



2023 Denver Mayoral Candidate Voter Guide

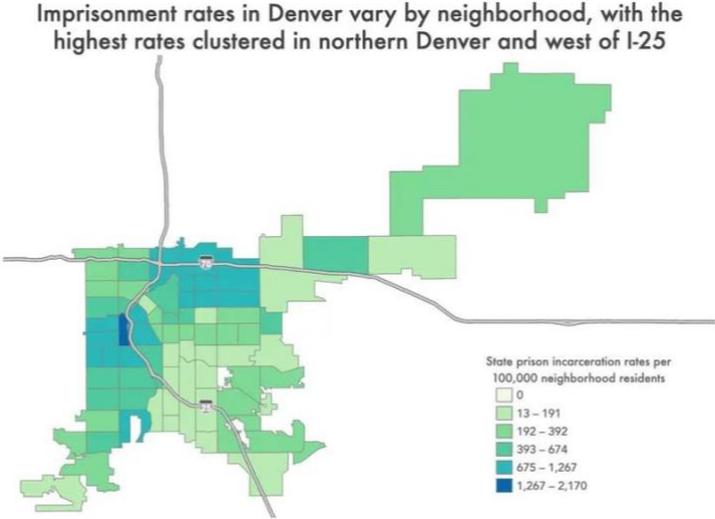
March 2023

CCJRC4Action submitted a 5-question written questionnaire to all candidates running for Denver Mayor in 2023. The following are the verbatim responses received from the candidates, which are presented in alphabetical order by last name. Changes were made only for formatting consistency. If a candidate is not included, it is because they did not submit a response.

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NOTE

Question 5 of the questionnaire included the following map, which illustrates how different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher rates of incarceration in state prison.



Source: *Where people in prison come from: The geography of mass incarceration in Colorado*, Prison Policy Initiative and Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (July 2022)

CCJRC4Action also released the results of a recent [poll](#) regarding Denver voters’ views on crime and public safety strategies. View the poll and more at ccjrc4action.org.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: **Kelly Brough**

1. **What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology. There is a whole field of academic study dedicated to this question. It is really hard to answer this question thoughtfully and concisely, but I think, in the most general terms, there are three basic categories of risk factors that make people more likely to commit crimes:

- **Family risk factors** – people in abusive relationships or with unstable families; people facing grief or loss within their families; people whose family members are engaged in criminal activity
- **Social risk factors** – people facing financial pressures and / or unstable housing; people lacking education and / or economic prospects; those in communities where criminal activity is high and there is social pressure to engage
- **Personal risk factors** – people with mental health disorders, particularly those that relate to impulsivity; people struggling with addiction; people who have been discriminated against, bullied or otherwise feel isolated

Recognizing that crime is closely linked to economic and health conditions, a central part of my community safety strategy will include to our public health priorities – particularly our response to the substance misuse crisis, including fentanyl – and our economic development strategy.

Further, I will embrace innovative restorative practices and transformative justice approaches to reduce recidivism. Addressing education, economic opportunity, health and housing will be equally important to my community safety agenda as policing and criminal justice response.

Some of my specific priorities include:

- **Education & Economic Opportunity** – We must create multiple pathways to educational success and economic opportunity, starting with our youngest kids and continuing through adulthood. My priorities will include investing in early care and education, supporting and holding DPS to account for providing lots of high performing school choices and closing achievement gaps, creating apprenticeships and internship programs, opening doors to higher education and providing for on-going job training and reskilling programs in multiple public settings (e.g. libraries, job centers, jails, etc).
- **Safe Public Spaces** - Ensuring access to safe public spaces, such as recreation centers and libraries, particularly at night and on weekends. Providing programming to engage and support people who might be vulnerable to the influence of criminal activity, particularly youth and young adults.
- **Drug Prevention & Treatment** - Investing in drug use prevention, intervention, and treatment to reduce demand for the deadly substances that are destroying lives and families and contributing to criminal behavior.
- **Jail Alternative Programs** - Expanding jail alternative programs such as Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), community courts, Denver CARES, "drug court," and juvenile diversion programs.

As it relates specifically to youth, I will appoint a strong and accountable leader to the Office of

Children's Affairs and empower that person to work across the City's agencies and in partnership with DPS and youth-serving organizations to establish a comprehensive youth development strategy, focused on an evidence-based positive norming approach.

2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates?

Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.

It's clear that crime increased during the COVID crisis period of 2020 to 2022. Data from the City of Denver's Overall Crime Dashboard (retrieved on January 2, 2023) shows:

- Violent crime increased almost 40%, going from 5,118 incidents in 2019 to 7,070 incidents in 2022.
- Property crime increased more than 60%, going from 27,206 incidents in 2019 to 43,594 incidents in 2022.

Further, COVID caused closures of schools, businesses and recreational activities, created economic disruptions (workforce issues, supply chain), contributed to inflation and economic uncertainty. These things likely contributed to crime, but we can't assume causation. During the same time frame (2020 – 2022), our country and our city experienced substantial social unrest related to increased awareness of inequities, racism, police-initiated violence, and political instability at many levels of government.

While many of these issues were magnified by COVID, they have been present in our society for generations, and we could no longer ignore them.

I am committed to using my platform as Mayor to bring greater transparency and accountability to public systems and structures and doing the hard and necessary work of addressing the underlying drivers of crime and building trust between government and community. I am also committed to partnering with health care professionals as we address the mental health crisis for our kids.

3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues? Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

Homelessness and housing instability are social risk factors for criminal behavior, but that doesn't mean that people experiencing homelessness are criminals. I will be careful to ensure that our policies do not criminalize homelessness or poverty. I believe in the resiliency of the human spirit because I've seen it in my own family, and I know that with supported opportunity, people can overcome tremendous challenges.

We have much work to do in terms of lowering barriers for formerly incarcerated people to make successful transitions back into society – including reducing barriers to housing and employment. I will:

- Expand on the success of Denver's Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond (SIB) initiative,
- Build housing on city owned property with the goal of reducing barriers to housing, particularly for people historically excluded,
- Continue and expand Denver's outreach efforts to connect people to supports and services through programs like Wellness Winnie, the mobile unit,

- Partner with the Denver Public Library to do more proactive job and housing support work at libraries,
 - Capitalize on federal funding for states and local governments to fund evidence-based strategies to support successful reentry and reduce recidivism,
 - Grow public-private partnerships to increase housing and employment options, and
 - Continue my commitment to Fair Chance Hiring as Mayor.
- 4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths? Please specify if there are any differences in your strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.**

I support the 2022 law change re: penalties for fentanyl possession because fentanyl is so incredibly addictive and deadly. As the illegal substances being sold on the streets continue to evolve and become even more potent and scarier, public officials must continue to respond with care, compassion, and effective policy. I support Denver's Problem Solving Courts and think it is critical that we fund supports and services for people struggling with addiction within our jails.

Prevention and treatment are critically important and underfunded in Colorado today. I will advocate for greater investment in evidence-based prevention approaches and community-based and in-patient treatment. Further, I will partner with AG Phil Weiser in support of the Colorado Opioid Framework and the state-regional-local partnership model to ensure that the settlement money actually goes to addressing the crisis, rather than having states use it to backfill funding for other programs (which is what happened to the tobacco lawsuit settlement money in the 1990s).

- 5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map? (note: this map only applies to adults in state prison)**

I am familiar with third grade reading research and how it has been used to predict incarceration rates, but I haven't seen the report referenced here. That said, this map is not terribly surprising when you compare this map to maps depicting educational attainment, economic opportunity, housing insecurity, etc.

We must acknowledge and recognize the structural / systemic barriers to opportunity and find ways to address them. I would bring an equity lens to our budgeting process and partner with City Council members to better understand priorities and needs for their districts. I'd also welcome the chance to meet with your coalition to learn more about what you learned in writing the report and exploring strategies to address these disparities.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: **Lisa Calderón**

- 1. What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

I've spent years studying this issue beginning in 2005 when CCJRC organized the Fail the Jail campaign to resist Denver's proposed \$378 million-dollar bond to expand the jail and justice center (Greene, 2005). Although the bond passed, 44% of voters opposed it (Crummy & Hudson, 2005). This sent a clear message to City officials to invest in keeping people out of jail as much as it invested in locking people up. The City made a pact with jail expansion opponents to invest in reentry services, include community stakeholders in the process, and operate in a transparent manner.

Crime is a product of numerous underlying causes, such as lack of affordable housing, barriers to employment, education inequality, wealth inequality and systemic racism. The most important way to prevent crime is to address these underlying causes. Additionally, we must shift resources from punishment to a public health approach including: housing stability, higher wage jobs, fully funded reentry services, trauma and mental health services, comprehensive health care, and addiction treatment that will reduce recidivism and incarceration costs. As mayor, I will overhaul the public safety office and create an Office of Community Safety and Well-Being, appoint an experienced leadership team centering the voices of formerly incarcerated people, and invest in the co-production of community safety to develop holistic approaches for improved safety outcomes.

Research from meta-analysis (a study of studies across decades) shows that alternative methods to crime reduction can be more beneficial to increasing community safety and more cost-effective than continually increasing policing budgets. Currently, the police budget comprises 40% of the general fund, while housing is only 4%. By right-sizing the police budget, we can reinvest funds into crime prevention strategies. For example, the Vera Institute has found that "limiting police interactions and investing in community-based interventions are crucial to providing for public safety in a way that's less intrusive, more just, and more constructive. By reducing the size and budget of the police department, those savings can be invested in creating alternatives to policing, reengineering 911 systems so that the police aren't the first responders to every call, and funding community-based programs, education, housing, jobs, and more."

As mayor, I will create root-cause solutions which will transform punitive systems into a continuum of restorative practices. I led the creation of and managed the city's successful reentry program for eight years. I developed relationships with community providers, academic researchers and evaluators, formerly incarcerated people, advocacy groups, and systems stakeholders. We need greater investments in the housing first model, healthcare, education, and transportation for reentering people. When we prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable in our neighborhoods, we see crime go down and our communities thrive.

- 2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates?** Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.

Covid has disproportionately affected communities of color, and exacerbated the underlying causes of

crime. For example, COVID caused extreme economic hardship on communities of color, limited economic opportunity, and led to health issues and death disproportionately among Black and Brown communities.

The over-reliance on jails as a criminal justice response to more significant social, economic, and public health issues has pushed jail populations throughout the country to unprecedented levels. Denver's safety officials have been inconsistent in its response to COVID. First it rightfully reduced the jail population at the height of the pandemic, but then in a reactionary measure to rising crime – a national phenomenon – reversed course and returned to pre-pandemic incarceration levels without understanding complex underlying causes (Schmelzer, 2022).

Furthermore, mass incarceration, which also disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities, exacerbated the scourge of COVID-19. COVID-19 caseloads grew more quickly over the summer of 2020 in nonmetro counties with more people incarcerated in them. Mass incarceration added to COVID-19 caseloads in multi-county economic areas and states. Nationally, this impact reached a tragic scale: Mass incarceration added more than a half million cases in just three months. In a startling report, the Vera Institute of Justice identified the “misuse of jails” as having detrimental and lasting impacts on individuals, and destabilizing effects on vulnerable communities (Subramanian, Delaney, Roberts, Fishman, & McGarry, 2015).

Additionally, COVID puts extreme strain on youth by shutting schools, and removing critical resources that schools provide beyond education. For example, schools provide meals, counseling, social support networks, and connections to services. By removing these resources, and expanding financial inequities for families, COVID puts young people at greater risk of committing or being victimized by crime.

Our city has yet to be made whole by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. In any crisis, whether it be economic, social, or public health, we must prioritize the needs of our most vulnerable communities. I will pursue as mayor work to find ways to subsidize the rent of tenants who are still struggling to make ends meet after months of lost wages. I will also support efforts to ensure employers give workers appropriate sick time so as to not continue the spread of the virus in the pursuit of profit. I will also work to follow Albuquerque's lead in funding health clinics like Planned Parenthood that provide comprehensive health care, preventive care, and lead in gender-affirming care at a low cost in Denver.

3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues? Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

Housing is a human right, but currently, criminal history is a significant obstacle to many unhoused individuals securing long-term housing and employment opportunities. In my doctoral research focusing on “what works” with incarcerated people, housing and meaningful employment were at the top of the list as crime reduction strategies. However, overcoming the stigma associated with incarceration and community acceptance of released individuals was a significant barrier.

The most daunting challenge is societal since jail populations reflect breakdowns in not only the lives of individuals but within communities, educational systems, and governments (e.g., Belknap et al.

2016; Middlemass, 2017). Incarceration interrupts life cycles by losing physical, intellectual, and psychological freedoms that reverberate throughout society. The root causes of repeated incarcerations often involve a lifetime of barriers for individuals related to generational poverty, substandard educational systems, trauma exposure, untreated mental illness, and inadequate housing. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed to address the needs of incarcerated people for their successful transition back into their communities.

There is now a growing body of evidence that receiving educational programming while incarcerated reduces an individual's risk of recidivating as indicated by a 2013 Rand Corporation report that found: 1) jail education improved odds by 13% of obtaining employment after release; 2) inmates who participate in such programs had 43% lower odds of recidivating than those who did not; and 3) educational programming can be cost-effective when it comes to reducing recidivism. By providing inmates educational opportunities they are significantly less likely to return to jail, and more likely to find employment thereby reducing recidivism (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, Miles). One recent study found education programs in prison empowered the participants view themselves more positively and thus improve their reentry success (Evans, Pelletier, & Szkola, 2018).

As mayor, I would fully invest in reentry services, work with City Council on expanding anti-discriminations protections for people with criminal histories when there is a racially disparate impact, and expand the availability of affordable housing by creating social housing, utilizing publicly held land, and underutilized spaces such as office buildings and schools. A key tenant of my social housing plan is the revision of screening processes that use criminal history as a criteria for securing housing.

Moreover, I aim to reimagine community safety so that fewer individuals have criminal records for crimes that today should not be considered illegal, or are unjustly targeting communities of color. As Chief of Staff for Candi CdeBaca, I spearheaded the decriminalization of jaywalking – a law that led to the ticketing and criminalization of Black and Brown individuals at rates exponentially higher than others. Similar approaches can be applied to other laws to avoid many historically marginalized individuals ending up with criminal histories in the first place.

4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths? Please specify if there are any differences in your strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

I have long supported decriminalization of drug possession and would support policies to do this-- with as few barriers for people currently incarcerated as possible. Incarceration compounds the systemic disadvantages experienced by marginalized groups, depletes the brain-trust within communities of color, and contributes to the cycle of poverty in their neighborhoods. Further, punitive policing and surveillance practices, such as “stop and frisk” tend to focus on targeting young men of color (Subramanian, et. al., 2015). Despite similar rates of drug use, in comparison to their White counterparts, Black men tend to be arrested at higher rates for drug crimes (Subramanian, et. al., 2015). Therefore, the collateral consequences of criminalizing youth of color early and often through frequent and continuing contacts with law enforcement leads many to the front door of American jails. The community inevitably bears the high costs of incarceration including higher rates of unemployment, crime, and criminal justice debt (Subramanian, et. al., 2015).

As mayor, I will prioritize strategies focused on harm reduction, treatment, and prevention, rather than criminalizing drug use. I am a long-time advocate of harm reduction and safe consumption sites. To start we need to stop criminalizing people with addictions and reinvest in community-based programs that are proven successful. We need to treat addiction as the public health crisis it is, and not as a choice or moral failing. This involves getting at the root cause of substance use, and ensuring the necessary services and supports are available. This includes access to housing, physical and mental healthcare, good jobs with healthcare benefits, and recovery/harm reduction options.

I've spent 20 years implementing harm reduction models, whether it's safety, planning with victims of domestic violence to make self-determinative decisions for themselves, even if it seemed counterintuitive to others; or serving reentering people who are managing competing survival needs to help them make the best choices out of limited options.

When we expand the range of options, stop judging people for their life circumstances, and instead seek to understand the usefulness of harm reduction strategies in their lives, we can better address root causes, provide appropriate assessments for individualized solutions, and help improve their quality of life. We must eliminate harmful policies that perpetuate the legacy of the war on drugs and mass incarceration.

5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map? (note: this map only applies to adults in state prison)

Here we see imprisonment rates are higher in the 'inverted L' communities that have been historically redlined and disinvested. These destabilizing effects of incarceration at the community level are experienced most profoundly in communities of color and must be viewed within a larger socio-economic and political context that fuels the expansion of the prison industrial complex (e.g., Alexander, 2012; Middlemass, 2017; Richie, 2012). Although African Americans and Latinos collectively make up 30% of the general population, they comprise 51% of the jail population (Subramanian, Delaney, Roberts, Fishman, & McGarry, 2015).

Incarceration compounds the systemic disadvantages experienced by these marginalized group, depletes the brain-trust within communities of color, and contributes to the cycle of poverty in their neighborhoods. Ironically, the prison industrial complex often begins within the educational system by funneling children of color into the juvenile justice system working in tandem with public schools where there is a higher likelihood of a law enforcement presence to enforce "zero tolerance" policies (Subramanian, et. al., 2015).

Criminalizing poverty has never worked to address deeply rooted social problems. Punishing the poor pushes people farther into the shadows by creating more fear and stigmatization and further contributes to the cycles of poverty. All justice movements are connected, and we cannot have justice in one area without creating it in all areas. Public safety is a two-fold issue. We deserve to live in our city and feel safe from harm, including law enforcement violence. My campaign and 30+ years advocating for criminal legal system reform in the community are rooted in using proven solutions that get at the root causes. We can connect public safety and public health to the extreme

inequities our communities experience and the poverty cycles that forced upon our communities. Furthermore, incarceration compounds the systemic disadvantages experienced by these marginalized groups, depletes the brain trust within communities of color, and contributes to the cycle of poverty in their neighborhoods. (Subramanian, et. al., 2015).

Poverty in the United State is the result of systemic wealth inequality and racial disparity. The top 1% of Americans own more wealth than the bottom 90%, which has only widened during the pandemic. The middle class used to be the vehicle out of poverty. Yet, with rising income inequality, the middle class is rapidly shrinking, and increasingly being squeezed out of economic opportunities. The result is the widening of the poverty gap where middle and lower-class families are often one paycheck or a health crisis away from poverty, and even homelessness.

We need to build economic and social power and have the political will to dismantle barriers by investing in communities of color, passing policies to ensure equity, and transforming the systems and institutions that perpetuate poverty. This includes access to adequate health care (reproductive and beyond), equity in education in all neighborhoods, free college, affordable and accessible transportation, policies to stop modern-day redlining, and much more. As mayor, I will work to dismantle the systems that keep poor people poor, including burdensome criminal legal system debt.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: [Chris Hansen](#)

- 1. What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

Many factors contribute to why people commit crimes. Sociologists, psychologists, and others study this complex topic. When folks do not have their needs met, they can go outside the norms of society and the law to meet those needs. It is important for governments to try to make sure that peoples' needs are met, but that alone does not stop all crime from happening. A relatively small number of juveniles commit crimes and factors that contribute to this range from failure in school and family problems to substance abuse and gun possession, according to the [California Legislature's nonpartisan Legislative Analysts](#).

- 2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates?** Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.

According to the [Brennan Center for Justice](#), among many others, crime rates have gone up since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. The pandemic was especially tough on kids, but data does not show that juvenile crime rates increased during that time period.

- 3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

Unfortunately, a criminal history can have a strong impact on an individual's ability to secure employment and housing. With that understanding, in 2019 Chris supported the ban the box legislation [HB19-1025](#) that prohibits an employer from preventing a person with a criminal history from applying for a job or from requiring disclosure of an applicant's criminal history on an initial application. As Mayor, Chris looks forward to working with organizations like CCJRC and other important stakeholders to identify the most helpful strategies the city can put in place to make sure folks have housing, job training, and wrap-around services, like substance use and mental health treatment when needed. Please visit the [campaign website](#) to see Chris' plans to address these complex issues.

- 4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths?** Please specify if there are any differences in your strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

First of all, prevention is key. It is crucial to prevent drug use, especially for dangerous, addictive drugs like fentanyl and meth, and easier to do than it is to deal with the consequences of Denverites using those substances. We need to make sure we are taking a public health approach to the issue of youth substance use and utilize data about which neighborhoods in the city have the highest risk of youth substance use and target resources to those communities.

Chris' work in the legislature has resulted in tens of millions of dollars going towards substance use prevention programs and treatment facilities. For example, as a member of the Joint Budget Committee during many of his seven legislative sessions, he is proud to have supported funding for grants issued to communities through the Communities That Care model. The Communities That Care model is a community-based prevention model that was evaluated in 24 communities across seven states with significant results, including preventing youth substance use initiation and criminal behaviors. Using prevention science, this model helps local communities assess the specific risk and protective factors among the youth in their communities. The communities then pick from a menu of effective, evidence-based programs and strategies to address the specific needs of the youth they serve. In the 2022-23 budget, Chris made sure this program received nearly \$9 million in funding from the Marijuana Tax Cash Fund, so it could keep doing this important work in communities across the state.

With regard to harm reduction, leaders in all communities—schools, cities, libraries, neighborhoods—need to know that Naloxone is a life-saving opiate antagonist that helps prevent overdose deaths and ensure the availability of this important tool in the fight against fentanyl deaths.

5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map? (note: this map only applies to adults in state prison)

According to the [Brennan Center](#), addressing the deep structural problems that make some communities more susceptible to violence is a generational project. No one solution will roll back decades of disinvestment. However, some initiatives may be undertaken now to start the process. For example, summer youth employment programs (SYEPs) have **been shown to reduce crime**, whether by providing much-needed income or creating structure and mentorship for youth during their time away from school. Generally funded by city governments in partnership with local businesses, SYEPs provide young people with paid jobs in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. As Mayor, Chris would look for evidence-based programs like these to use in Denver to make sure we are helping kids make good choices that keep them out of prison.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: Leslie Herod

- 1. What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

The evidence is clear - increasing crime is linked to housing insecurity, substance use issues, gun sales, unemployment, mental health struggles, family disruption and violence, and lack of access to services. We need to address the root drivers of crime, not just react to instances of crime. By providing housing and safe indoor spaces for everyone currently living on the streets, expanding mental health resources and programs like STAR, and ensuring that every person in Denver has true access to the services they need to thrive, we can reduce crime and violence in this city immediately and compassionately.

We also need to ensure that young people can envision a future for themselves in Denver. The city can work with DPS, local organizations, and local businesses to create opportunities for our youth to be involved in the community and begin to establish their place in this city, and to feel invested in the city.

- 2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates?** Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.

The pandemic wreaked havoc on our Denver and our communities, as it did across the country. People are struggling to make ends meet, find and maintain stable jobs and housing, and bring our city back to life. We saw increases in interpersonal violence during the height of the pandemic and have continued to see the effects of the pandemic on our economy. Lack of access to work and housing, and feelings of hopelessness foster violence and criminal activity.

Prioritizing the economic, health, and housing wellbeing of Denverites in our pandemic recovery will also lead to increased safety for the city.

- 3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues? Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.**

Being unhoused is not, and should not be treated as, equivalent to being a criminal. Being unsheltered and living on the streets, though, is traumatic. It should come as no surprise that this trauma impacts people and can, as any form of trauma can, lead to cycles of violence. When we, as a city, neglect and vilify our unhoused neighbors, we cannot then act as though being unhoused is, in itself, a criminal act.

Criminalizing poverty necessarily contributes to the cycles of poverty that we see today. A criminal response makes finding stable work and housing more difficult. We are maintaining and perpetuating homelessness by treating people as criminals. People experiencing homelessness are people. It is our duty as a city to expand opportunities and resources so that every person in Denver can succeed.

- 4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths?** Please specify if there are any differences in your strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

Simple possession should not be a felony. Criminalizing substance use disorder does nothing for the person struggling or for safety. We need to expand resources to our unhoused population and everyone in Denver, and ensure that when people are ready to seek treatment it is available.

HB22-1326 was one of the hardest votes I've had to make as a legislator. I was involved in the early drafts of the bill, which did not re-felonize possession and were instead focused on harm reduction and public education. By the time it came to its final vote, the bill had changed immensely. I chose to vote yes on it because it still contained many of the harm reduction pieces that I originally helped ensure, but I was not supportive of making simple possession a felony. I believe that we got it wrong last year, and we can right that wrong.

- 5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map?** *(note: this map only applies to adults in state prison)*

It is clear that where you live has an effect on your prospects and outcomes, and that largely has to do with the resources available to you based on your zipcode. Low-income neighborhoods, and neighborhoods that are predominantly composed of people of color, are the most polluted, the most policed, and the least resourced. These neighborhoods lack access to public transportation, healthy food options, and opportunities for young people.

These factors all contribute to the disparities in incarceration seen by zipcode. As a city, we must prioritize equity in every conversation, whether that is housing, environmental sustainability, education, or transportation. By investing in our neighborhoods, we will see transformational change in safety and what our city can be.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: Mike Johnston

- 1. What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

I believe people commit crimes because they are left with little options in their day-to-day lives, they're suffering with mental health or substance use disorders, or they haven't had the opportunity to have a positive outlet. I think one of the best ways to prevent crime is by starting with prevention at a young age. Specifically, I think juveniles commit crimes because they get involved with negative peer groups when they don't have other opportunities to find their passion and purpose early on. That's why I've proposed investing in a citywide program that would give kids on free and reduced lunch access to after-school and summer programs, whether that's tutoring, a robotics club, or youth sports, so they can find their passion early on and avoid falling into negative situations. I also believe that we need to invest in early intervention for our young people when they are first stopped with a gun or committing other crimes. This could come in the form of counseling for the youth and their family, mental health support, and regular check-ins. For adults, we have to make sure we're creating opportunity for everyone to thrive on their own. That means making Denver more affordable so folks can live here and thrive regardless of their paycheck. It also means investing in mental health and addiction support, which is why my plan to address the homelessness crisis includes building microcommunities that provide wraparound addiction and mental health services, and why my public safety plan will convert two pods of the Denver Jail into mental health and addiction units so folks who are committing crimes can get the treatment and support they need to get back on their feet.

- 2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates?** Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.

There's no questioning that COVID-19 has had a massive impact on nearly every aspect of our society. With lockdown orders and economic shutdowns across our state, many people faced emotional distress and mental health issues. This likely had an impact on crime rates both in Denver and across the country, specifically on violent crime. For juveniles, they missed out on years of education, development, and time to learn and grow with their peers. Without healthy outlets and opportunities to learn and thrive, it's not surprising that there would be an impact on crime rates.

- 3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

Homelessness is often linked to mental health and substance use disorders, as well as a clear lack of stability and opportunity, which can lead to crime. A criminal history can also be a severe detriment to gaining stable housing and gainful employment. In the State Senate, I worked to remove these collateral consequences so previous history wouldn't get in the way of people accessing a job. I also worked to expunge marijuana charges, and as mayor would push to help expunge records on charges connected to drugs and mental health needs. As mayor, I will build 10-20 microcommunities across the city to provide safe, stable, dignified housing for Denverites experiencing homelessness. These microcommunities would not have requirements to be a part of and they will offer wraparound mental health, addiction, and job training services to help folks get the support they need to get back on their feet. There will also be support for finding permanent housing and employment, even if they

have a criminal history.

- 4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths?** Please specify if there are any differences in your strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

I believe that continuing a war on drugs is not the answer. We need to be investing primarily in prevention and harm-reduction. All law enforcement officers should be carrying Naloxone and should be trained on how to administer it to save lives.

Harm-reduction practices will be important in the near-term as we work to address this issue, but prevention, early intervention, and treatment will play a key role in addressing the opioid epidemic long-term. As mayor, I will expand mental health services and treatment facilities, so all Denverites have access to care. This includes providing on-site wraparound services in microcommunities, converting two pods of the jail to treatment facilities, and providing more support for early intervention and treatment programs.

We also know fentanyl needs to be treated as the life-threatening poison that it is, and we need to do everything in our power to get it off the streets, to crack down on dealers, and to get users access to treatment that can help them recover. I supported the movement to return 1-4 grams of fentanyl possession to a felony but believe the only purpose of that elevated charge is to get people into treatment and drug court, not to have them sit in a cell without treatment. In addition, the transition services people are provided coming out of corrections are woefully inadequate. We need to provide people access to housing, employment, food, and medication when they transition to prevent recidivism.

- 5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map?** *(note: this map only applies to adults in state prison)*

This map clearly shows that minority neighborhoods are seeing disproportionately high incarceration rates, compared to majority-white neighborhoods. This is due to overpolicing and mass incarceration in communities of color along with decades of disinvestment and the lack of economic opportunity in these communities. To address this, I will ensure that DPD embraces community-based policing, where we are recruiting officers directly from the communities they serve and they will be a regular presence in the community, walking the beat, building real relationships with neighbors, and ensuring that folks feel protected, not policed. I will also make [building equity](#) in these neighborhoods a priority in my administration by investing in youth afterschool programs, ensuring the city invests in minority small business owners, creating Neighborhood Investment Trusts that give community members ownership over new developments, and closing the wealth gap through down payment assistance.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: Deborah “Debbie” Ortega

- 1. What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

With the cost of living - and the cost of housing most acutely - skyrocketing, people are not able to afford the essential goods and services that keep them in good mental and physical health, off of our streets and in the workforce, and optimistic about their futures - leading to increased crime across our city. Not to mention, we are still recovering from a global pandemic which forced far too many to resort to crime just to get by.

Under my leadership, our city will make strides to get at the root causes of crime and prevent it from occurring in the first place. Ensuring all Denverites have the support they need to access social determinants of health - such as access to affordable and quality health care, job and training programs that lead to livable wage jobs, access to information that assists with legal defense for evictions and rental & utility assistance, clean air and water, a sense of community and purpose, and a safe place to live, among others - will guide my strategy to prevent crime from occurring in the first place.

This starts with making sure that anybody who is looking for an affordable place to sleep at night has somewhere safe to go (shelters with adequate resources, single room occupancy units, accessory dwelling units, repurposed vacant units and/or commercial spaces, as examples). Doing so requires a regional partnership for housing and wraparound services – including the critical missing piece of job connection – resulting in paths towards self-sufficiency.

While our youth will need housing just like their adult counterparts, I plan to stand up programming and engagement for juveniles that will help foster a sense of community - as I have in helping create the Safe City Office to address & reduce crime that stemmed from the “1992 Summer of Violence.” I will re-institute community policing that breaks down barriers between community and law enforcement focused on community building and having a variety of adult role models for our youth. One approach will be to ensure that youth from our Denver schools are recruited to take advantage of the city’s Public Safety Cadet Program that pays four years of college, pays them to work in one of four safety agencies, and provides preference points when they apply to serve, after completing their education. I would also convene the City-School Coordinating Committee, composed of City Hall leadership, our school board, and the Superintendent, who will discuss and put forth solutions for the challenges taking place in our schools, like drug use and violence.

- 2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates?** Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.

With how quickly the COVID pandemic created isolation for youth and adults who had to work and attend school from home, for those whose employers closed shop, they lost jobs and it forced people out of their homes - and onto the streets. I think the impacts are still reverberating across our city in many different ways, domestic violence, suicide rates, especially among our youth, have increased, as has with use of alcohol and other drugs. These have all been critical factors to the increased crime rates in our city and cities across our country (although correlation does not prove causation). Tragically, homicides are up for adults as well while robberies, property crimes, sexual assault, and other violent crimes increased.

With our children and students not able to attend classes and after school programs in recognition of the health risks presented by COVID-19, it is heartbreaking to see the consequences of increased learning loss and mental health challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic shone a light on a multitude of challenges taking place in our schools. Most acutely, and as a parent and grandmother of DPS graduates and current students, school safety and violence come to mind. When elected, I will convene the City-School Coordinating Committee to address many overlapping issues, including requests parents have made to the city seeking School Resource Officers to address critical issues, like gun violence.

Additionally, I will stand up a Metro Task Force focused on stopping the supply of lethal drugs and guns into our community while cracking down on car, bike, and catalytic converter theft. Additionally, we must invest in recruitment, retention and training to stem the loss of personnel in public safety departments while continuing to fund the STAR program.

3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues? Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

This is where Denver voters can expect that I will put forth initiatives that stop people from slipping into the cycle of homelessness in the first place. The Denver Day Work Program administered by Bayaud Enterprises, and funded by the city, has been extremely successful in taking people off the streets to clean up parks and has led to full time employment with our Parks Department for many, including access to housing. In my work as Executive Director for the Denver Road Home program, I saw the transformational change that stable employment had on the lives of individuals who had previously felt invisible, but now regained self worth, pride and purpose. I will continue ongoing funding for eviction defense services (a program I supported while on City Council), continued funding of the Temporary Rental & Utility Assistance (TRUA) program, and developing more innovative housing options for Denverites to consider, like single room occupancy units (SROs), accessory dwelling units, repurposing vacant units, and investing in modular housing. Furthermore, I plan on declaring homelessness a public emergency within my first 100 days of taking office, so our city can mobilize additional resources from local, state and federal agencies and organizations to address the homelessness crisis.

As for the impact a criminal history has on securing sustainable housing, again, I will partner with city agencies, nonprofits, the private sector, and advocacy organizations to create a variety of supportive housing options. There is no one-size-fits all solution to this issue and supportive housing should be responsive to the needs of the people served, including those with a criminal history who are in need of a home.

4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths? Please specify if there are any differences in your strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

Possession, use, and the distribution of deadly drugs like fentanyl must be a felony, which helps to focus on keeping it off our streets and out of our schools. With overdoses from this lethal poison being

at a record high in recent years, I will work with neighboring jurisdictions to create a Metro Drug Task Force focused on stopping the flow of deadly drugs into our communities and schools.

Each of us has a role to play in reducing fentanyl deaths. I will bring awareness to the issue by increasing public awareness of and training in the use of Narcan. I will also look towards Denver's Opioid Abatement Council to fund projects that include peer counselors with lived experience and certifications to work locally and with regional programs to ensure the professional workers needed to do this hard work are being trained to cover the range of new or expanded programs with a large need for treatment beds.

Additionally, I will invest in personnel recruitment and retention supporting our public safety departments so they can allocate resources that address all illegal activities that take place across our city. I will continue funding for Denver's Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) Program so qualified mental health professionals can resolve nonviolent scenarios while the police can focus on keeping us safe from dangerous illegal activity like assault, homicides, and theft.

On top of these initiatives, I will deploy strategies and programs (employment training, access to transportation, day care, etc) that help prevent people from resorting to drug use in the first place. Again, this starts with ensuring people have a safe and welcoming place to call home, whether it be in the short term, or on a more lasting time frame. For example, I will create innovative and lasting solutions to house more people such as single room occupancy (SRO) housing that are equipped with the resources to help address the underlying causes of homelessness with job connection opportunities.

5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map? (note: this map only applies to adults in state prison)

Due to systemic social and economic inequalities, there is a disproportionately high percentage of people of color in prison compared to white people. This starts with access to legal representation when convicted of a crime. The prevention programs I mentioned in previous answers that I intend to implement will help reduce this disturbing trend.

As mayor, I am committed to getting at the root causes that lead to crime in the first place. For example, I'd like to create more opportunities for economic development for our traditionally marginalized and left behind communities through continued investments in the "Malone Fund", expanding housing options for Denverites in these communities across income spectrums, and continuing to invest in the STAR program, so nonviolent scenarios can be de-escalated with the utmost of safety.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: Jesse Lashawn Parris

- 1. What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

My thoughts are people create crimes out of poverty and scarcity. People need to have the causes of crime addressed in order to prevent crime. My administration would create programs and services if they don't already exist to address the factors of crime for both adults and juveniles.

- 2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates? Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.**

I think COVID-19 had an impact on crime rates due to the fact many people were on lockdown and the rent moratoriums ended, resulting in several evictions and an increase in our unhoused neighbor population.

- 3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

My thoughts are we need to address economic inequality and poverty in Denver. Having a criminal record lessens your chances of securing employment especially if you are Black, in addition it limits and restricts your access to sustainable housing. Having worked on Ban the Box legislation with groups like Together Colorado and others I understand the importance of removal of criminal history and record on applications is essential for those with criminal backgrounds to have access to secure employment and housing.

- 4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths? Please specify if there are any differences in your strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.**

I think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor, we need to stop criminalizing people who are addicted to drugs. These cases for both adults and juveniles such be deferred to drug court. The failed war on drugs is not working and increasing the penalties for using drugs is not going to stop or reduce drug use. I support that the Harm Reduction Center is doing here in Denver and I support the safe-injection sites as effective means to reduce overdose deaths. So the strategies my administration will deploy will be more funding for the Harm Reduction Center, more funding for Safe-injection sites and more access to drug treatment in the city.

- 5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map?** *(note: this map only applies to adults in state prison)*

I think the causes for those differences in those neighborhoods along the inverted L are both systematic racism white supremacy and divestment in those communities. The strategies my administration would deploy are more opportunities for economic development in those neighborhoods, allow for more small business creation, more job opportunities for people in those neighborhoods and support for trade and apprenticeship programs for our youth, so they have a skill and trade about time they graduate from high school.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: Ean Tafoya

1. What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime? Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

As Mayor I would always get to the root cause of an issue. For different types of crimes that root cause is different.

Some crimes are crimes of poverty and we can prevent them by ending poverty and decriminalizing those issues altogether. For example, criminalizing loitering, eating or sitting in public transit stations, sex work, shoplifting baby formula and the camping ban are all basically making existing or struggling to survive a crime. When we decriminalize these behaviors we stop wasting money punishing people and start investing in solutions. These include a housing system that gives everyone a roof over their head, tenant protections, supporting worker organizing for better wages and much more. Poverty is also likely at the root of other property crimes, such as auto theft, but we need to actually talk to people who commit these crimes to understand their motives and how we can prevent future theft.

Some crimes are related to poverty but also other factors, like a lack of opportunities, hope, connectedness, addiction and mental health struggles. When it comes to mental health struggles, addiction and certain types of violence, we have to pursue community healing rather than jail cells. I don't believe criminalizing addiction or mental health episodes is productive, because it is likely that trauma will only be compounded in jail. We must invest in safe use sites, harm reduction and widespread availability of drug use education and lifesaving products like NARCAN and test strips. I believe many types of violence, such as fights that youth get into can best be handled with diversion programs, restorative justice and counseling rather than incarceration. This goes for adults as well. Continuity of mental health care, community programs to teach conflict resolution skills and restorative justice should be readily available to all.

There are many other types of more serious, violent crime. I believe we need to look to data and studies to understand the root causes of these crimes and respond accordingly. For example, sexual violence may be caused by individual motives, but also our societal norms of patriarchy, racism and other prejudices. To get at the root causes of sexual violence we'll need to change rape culture itself, so that sexual violence is never normalized and consent is the norm.

2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates? Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.

Since the COVID pandemic, certain crime rates have gone up and certain crime rates have gone down or stayed the same. According to the most recent data from the Denver police department, some types of crime (car thefts, drug crimes and property crime) have risen from 2021-2022 while others have gone down (sexual assaults, domestic violence, burglaries, robberies). While these changes have occurred since the pandemic, we have to study exactly what drove these changes.

3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues?

We've criminalized homelessness and every behavior that comes with it. The unhoused don't have a

public bathroom, so they're forced to go commit a crime by going to the bathroom outside. The unhoused are traumatized, so many commit a crime by turning to drugs to self-medicate. The unhoused have to protect themselves from other people with mental health issues or anger problems, and in doing so may commit a crime like assault. "Crime" is socially constructed and how we define it makes being unhoused criminal. The fact that people are unhoused and on the street is a catalyst for public health crises, both for those who are unhoused and those living around them.

The first step to address this is to improve access to public health resources and sanitation. I have done this with the Headwaters Protectors, a nonprofit that provides clean water and trash services to encampments. In 2020, I [presented a community plan](#) that leveraged regional cooperation to rapidly get our neighbors off the streets into safe outdoor sites and hotels.

Step two is permanent solutions. There is [solid research](#) that shows the fastest, cheapest way to get people off the streets is to get them into housing with wraparound services. As Mayor I would expand housing [programs that have actually been proven to work](#) in Denver. We also have to address our housing crisis so no one becomes homeless in the first place.

4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths?

I don't believe drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor, much less a felony. I believe that when we criminalize possession we criminalize addiction. That destroys the factors that allow people to recover like stable support systems and consistent access to care. This disruption is why those recently released from prison are at highest risk for overdose. Instead we need consistency of care, including harm reduction centers and safe use sites with NARCAN, test strips and medication for Opioid Use Disorder. We also need effective public education about drug use.

5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map? (note: this map only applies to adults in state prison)

According to the CCJRC and Prison Policy Initiative report, these neighborhoods are disproportionately low-income, Black and Latino. This is also just what I know to be true as a lifelong Chicano Denverite. I also know that these communities have been redlined and suppressed by active policy choices that have denied their residents access to clean air, clean water, good jobs, good housing and the peace and dignity afforded to wealthier neighborhoods.

We know that communities of color and lower income communities are disproportionately policed, surveilled and jailed nationwide. We know this is partially because the existence of these communities is criminalized (again, see loitering laws or urban camping laws), because poverty contributes to other problems (for example, community conflict emerging from the tension of fighting to survive) and because law enforcement is biased against those communities. This bias is within individual officers, as data consistently shows police disproportionately target Black and brown people. It's also structural. For example, police functionally punish shoplifting but don't enforce labor violations like wage theft. It's time to end mass incarceration of our communities with data driven, evidence and community based solutions.

Name of Mayoral Candidate: **Jim Walsh**

- 1. What are your thoughts on WHY people commit crime and what strategies will your administration deploy to prevent crime?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

I believe that most crime is crime of economic desperation. There is a reason that the overwhelming majority of incarcerated people in this country are from low socioeconomic status. Preventing crime means creating systems where everyone has access to basic necessities, housing, and the dignity of being able to work and provide for one's family. This means a minimum wage that is a living wage, Universal Basic Income, and workers having access to unions and a collective voice in their workplaces. Preventing crime is not about adding police officers and incarcerating more people, it's about creating a more just society. White collar crime, which is the more serious kind of crime because it's impact can be systemic, is rarely prosecuted or identified. We have a justice system where access to resources determines ones outcome. Juveniles should never be subject to adult penalties for crimes that they committed. Instead, they need to be treated as the vulnerable, emerging and evolving people that they represent.

- 2. What, if any, impact do you think the COVID pandemic has had on crime rates?** Please specify if any impacts differed between adults and juvenile crime rates.

COVID increased crime rates because it threw many people into economic crisis and onto the streets. The Black Lives Matter movement also was a precursor to the "crime wave" that we are experiencing. Every Civil Rights movement is followed by a reactionary Law and Order countermovement, where fears of lawlessness and chaos are pushed into the nation's consciousness, fears rooted in tropes of black male criminality. We are living this backlash today, where Critical Race Theory is demonized and any kind of critical analysis of American History is dismissed as "woke" culture. These fears of a crime wave, like the Willie Horton political add of 1988, is a tactic used for centuries to scare the public and reign in the social progress that has been achieved through a massive social movement. Low income communities are harmed the most by these backlashes.

- 3. What are your thoughts on any potential links between homelessness and crime and the impact a criminal history has on securing employment and sustainable housing? What strategies will your administration deploy to address these issues?** Please specify if there are any differences in your thoughts or strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

Unhoused people are no more criminally-oriented than any other segment of our society. Unhoused people have been criminalized due to laws such as the Urban Camping Ban and pushed around the city due to sweeps of encampments. Once an individual has a criminal history, particularly a felony on their record, it becomes very very difficult to find permanent employment and housing, placing them into a semi-permanent lower caste. The unhoused also face challenges around having valid identification, a mailing address or phone number, and access to a shower to prepare for an interview.

My administration will directly and immediately funnel resources, including Universal Basic Income, into the hands of those who are struggling the most. Strategies include inviting unhoused voices to policy-making spaces where their collective voice can be heard, banning the check of box on

employment applications so that those with felonies can start over without fear of stigmatization, and channeling low-level incarcerated people into education.

4. When it comes to addressing drug use in Denver, do you think the penalty for drug possession for personal use should be a misdemeanor or felony and what strategies will your administration deploy to reduce drug use and overdose deaths? Please specify if there are any differences in your strategies that differ between adults and juveniles.

I don't believe there should be any criminal penalty for drug possession. I believe that all drug-related matters and efforts should be channeled through the principles and practices of Harm Reduction, which challenges the stigmatization and criminalization of substance use and shifts the focus to doing whatever is necessary to ensure that substance users are safe and that their lives are valued. Reducing overdose deaths means providing Safe Use Spaces to and Safe Substances to substance users, not arresting them or incarcerating them.

5. According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes for these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map?

This map is alarmingly similar to one that I came across in researching my graduate school thesis, which was a history of the Curtis Park community during the 1940s and 50s. The Denver Post published a map of Denver that was color-coded to show where crimes were being committed. The map called these high-crime areas the "Bad Belt" of Denver. These areas were NE Denver, the West Side, and SW Denver. Eighty years later, this has not changed. This has nothing to do with criminality in these areas and everything to do with race and socioeconomic status, the targeting of vulnerable predominantly black and brown communities, by law enforcement. I would use this map as Mayor to retrain police officers about how to serve low income communities and communities of color and not how to police them. This includes tactics in de-escalation, patrolling these communities in a way that does not feel like surveillance.