



Mayor Pete Buttigieg: Higher Heights Questionnaire

Issue & Policy Questions:

Healthcare

1. Please outline the specifics of your policy proposal on healthcare, including expanding access, what would be covered, lowering prescription drug costs and transition from the current system.

My plan for Medicare for All Who Want It will make comprehensive health insurance coverage available to all Americans. It will add a more affordable, public alternative to the health insurance marketplaces, while also increasing the generosity of financial assistance for lower income people and extending subsidy eligibility to more middle-income people. The more affordable public option will incentivize corporate insurers to compete on price. If corporate insurers don't lower costs to deliver something dramatically better than what is available today, competition will create the glide path toward Medicare for All.

To lower drug prices, I support empowering the federal government to negotiate drug prices and capping monthly out-of-pocket costs for drugs.

My "Healing and Belonging in America" policy is a comprehensive plan for addressing the opioid epidemic and the broader crisis of addiction and mental illness. We will invest \$300 billion in mental health, including a \$100 billion grant program for communities to create tailored solutions for ending addiction and supporting mental health. To improve long-term mental health and well-being, we will enforce mental health and addiction parity across all private payers, Medicare, and Medicaid, so that treatment for mental illness and addiction is as accessible as treatment for other chronic conditions, such as diabetes.

2. **How does your plan address the myriad of disparities – including chronic illness, underdiagnosing of illness, heart disease, mental health, access and affordability that negatively impact the health and well-being of Black women?**

A critical part of my plan is launching an inter-agency National Health Equity Strategy. This strategy will prioritize anti-racism and be undergirded by the belief that quality health outcomes should be the norm for every American, regardless of race, place, income, or even access to health care. I will designate and fund Health Equity Zones to address communities' most pressing health disparities, especially in communities with histories of redlining and economic and social marginalization. These Health Equity Zones will support the identification, development, implementation, and monitoring of plans tailored to address local health inequities. Building from early models like Accountable Communities for Health, these Health Equity Zones will create multi-sector coalitions focused on health equity and closing health disparities, and reflect the fundamental economic, social, and political determinants of health in a community. In addition, I will revitalize the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that frameworks are in place to address health inequities, promote equal access, and prohibit discrimination; that agencies explicitly consider racial impact in their regulatory decisions and rule-making; and that legal recourse and enforcement is readily available to people and communities in order to protect these basic human rights.

I will also work to end the maternal health crisis that we face and ensure that Black mothers have equal access to high-quality care. In my [Rural Health Plan](#), we address the need to increase the number of health professionals providing maternal and obstetric care and to train non-obstetricians, such as family physicians, midwives, and general surgeons, to provide obstetric care. I will also support passage of the MOMMA Act, Maternal CARE Act, MOMS Act and MOMMIES Act to achieve needed reforms like requiring training to address implicit bias and racism in hospitals and other health care settings, expanding Medicaid coverage for one year postpartum, and expanding evidence-based programs shown to reduce disparities in pregnancy outcomes.

Finally, I will increase Medicare reimbursement rates—and encourage states to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates—for providers working in medically underserved areas, including rural areas, where racial health disparities are particularly acute. We will also address the underrepresentation of Black Americans in the health workforce and train our current health workforce to combat bias—especially racial bias—when treating patients.

3. **What are your policy plans for the future of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid?**

I will make Medicare more affordable by capping out-of-pocket costs for traditional Medicare and Medicare Part D, and I will protect the choices of over 20 million seniors who have chosen private Medicare plans. I will strengthen the Medicaid program by

making enrollment automatic, banning work requirements and other demonstrations that aim to limit eligibility, and increasing reimbursement rates for key services, such as treatment for mental health, addiction, and maternal health.

As President, I'll also protect Social Security—not just as a lifeline for millions, but as a national inheritance for future generations. That means shoring up the program's solvency by making sure that top earners pay their fair share—and not by cutting benefits for seniors or by raising taxes on middle-class and working-class Americans. I also support enhancing Social Security benefits for financially vulnerable Americans, enabling them to retire with dignity and security after a lifetime of hard work.

4. How will your administration protect Roe v. Wade and a woman's legal right to reproductive rights and justice?

I endorse the EACH Woman Act and support abolishing the Hyde Amendment to restore insurance coverage of abortion for people enrolled in Medicaid, other federal programs, and private insurance. I will also reverse and prohibit the current administration's "gag and refusal of care" rules, which interfere with the reproductive healthcare needs of individuals by restricting the information shared with patients or allowing discrimination through the prioritization of a healthcare provider's personal beliefs over the delivery of evidence-based care.

5. How does your healthcare plan address access and affordability issues to the full range of reproductive services including contraception, comprehensive sex education, STI prevention and care, disparities in prenatal, pregnancy and postnatal care, which disproportionately impacts Black women, women of color, women who may not be able to afford these services and/or may not have the ability to travel long distances to access these services?

Ensuring equal and affordable access to comprehensive, safe, evidence-based, and high quality reproductive health care requires additional legislative action. My bottom line is that reproductive health care decisions -- whether it's about choosing birth control, planning a pregnancy, having an abortion, or preventing STIs -- should be an individual decision made by a woman in consultation with her doctor. As President, my legislative priority will be to remove restrictions and risks to these decisions, to stop dictating to doctors what they can or cannot discuss with their patients, and to provide every woman in the country with access to reproductive health services and information, regardless of her ability to pay, where she works, where she lives, or the type of insurance that she has.

To make this happen, I will fight to repeal the Hyde Amendment, end Medicaid work requirements, and pass bills that include provisions to address implicit bias and racism in health care settings. As previously mentioned, I will prioritize rolling back the current

administration's gag and refusal of care rules, which disproportionately impact women of color's ability to access reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion. Finally, I will guarantee universal health care coverage to close gaps in uninsured rates for Black women of all ages and incomes.

6. Do you support the repeal of the Hyde Amendment?

Yes - please see answer to Numbers 4-5.

Economy

1. How will your administration address the racial wealth gap, the pay gap for women and promote economic security for middle, and low-income Americans?

The racial wealth gap is the most visible economic consequence of our long history of discrimination against Black Americans. My Douglass Plan for Black America proposes ways to invest, at an unprecedented scale, in Black Americans and to intentionally dismantle racist systems. We do this through several policies. For example, we propose a 21st Century Community Homestead Act to launch a public trust that would purchase abandoned properties and provide them to eligible residents in pilot cities while simultaneously investing in the revitalization of surrounding communities. This plan will attack the racial wealth gap by directly fostering asset ownership among those previously prevented from accumulating capital. We plan to pair this with the Walker-Lewis initiative (described in the next question) to address the entrepreneurship gap and create jobs in minority communities.

Our nation's pay gap for women, which is worse for women of color, is unacceptable. In my plan for empowering workers, "A New Rising Tide," we share policies to ensure that women are equally compensated as well as promoted into and retained in the well-paid jobs they deserve. This starts with gender pay transparency. Total pay gap transparency would be a down payment on more granular reporting requirements, such as by gender, race, and job within companies—building on the Obama Administration's Equal Opportunity Office compensation data collection. We will also pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, raise a \$15 federal minimum wage that is indexed to wage growth, end the tipped minimum wage that disproportionately affects women, and end the subminimum wage for workers with disabilities. My Administration will also strengthen labor protections for domestic workers who have historically been excluded from such protections.

In addition, I will ensure that my policies promote the economic well-being of middle-income and low-income Americans. For example, in my Medicare for All Who Want It plan, I propose generously expanding premium subsidies for low-income people to make marketplace coverage more affordable for individuals and families. I will also cap marketplace premium payments at 8.5% of income for everyone, which will primarily help middle-income families. In my climate change plan, Mobilizing America: Rising to

the Climate Challenge, I propose a carbon tax with revenue rebated to low-income and middle-income families. Through policies like these, my Administration will strive to safeguard economic security for all low- and middle-income Americans.

2. How do your plans for economic growth address investment in underserved communities?

My plans reflect my commitment to providing dramatically more federal investment and support to underserved communities. For instance, we will invest in underserved communities through the Walker-Lewis Initiative for business opportunity and equal employment. Inspired by Black business pioneers Madam C.J. Walker and Reginald Lewis, it aims to triple the number of entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds within 10 years and create up to 3 million new jobs in minority communities.

The initiative includes creating the federal Walker-Lewis Entrepreneurship Fund to invest in entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds. This fund will co-invest in funds with the explicit goal of investing in entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds, particularly based in low-income and minority communities. The government would co-invest up to \$10 billion within five years, which will activate another \$10 billion of private capital. Additionally, there would be corresponding investments in increasing access to capital, entrepreneur training and development, and rigorous measurement and data tracking.

We also propose a new Walker-Lewis Debt-for-Jobs Plan to help students start businesses. Every student who was eligible for Pell Grants while in school will have his or her college loans deferred and forgiven over a five-year period if they start and maintain a business employing at least three people within five years of leaving school.

In underserved rural areas and small towns, my administration will expand and connect Regional Innovation Clusters to catalyze job creation, as described in my rural economy plan, "A Commitment to America's Heartland." We will provide up to \$500 million in federal funds to develop and support a national network of 1,000 clusters to support the growth of rural businesses and jobs and launch a new generation of rural entrepreneurs, including veterans.

3. Do you support a \$15 minimum wage? Why or why not?

Yes. I want to make sure that workers who are giving their all to an employer are getting paid fairly in return. By raising the federal minimum wage to \$15, we can start taking steps to make sure that the economy is working for all workers. Over 33 million workers would benefit from raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 by 2025, including 4 million Black workers. We also need to index the federal minimum wage to median wage growth so that moving forward, both workers and employers know with certainty what it will be in the years to come. That's why I strongly endorse the Raise the Wage Act. An important part of the Raise the Wage Act is ending the subminimum wage for disabled workers and ending the tipped minimum wage. No one in the United States should be exempted from minimum wage laws. This practice is indefensible.

4. How will your administration address the disparities in access to capital for Black women owned small businesses?

I will launch the Walker-Lewis Initiative described above to increase access to capital for Black women owned small businesses. As part of the Initiative, I will commit to the Walker-Lewis Promise to aim to award 25% of federal contracting dollars to small business owners from underserved communities in urban and rural areas, including minority-owned firms (currently nearly 10%) and women-owned firms (currently at 5%).

5. How do your plans address climate change and “green jobs” impact communities of color?

I will focus my green bank and Regional Resilience Hub initiatives outlined in my climate plan on serving communities of color. Building on the success of green banks in states, the American Clean Energy Bank that I propose in my climate change plan will have \$250 billion of initial capitalization. It will provide loans, grants, credit enhancements, and loan guarantees to finance clean energy technologies and energy efficiency, waste and water, and resilient infrastructure projects that create good local jobs, through which the bank can leverage up to six times more private-sector capital. As part of the Walker-Lewis Initiative, this Bank will promote funding for members of under-resourced communities to ensure that they have access to clean energy technology and resilient infrastructure. The Bank will have regional hubs, co-located with our Regional Resilience Hubs, which will provide communities with financing and technical assistance. Each Regional Resilience Hub will have a Board of Advisors made up of local elected leaders, community leaders, and other citizens. The Hubs will work with diverse groups of communities to understand and manage the risks of climate change.

6. Do you support reparations? If so, please describe your specific policy proposals to address the systematic and institutional legacy of slavery, Jim Crow and other forms of racism and discrimination. If not, please explain.

I have committed to creating a commission to propose reparations policies to Congress. My [Douglass Plan](#) is a specific plan for Black America—but it also establishes a deep and solid foundation for racial and economic justice for all communities of color and for all Americans. The Plan, which is a complement to any potential reparations proposals, aims to provide the scale and scope necessary for true nationwide restorative justice. Its policies touch every facet of American life from housing to criminal justice, from education to health. It includes the Walker-Lewis Initiative, a 21st Century Community Homestead Act, increased funding for Title I schools and HBCUs, comprehensive criminal justice reform, and investment in public health and infrastructure. Through these, we will attack legacies of slavery like the racial wealth gap and health disparities.

Criminal Justice Reform/Gun Violence/Judiciary

- 1. Please outline the specifics of your plan to address criminal justice reform and include relevant information on returning citizens, over-policing and sentencing reforms.**

I will work to ensure more people are free by reducing the number of people incarcerated in the United States at both the federal and state level by 50%. I will double funding for federal grants for states that commit to criminal justice reform and prioritize funding for programs aimed at pretrial reforms, decarceration, and expansion of alternative to incarceration (ATI) programs. On the federal level, I will eliminate incarceration for drug possession, reduce sentences for other drug offenses and apply these reductions retroactively, and legalize marijuana. I will also eliminate mandatory minimums.

I will establish comprehensive measures to hold police accountable to their communities. My Administration will create a federal database both documenting use of force and tracking officers who are fired from their duties. I will support the use of body cams, policies that limit use of force to when it is absolutely necessary, and programs that end discriminatory and unfair policing practices.

To help returning citizens reintegrate, I will support ban-the-box initiatives, work with the Department of Labor to set guidelines to reduce implicit bias, increase the availability of tax credits and bond insurance for employers who hire formerly incarcerated people, and allow returning citizens to access housing credits and SNAP.

- 2. How will your administration work with the Department of Justice to handle police misconduct and death in custody issues in state and local police departments?**

I will develop incentives to encourage states to make public data related to officer misconduct, as well as use of force, line-of-duty deaths, and policing activities (including traffic stops). As a precondition for federal grants, I will require law enforcement agencies to publish documents like protocols and manuals that promote transparency—especially related to use of force investigations, technology, surveillance, and intelligence.

I will reinvigorate the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and direct it to investigate law enforcement agencies that have a pattern or practice of violating civil rights and the Constitution, including by racial profiling. The DOJ will also investigate officer misconduct, and deaths in custody.

Finally, I will support departments that actively strengthen community relationships and implement community policing, and we will encourage other departments to follow their lead. This includes departments that have recruited a diverse police force that reflects their communities, encourages hiring of police officers who live in communities they

serve, and departments that have effectively responded to officer misconduct. Such departments have selection and promotional policies that reward officers not simply on enforcement.

3. Please outline your specific policy proposals on gun safety. Do you view gun violence as a public health issue?

In my gun violence and extremism plan, "[An Action Plan to Combat the National Threat Posed by Hate and the Gun Lobby](#)," I outline my gun violence policy. I will make background checks universal and close the loopholes that allow dangerous individuals to acquire and keep guns. These include the "boyfriend loophole" in domestic violence cases, the "Charleston loophole" that allows sales to occur with completed background checks, and the "hate loophole" that still allows individuals convicted of hate crimes to have guns. I will ban assault weapons and high capacity magazines, support red flag laws that disarm domestic abusers or others who are deemed an immediate threat to others/themselves, and create a national gun licensing system.

I absolutely consider gun violence to be a public health crisis, but for the past two decades Congress has effectively cut funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institutes of Health for studying gun violence. The House of Representatives allocated \$50 million of funding for gun violence research at CDC and NIH, and the Senate should immediately pass it.

4. Do you support the death penalty?

No. I would support a constitutional amendment to ban the death penalty. We must address the blatant prejudice in our application of the death penalty, which disproportionately affects Black Americans.

5. How will you strengthen the Voting Rights Act, protect voting rights and ballot access?

The American quest to build a more perfect union starts with a democracy that includes every citizen. Voters must not be denied their rights because of badly run elections or because some people on one side think it's better if fewer citizens are able to vote.

That's why I propose a 21st Century Voting Rights Act that will use every resource of the federal government to end all types of voter suppression, expand voting access, and create a democracy where the rights of each citizen no longer depend on the color of their skin, the community they live in, or for whom they want to vote. Registration must be made easier, by automatically registering eligible voters, allowing online and same-day registration, and making registration portable within states. Voting must be made easier and more accessible by allowing early voting and vote-by-mail, making

Election Day a national holiday, and by setting and enforcing standards for poll workers and the distribution of voting machines.

I will authorize a new preclearance procedure under the Voting Rights Act to enable the federal government to block racist voting laws before they take effect. We need to create and enforce standards for voter roll maintenance to stop discriminatory voter purges, neutralize the effects of restrictive voter ID bills by allowing people to vote with a sworn written statement of identity, and increase and enforce criminal penalties for people who try to interfere with a person's right to vote.

My administration will address discriminatory racial gerrymandering and partisan gerrymandering—which often has the same effect—by ensuring that Congressional redistricting is conducted by independent, statewide commissions using fair and non-discriminatory redistricting rules.

6. Will your administration recognize violence perpetrated by white supremacist hate groups as acts of domestic terrorism?

Yes. We will dedicate \$1 billion to ensure that law enforcement across all agencies and all levels have sufficient resources to counter the growing tide of white nationalist violence. We will pursue domestic white nationalists with international terrorism links and increase the FBI's domestic terrorism field office to combat violence and extremism.

7. What type of judges will you seek to appoint to the Federal bench and the Supreme Court?

I will ensure that the federal bench includes more women and people of color. I will also prioritize deepening the experience of the bench by appointing former public defenders and civil rights attorneys who share a commitment to the protection and expansion of civil rights and civil liberties.

I will nominate Supreme Court Justices that support the rights of women and minorities and of people, not corporations. This means nominating justices that understand the importance of upholding *Roe v. Wade* and who support the principle that corporations are not people and that *Citizens United* should be overturned.

Education

1. **Please outline your platform on K-12 education, and Post-Secondary education opportunities other than two-or four-year college like apprenticeships, trade school etc.?**

All students deserve to reach their potential, regardless of background. To do so, we must ensure that all public schools are equipped with the resources, capacity, and workforce to become the best places to teach and to learn. I will do this by investing in an equitable public education system through a massive increase in federal resources for students at Title I schools. I will focus federal resources on increasing educator pay in Title I schools so that we are paying teachers in a way that reflects their value in our society. I will also implement new transparency policies to build a teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of the student body and our country as a whole. In addition, I will expand access to high-quality job training and postsecondary educational opportunities, including certificate and associate degree programs. And I will invest up to \$5 billion over the next decade to create a national network to double the number of apprenticeships and increase access to other earn-and-learn opportunities.

2. **Do you support charter schools?**

I support public education, and believe that American public schools should be drivers of equitable opportunity for all students. If regulated effectively and transparently, charter schools can play an important role as laboratories for innovation, and the best ones are closing the opportunity gap for low income students and students of color. That said, my primary focus will be on investing in public education overall. That will start with having a Secretary of Education that truly believes in the power of public education and the leadership of teachers in their classrooms. I would direct the Secretary to lead an initiative to close for-profit charters.

3. **How will your education plans address the school to prison pipeline, the over-discipline of Black girls and protect programs like STEM?**

My Administration will break the school-to-prison pipeline because zero-tolerance school discipline policies disproportionately impact students of color and reduce their instruction time. I will help schools and districts eliminate disciplinary policies that impact instructional time in the classroom based on non-violent behavior. I will also implement new policies that support restorative justice disciplinary policies and track data around school discipline to ensure there are no disparities in how and how often students of color and students with disabilities are punished.

I will increase federal investments and incentivize state and local investments in middle school, high school, and college programs to increase readiness and competitiveness for Black women and men in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and fields of growing employment opportunities, especially health professions, software,

finance, and alternative energy.

4. Do you support increasing teacher pay?

Yes. If we want to get the results that we expect for our children, we have to support and compensate the teaching profession. We need to respect teachers the way we do soldiers and pay them more like the way we do doctors. That is why I will massively increase Title I funding and require the first use of those additional funds to be directed toward raising teacher salaries at Title I schools.

5. How will your administration address funding disparities among school districts?

I will reverse inequitable funding structures at the state and local level that perpetuate the opportunity gap. State and local per-pupil spending in the districts serving the highest populations of students of color in America is 13 percent lower¹ than per-pupil spending in our most predominantly white districts. A Buttigieg Administration will target all Title I funding above current levels to support states and districts that implement progressive education funding formulas to provide more state and local resources to low-income schools.

6. How will you address the student loan crisis in America?

We need to ensure that student debt is affordable. This includes guaranteeing that borrowers whose loans are cancelled through income-based repayment aren't taxed on the amount forgiven. I will also cancel the debts of borrowers in low-quality, overwhelmingly for-profit programs, beginning with those that failed federal "gainful employment" rules that ensure students receive an adequate return on their investments. Additionally, I will provide more support to students entering public service, helping them repay their debts more quickly.

7. How do your plans for higher education address HBCU's?

I will increase dedicated resources by \$25 billion for HBCUs and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), which have played an extraordinary role in educating Black students and developing remarkable leaders. A portion of those funds will be set aside for a fund to support, test, and scale promising practices to improve college completion at these institutions. Significantly increasing the resources available to HBCUs and MSIs to help level the playing field between them and other world-class institutions in the United States is about a commitment to restorative justice.

¹ Amerikaner, Ary and Ivy Morgan. "Funding Gaps: An Analysis of School Funding Equity Across the US and Within Each State." The Education Trust. February 2018.