power,” if you want to call it that, comes from the fact that I am crystal clear in my mind that I am fighting for working people, the marginalized, and the vulnerable, and that my Council position does not exist to benefit or enrich myself personally, or to build my personal career. My strength and ability to have succeeded over and over again in winning victories for ordinary people has come from using my Office to empower thousands of people to unite and fight for social justice.

My strength also comes from the fact that I am a member of Socialist Alternative - a democratically-run organization which fights in workplaces, communities, and campuses against exploitation and injustice around the country. We have a long record of winning victories for working people and marginalized communities through grassroots organizing. We see the global capitalist system as the root cause of economic crisis, poverty, racism and discrimination, war, and environmental destruction. We are for building a democratic socialist society where ordinary people will have control over our daily lives.

I have never accepted a penny from corporations, CEOs, business lobbyists, or big developers, but have instead relied on the individual donations of working people. I was the candidate of Socialist Alternative for Washington State Representative in 2012 and with the help of hundreds of volunteers and the support of unions and community groups I was elected to Seattle City Council in 2013, when I became the first socialist to serve in more than 100 years. I won re-election in 2015, endorsed by a wide range of unions and other progressive organizations.

As a City Councilmember, I take home only the average workers’ wage of $40,000 after taxes, and donate the rest of my $130,000 City Council salary to grassroots movements.

I helped build the movement that made Seattle the first major city to win a $15 minimum wage. My office has helped win a series of landmark renters rights victories and millions for affordable housing. Working with indigenous activists, my office ushered in the Indigenous People’s Day, ending Columbus Day. Every year my office organizes the People’s Budget movement, and
through grassroots organizing in coalition with other progressive organizations, have won millions in additional funding for social services.

4. What experience do you have in listening to and amplifying community voices? In what ways do you base your policies and priorities on the needs of those who will be most impacted by them?

I have used my office in the five and a half years I have been in City Hall to fight for and alongside working people, the marginalized, people of color and LGBTQ community members. I have done so by helping to organize grassroots movements and bringing their collective voice, and I will continue doing so.

My office has helped build broad grassroots campaigns to win a number of major victories, beginning with Seattle’s historic $15 minimum wage. Working alongside the Block the Bunker coalition we and stopped the $160 million North Precinct police bunker and went on to organize the 1,000 homes campaign to win tens of millions of dollars for affordable housing. Working with tenant activists and housing rights organizations we’ve won a series of landmark renters’ rights victories: the Move-In-Fee cap, the “Carl Haglund” law barring rent increases at substandard rental homes, the Fair Chance Housing bill to limit the use of criminal records in rental housing applications, and a law requiring landlords to provide voter registration information to new tenants. The Move-In-Fee law means that Seattle renters no longer need thousands of dollars just to move in, caps how much landlords can charge in non-refundable deposits, and requires them to offer a payment plan for move in fees.

Fighting alongside homeless activists, we’ve organized to Stop the Sweeps and authorized and won funding for homeless encampments.

My office amplified the voices of the indigenous community, and worked alongside them to win an end to Columbus Day and usher in the Indigenous People’s Day.

Fighting alongside East African immigrant residents, we stopped the Seattle Housing Authority’s Orwellian “Stepping Forward” public housing attack, which would have raised rents by 400%.

Since February this year, my office has been working with the Tenants Union, Be:Seattle, PSARA, and with the tenants of the Chateau Apartments in the Central District. This building is home to many black, Asian, East African, and white working-class tenants, who faced the prospect of demolition and economic eviction. By building a strong movement, we have already succeeded in winning victories against the corporate developer, Cadence, and we are continuing the work of organizing the tenants. We won a breakthrough commitment from the building’s developer to delay demolition and to provide additional relocation assistance for each household, above and beyond what city law provides. The Chateau tenants included numerous retirees. Working with my Council office, the Chateau tenants have forced their building owner to make dozens of repairs and upgrades to the building and their apartments.
With the black community and working class people being disproportionately gentrified out of Seattle, we need to urgently fight for rent control and social housing, both of which have proved to be a lifeline for ordinary people and the most vulnerable in many cities throughout the world. My office has just launched a campaign for comprehensive, citywide rent control free of corporate loopholes.

Just days ago, my Council Office fought alongside renters in Skyway, in unincorporated King County, who were facing the prospect of eviction for no cause. The tenants are all immigrants and people of color. Through a movement-building approach, we were able to build momentum to ensure that the landlord rescinded the eviction notices. I have also reached out to King County Council and Executive to pass Just Cause Protections in all of unincorporated King County.

My office fought alongside working-class seniors living at Halcyon Mobile Home Park to defend against displacement, and for some, likely homelessness. I was pleased to work with unions, faith communities, and others to successfully fend off the sale and demolition of this working class community. We got a unanimous vote from the Council, despite initial terrible opposition, because we built a strong grassroots movement.

Instead of holding closed-door meetings with CEOs and lobbyists, I use my office to organize alongside social movements so that my office can be genuinely accessible and base itself on the power of working people. My office has supported workers fighting for workplace rights - like REI workers and the security officers at the Amazon campus, and labor unions fighting for a fair contract including striking Seattle Educators, cement workers, school bus drivers, operating engineers, cargo pilots, teaching assistants, hospital workers, UW staff, and many others. My office has supported workers facing harassment and discrimination, including City workers and Amazon security guards. Unions are one of the best defenses workers have and statistically, are one of the most effective ways to end the gender pay gap. I have consistently supported workers organizing to form unions and fighting for a fair contract.

Every year since 2014, my first year in office, I have hosted a People's Budget. This is an annual gathering of community members, social justice activists, homeless advocates and labor leaders which is designed to bring the needs and voices of ordinary people into the city’s budget-making process. It has brought thousands of ordinary people to city hall for the first time, as a counterweight to the business-as-usual city budget put forward by the political establishment to mainly benefit big business, corporate landlords, and developers.

We have demanded, and won, many other important gains, such as expanding the L.E.A.D program citywide, which directs low-level offenders into community-based treatment and support services; doubling funding for Career Bridge, which help prisoners transition into the
reliable, well-paying jobs; and doubling funding for the Priority Hire program, which provides good youth jobs.

Most recently as members of the Seattle Human Services Coalition know, I have worked with the Coalition to demand an inclusive process for the appointment of Seattle’s Human Services Director. In February of this year my office brought forward a resolution urging Mayor Durkan to convene a search committee that includes representatives of non-profit human services providers, individuals who have or are experiencing homelessness and other clients of HSD, and representatives of HSD employees selected by PROTEC17 and the HSD Change Team and Caucuses, so that the permanent HSD Director can be selected with the full engagement of staff, human service providers, and community members.

5. The cost of health care increases every year. Recent federal policy changes have threatened the long-term sustainability of Medicaid — such as attempts to reduce funding or turn the program into a block grant — and have aimed to undermine the viability of private health insurance markets — such as eliminating the individual insurance mandate from the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or not defending the ACA in court. Given so many barriers being placed at the federal level, how would you work to improve health care access at the local level to ensure stronger and more vibrant communities?

There is no avoiding that we urgently need Medicare for All, but there are important things Seattle can do to expand affordable access to healthcare while we’re fighting for universal healthcare statewide and nationally.

For example, the People’s Budget movement led in part by my office fought for and won $100,000 for an LGBTQ health care clinic at Nova High School in the Central District. We have also used our office to support Trans Pride and the Trans Day of Resistance/Remembrance. As part of the event we hosted last fall, we underscored the need for healthcare that fully funds gender-affirming care. I also have worked closely with UAW 4121, a union that went on strike last year, demanding a contract with an expansion of health coverage that included gender confirmation services, and mental health services.

Unionizing, and building strong and democratic unions, is an important avenue to win healthcare as a workplace right, while we build a fight for Medicare for All. I am strongly supporting hotel workers to win the best possible healthcare in the legislation currently under discussion by the City Council.

Numerous studies show that one of the most important determinants of health is one’s access to housing. This is why our movement for rent control and taxing big business to build high quality social housing is crucial to people’s lives on many levels.
Last year, we saw thousands of working-class people flood into town halls and office occupations with the serious threat of attacks on the Affordable Care Act by Trump. 71% of Americans support healthcare as a human right. A single-payer system would be a dramatic improvement over the current market-based system, though it is not a complete solution to the health care problems. A national, fully funded Medicare-for-all health care system would go farther than a state or national single-payer plan. The huge profits of the big hospital corporations, the so-called health care providers, would be eliminated entirely, freeing up social resources for patient needs.

We should also recognize that the threat that any step toward socialized medicine represents to the healthcare industry, Big Pharma, and the ruling class as a whole, also means we will need a powerful movement of millions of working people to win any such gains.

6. Federal policies over the last few years have created a climate of fear for immigrant and refugee communities across the country. Even Washington State, long a welcoming environment, is no stranger to these challenges, as the recent Department of Licensing scandal showed. This climate of fear impacts immigrants and refugees of all statuses, and new research shows this fear is driving immigrants away from health and human services programs they are legally eligible to participate in. What would you do to leverage local systems and resources to bring immigrant and refugee communities back out of the shadows?

Seattle’s current “sanctuary city” status needs to be urgently augmented to include many concrete protections. Seattle should do everything in its power to end detentions and deportations, refusing all cooperation with Trump’s deportation machine, and making Seattle ICE-free.

We could also use our public notification networks to notify the city of planned immigration raids so that families can prepare and rapid response networks can immediately mobilize as was seen in Oakland last year. Seattle should end all policing tactics that criminalize immigrants and people of color. At present, anyone suspected of a crime who ends up in King County Jail or in the court system risks being deported by ICE agents.

We should expand municipal voting rights to all residents - no human being is illegal! Seattle should reject all companies and agencies with discriminatory practices. Such changes are restricted at the state level, which shows that we will need a powerful movement to win this.

I have used my office to build movements against Trump’s xenophobia and bigotry. My office helped organize, and participated in, a peaceful civil disobedience direct action last July, when a number of us blocked the entrance of the downtown ICE office for several hours, to draw
attention to the Trump administration’s horrendous family separation, and detentions, at the US-Mexico border.

In February 2017, alongside immigrant rights organizations, my office led a crucial rally to #FreeDaniel, in response to the first DACA recipient - Daniel Ramirez Medina - in Seattle who was detained under Trump. My office supported the hunger strikes two years ago at the Northwest Detention Center against the inhumane conditions for undocumented immigrants at the prison, and has stood in solidarity with a number of immigrant community members who have been targeted by Trump’s ICE.

I was proud to help lead a mass nonviolent civil disobedience at SeaTac Airport to demand the release of those detained by Trump’s racist Muslim Ban. I have fought alongside SEIU Local 6 and the security workers (mostly East African immigrants) on the Amazon campus for their prayer rights in the workplace, and in their struggle to unionize.

Seattle can’t consider itself a “sanctuary city” if working-class immigrants can’t afford to live here, which means we need universal rent control and a massive expansion of quality, social housing. I will continue to fight alongside movements for bold policies in the interests of immigrants, refugees, and all working people. We need a major expansion of social housing and a Green New Deal for working people, which together can create hundreds of thousands of living wage union jobs for both native born and immigrant workers, and cut across the right wing’s attempts to divide and rule.

We must support the efforts of all workers to unionize, which is statistically proven to be the best way to prevent intimidation and harassment. This includes the low-paid service sector and the Gig economy. While undocumented workers are technically protected by existing labor laws, many undocumented workers fear retaliation if they come forward, and the laws are often poorly enforced. We need stronger programs to ensure labor rights for undocumented workers who are disproportionately victims of workforce abuses and gaps in the existing enforcement of workers’ rights.

I strongly support the move to unionize tech giants like Amazon and Google, who hold a large proportion of H-1B visas. Tech Won’t Build It and the international Google Walkouts show what is possible when workers stand together. I supported Unite Here’s campaign for I-124, which forced hotel giants to provide panic buttons for hotel workers, predominantly immigrant women, in protection against sexual assault. My office was part of the fight for the Office of Labor Standards in Seattle, which has provided a much needed lifeline to immigrant and refugee workers who are disproportionately targeted for wage theft.

7. Over half Seattleites and over 40% of people in King County are renters. Currently in most of Washington State tenants can be forced to move with only 20 days’ notice and
even within the city of Seattle, there is no guarantee that a landlord will renew a tenant’s lease. [For King County Candidates] As part of the King County Council, will you enact just cause protections to give tenants stability? [For Seattle Candidates] As part of Seattle City Council, will you expand just cause protections for renters with fixed term leases who are up for a lease renewal? [For both] What are your plans and strategies to protect renters?

Yes, absolutely I think all loopholes in Seattle’s Just Cause ordinance need to be closed. In fact, as we speak, my staff and I are drafting legislation, including to close the major loophole where renters with fixed-term leases who are up for renewal do not have just cause protections.

As mentioned above, just days ago, my Council Office fought alongside renters in Skyway, in unincorporated King County, who were facing the prospect of eviction for no cause. The tenants are all immigrants and people of color. Through a movement-building approach, we were able to build momentum to ensure that the landlord rescinded the eviction notices. I have also reached out to King County Council and Executive to pass Just Cause Protections in all of unincorporated King County.

My office has helped fight for and win (by sponsoring legislation for, building a movement for, and winning unanimous or majority City Council vote on) a series of landmark renters’ rights: the Move-In-Fee cap and payment plan; the “Carl Haglund” law barring rent increases at substandard rental homes as part of a Tenant’s Bill of Rights to help protect renters against mistreatment by landlords; the Fair Chance Housing bill to limit the use of criminal records in rental housing applications; and a law requiring landlords to provide voter registration information to new tenants.

I am especially proud of the unanimously-passed move-in fee cap and payment plan for renters. Because of this policy measure, Seattle renters no longer need to have thousands of dollars saved up just to move in. The law caps move-in fees by restricting security deposits and non-refundable fees to one month’s rent. Most importantly, it enables renters to move in by paying only the first month’s rent, and allows the other costs, such as last month’s rent, to be paid in installments over several months.

Renters often come up to me personally and tell me this legislation directly helped them to get housing. A Washington CAN! survey of Seattle’s renters revealed that the “biggest barrier to moving, a problem for 87 percent of respondents, is the burden of expensive up-front costs, including first and last month’s rent, a security deposit, and cleaning costs at move-in. Almost all respondents identified up-front costs as a barrier to moving, though it was particularly a problem for people of color, transgender/genderqueer people, older people, people who are disabled, and people paying with alternative sources of income.”

Last year, in the People’s Budget campaign, we won the first-ever public funding in City of Seattle history for an eviction defense attorney, to provide badly needed support for tenants
facing evictions, as well as tenant education and organizing through organizations like the Tenants Union. I am continuing to fight to win fully-funded legal services for tenants. A tenant with any legal representation in housing court is twice as likely to stay in their home. New York City, Philadelphia and San Francisco launched taxpayer-funded programs to provide lawyers in housing court. Seattle needs to build upon the progress we made through the People’s Budget campaign last year.

My office also helped to win $29 million to build new affordable housing.

We’ve fought to Stop the Sweeps and won funding for homeless encampments and we stopped the Seattle Housing Authority’s Orwellian “Stepping Forward” attack, which would have raised rents by 400%.

With Be:Seattle, we’ve organized over 30 renters’ rights bootcamps.

We’ve launched our Seattle Needs Rent Control campaign, commissioned a commercial rent control study, and passed a resolution to lift the statewide ban.

8. In 2018, the consulting firm McKinsey and Company conducted an extensive analysis of the current crisis response and homeless housing programs in Seattle and King County. They found that our region dramatically under-invests in housing and other system-wide responses, while the numbers of people experiencing homelessness grows. They found that between 2014 and 2017, the number of households accessing homelessness services grew by an average 11 percent a year, while funding grew by an average 2.4 percent a year. The McKinsey analysis estimated an additional investment of between $360 and $410 million per year for at least ten years is required to make and maintain progress in solving homelessness. Such added resources would bring our community in line with sister cities and counties addressing homelessness and affordable housing crises. What are three specific revenue options (local, regional, and state) you would use to generate the necessary funds to fill the gap between current local, state, and federal dollars, and the housing and service system investments required to do the job for Seattle and King County residents experiencing homelessness?

I support all avenues to pass progressive taxation by taxing big business and the rich.

Unfortunately, because of the way corporate politicians in the State Legislature have strangulated municipal abilities over decades to raise progressive revenues, the Amazon Tax (also called the “head tax”) is one of the few legal pathways for the city to raise progressive revenues. And in fact it will not have any detrimental effect, contrary to the lies spread by big business and the corporate media last year and since the repeal of the tax under the pressure
of Amazon’s bullying. So we simply cannot afford to abandon this fight, and we cannot let politicians at the city and state level pass the buck to one another and just offer lip service, while the housing crisis continues to rage.

I have enthusiastically endorsed the Policy Platform of the Nonprofit Leaders for Housing, where the authors correctly point out two areas of work: reducing the cost of affordable housing production, and expanding sources of funds for affordable housing. One of the points that has been highlighted by them is the need to maximize the use of City-owned public lands for affordable housing, and to expand density zoning, so that as many affordable homes as possible can be built on publicly-owned land, given the high costs of purchasing land for social housing.

We need to replace our city and state’s regressive tax structure with progressive tax measures including a tax on the highest incomes, the biggest businesses, capital gains, mansions, and real estate speculation. We will need to fight to remove the undemocratic bans in our state limiting cities from implementing so many of these progressive taxes locally.

I was a sponsor of the local legislation in Seattle to tax the incomes of wealthy people. This income tax only applied to income in excess of $250,000. Unfortunately it has been tied up in the courts with a big business lawsuit arguing that the City does not have the authority to impose that tax.

There are other important progressive sources of revenue that could be tapped by the City of Seattle. We need a vacancy tax on big real estate companies, who leave units vacant to keep rents high. We also need impact fees on corporate developers.

Let’s keep in mind, though, that the issue is not a shortage of creative ideas. What is scarce is political courage to fight big business, and the clarity and boldness to understand that it will require mass movements, and elected representatives who base themselves on building that collective grassroots power, as opposed to limiting themselves to the Chamber of Commerce’s agenda. We’ll need more, not fewer, working-class representatives who will stand up to corporate bullying.

9. Seattle and King County are in the midst of a child care crisis because child care is expensive and unaffordable for many working families. At the same time, some child care providers cannot afford to pay workers a living wage and stay in business. What ideas do you have for solutions?

Childcare today poses serious financial hardship on working-class and middle-class families. My office has consistently brought up this point on the City Council and advocated adding increased state rates for subsidized child care to the City’s state legislative agenda.
Since my first election campaign I have called for at least 12 weeks of paid family leave for all, and for universal, high quality, affordable and publicly-run child care. Together with a publicly Medicare for All system with free reproductive services, these are some of the basic supports that society owes to working class parents and children.

In my call for a massive expansion of quality social housing, I am also calling for these new publicly-owned residential buildings to include publicly-run, unionized childcare, clinic, and social services.

One of the most effective ways, as we have seen, of winning progressive change in Olympia, is to build fighting movements right here in Seattle, such that politicians in the city and state level are not forever passing the buck to one another while the lives of working people get more and more difficult.

We need to tax big business and the wealthy to fully fund the social needs of our city. It is unconscionable that in a wealthy city in the wealthiest country in human history, that we have the nation’s most regressive tax system, and grossly underfunded education and social services alongside unaffordable healthcare.

10. Survivors of gender-based violence frequently enter the criminal justice system due to their victimization, but criminal justice responses are woefully inadequate and problematic for most survivors for a variety of reasons, especially Black, indigenous, and other survivors of color, refugee and immigrant survivors; and gender non-conforming survivors. What specific solutions will you bring forward for addressing issues of gender-based violence in our city? What mechanisms would you employ to shift the structural oppression and racism, specifically in criminal justice institutions?

I am calling for the establishment of an elected, independent office to investigate workplace sexual and gender harassment, with full powers to hold corporations accountable.

We need to end the gender pay gap, beginning with an audit of pay disparity in all companies doing business in Seattle.

We need to fully fund the city’s programs against domestic violence and housing alternatives and shelters for women leaving abusive relationships.

Through our movement and my council office’s work around the People’s Budget, we’ve won important gains for the LGBTQ community, including funding for an LGBTQ senior center in the heart of Capitol Hill, funding for an LGBTQ wellness center at NOVA High School, and we’ve defeated cuts made by Mayor Jenny Durkan to restore funding for services for the trans community.
We need to stop the school-to-prison pipeline and mass incarceration and end police violence. Unfortunately, I was one of the only City Councilmembers to vote against the New Youth Jail, and the only councilmember to vote against the rollback of accountability in last year’s city-police contract, which was recently ruled by Judge Robart to be in violation of important police accountability reforms. We need to establish an elected community oversight board with full powers to hold the police accountable.

11. Describe how you would represent your constituents to ensure there is a pathway to emergency food services for all who need it. What policies and investments would you support so that residents across Seattle and King County have equal access to adequate, culturally appropriate, healthy food?

There is no question that we urgently need to fully fund all social services, which would include funding for food, among other needs.

The skyrocketing rents are not only gentrifying working families - particularly families of color - but also immigrant- and black-owned small businesses. This is having an adverse impact on the availability of culturally-appropriate foods.

However, the biggest barrier here is not fundamentally that of geographical access (although it is a factor), but of incomes, poverty, and inequality. At the end of the day, if a working-class or low-income family struggles just to pay for basics like rent and school supplies, childcare and healthcare, then not surprisingly, that has a negative impact on their ability to purchase nutritious and adequate food.

From Crosscut: Farmers’ markets, community coops and local grocery stores are nice, but increased job opportunities and the dissolution of the popular 128 bus would most affect access to healthy food in Seattle’s Delridge neighborhood. That’s according to a new City of Seattle report published this month about food access priorities for women and families in Delridge.

The report’s findings were surprising. The cultural relevance and proximity of a grocery store, participants said, were less important than its ability to create economic opportunities for local residents. Increased job and income-generating opportunities and the chance to build social capital through learning about growing and cooking healthy food all felt more urgent to the study’s 40 participants than merely adding more grocery stores to the neighborhood.

12. According to a 2017 FBI report, nationwide reports of hate crimes increased by 17% from 2016 to 2017; by 32% in Washington State, and 198% in Seattle. Within Washington State, 38% of reported hate crimes were in Seattle. The City Auditor analyzed data that
reported hate crimes doubled from 2014 to 2016 and doubled again from 2016 to 2018. 54% of the crimes related to race/ethnicity and 32% sexual orientation. What are your ideas for responding to hate crime in our region without criminalizing communities of color?

Since the first Seattle Trans Pride celebration in 2013, where my City Council campaign and I marched with the trans community, my Council office has proudly supported and marched alongside the trans and non-binary community every year.

In response to increasing hate crimes against the LGBTQ community, my office hosted a Capitol Hill forum on LGBTQ hate crimes in 2015, along with Gender Justice League and other LGBTQ organizations. Mayor Murray's initial response to the rise in hate crimes was a call for "more diversity in the police force." The LGBTQ hate crimes forum put pressure on Murray to immediately set up an LGBTQ task force to address violence in the community.

That task force was a product of the public pressure we built through that town hall.

The initial successful pushback against Trump's Muslim travel ban came from tens of thousands of courageous people protesting at airports - from SeaTac to JFK. I was there at SeaTac with 6,000 people, and we shut down SeaTac Airport in an act of peaceful civil disobedience.

In general, crime is also strongly linked with the brutality of economic inequality - we need elected representatives who will fight against big business for rational solutions, such as taxing the wealthy in this city with the nation’s most regressive tax system.

Our city also needs a 24-hour hate crime hotline, and an independently elected office to investigate workplace sexual and gender harassment, with full powers to hold corporations accountable. These services are necessary to provide support and justice for those impacted by harassment or hate crimes.

We need to fully fund anti-bullying and harassment education in all our schools and workplaces. Regardless of federal policy from Trump, Seattle should reject laws and companies that allow discriminatory practices and policies. Seattle must be a sanctuary city in more than just a name, but in action as well.

In Seattle, LGBTQ and other marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by the affordable housing crisis. Seattle needs rent control, and a tax on big corporations to fund a massive expansion of social housing and LGBTQ services. Our city cannot claim to be an accepting place for the LGBTQ community or immigrants until we make Seattle affordable for all.
13. As a city, we have moved to district representation. However, the needs of our residents are not necessarily most efficiently and effectively addressed by district. Nonprofit services most often cross multiple districts and people who make use of the services interact with providers throughout the city. How will you work to represent both the needs of your district as well as Seattle as a whole?

Seattle is rapidly becoming a playground for the rich, while working people, small businesses, people of color and LGBTQ people are being gentrified out of our city. The Seattle area is home to the world’s only two members of the 100 billion dollar club, yet we have the highest rate of homelessness per capita. Our affordable housing crisis is one of the worst in the country.

Seattle’s District 3 — including the historically people-of-color Central District and the historically LGBTQ Capitol Hill — is at the epicenter of this crisis. Corporate developers are raking in profits, while working people are being gentrified out of the CD and Capitol Hill. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Central District was over 70% black — now, it’s less than 20%. And on average, one of our neighbors in District 3 is evicted every other day.

But we’re fighting back. Our office, alongside movements, has played a key role in fighting gentrification in Capitol Hill and the Central District, winning a series of landmark victories for renters’ rights and affordable housing, and against displacement of working-class residents - as I have laid out in other sections of this questionnaire. In the words of community leader and trans activist Mac McGregor, “If you want thoughts and prayers, there are many other offices to call. If you want action, Kshama’s office is the one to call. Because hers is the one that gets stuff done.”

But just as with the $15 an hour minimum wage, the most crucial needs of the majority of working people and community members are not artificially restricted to political district boundaries. My Council Office has consistently fought for working people and the marginalized on district-level issues, most issues transcend across district boundaries (homelessness and skyrocketing rents), and many of the issues are regional (the affordable housing crisis) or statewide (the chronic underfunding of public education and the absence of a statewide Medicare for All).

The successful fight for $15/hour, which was led in part by my Office, has gone statewide and nationwide. Our experience shows that building fighting movements at the city level, by empowering ordinary people, sends an inspiring message to working people everywhere, that when we fight, we can win.

I mentioned above how my office is working with the county to extend Just Cause protections for renters in the region.

Similarly, my Office is not only campaigning alongside small businesses in Seattle for commercial rent control, but we have joined hands with immigrant-owned small businesses.
I think the essential point is that working people across cities and regions must unite.

14. Will you support an automatic annual inflation adjustment tied to the CPI-W for the City's human services contracts so providers can maintain current levels of service as costs of doing business increase?

Yes, absolutely, I have and will continue to strongly and publicly supported this.