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Office You Are Seeking: State Representative, HD-17

Why Are You Running For This Office?: In the fewest possible words: To block a Republican from running unopposed. In a few more words: With 100 hours to go before the filing deadline, I was recruited to run because nobody else would. It so happens that my political pet peeve is that Democrats let thousands of Republicans run unopposed across the nation. Another is that we, generally, ignore our statehouse. I decided that I wasn't going to just hand our seat to the winner of the GOP primary. I worked with Democrats in the district to get my name on the ballot with 24 hours to spare. And so here we are. The Republican will have an opponent in March AND November!

Describe Your Progressive Values And How You've Been Active In The Community

Supporting Those Values: It's not as though someone handed me a checklist one day and said "this is what you must believe to be a progressive," it's more like I discovered the progressive moniker and movement and I thought to myself, "oh, finally—this is where my beliefs and I fit into when it comes to politics." I believe that we as a society have an obligation to ensure equal rights and opportunity for each other. Like other progressives, what I envision as the bare minimum—from wages to education, housing to health care—that we guarantee everyone is a hell of a lot more useful and comprehensive than it is right now. I believe people have a right to exist, and I believe we have an obligation to do our absolute best for our habitat so it continues to exist for those humans coming behind us. As for my bonafides? Opportunities for service often present themselves but I also seek them out. I started in politics with Kerry/Edwards and fighting California's Prop 8—both were brutal losses. I volunteer in homeless shelters, usually with at-risk kids living in them, or otherwise experiencing homelessness. I've gotten several young people through four-year degrees with a mentorship model, including wraparound services, that I built around their needs and lived experiences. I have worked at Daily Kos for over six years, where I've worked to elect more and better Democrats every single day. I've raised thousands of dollars for journalists covering intense situations such as the unrest after the murder of George Floyd. And when I came back to Ohio in 2020, I co-founded a 700-member-strong group of Berea progressives. I served on my school district's defunct JEDI task force and co-led my division. I gave out hundreds of yard signs across the August and November elections this year. I'd planned to dedicate 2024 to getting Sherrod Brown reelected—but the County Dems brought me a different plan entirely.

How Will You Implement Progressive Values In The Office You Are Seeking?: Well, it's not just about voting the progressive way or bringing and supporting and/or co-sponsoring progressive legislation, particularly in the face of not just a Republican majority, but potentially a far-right Republican supermajority. And so the job is also about growing the movement. About connecting the movement—both my district and in the immediate communities carved out of it, such as Brecksville, Middleburg Heights, and Brookpark—and the rest of Olmsted Township beyond the two wards in HD-17.

Please Give At Least One Specific Progressive Policy Proposal You Would Seek To

Implement.: I'd love to get an omnibus voting rights reform package, resembling the John Lewis Voting Right Act, through. The change to voting laws in recent years are clearly designed to make voting harder, when it should be as accessible to the electorate as possible. And to make it harder for voters of color and in areas most likely to lean left of center. "At least one?" That means I can keep going! As someone with massive student debt—a large chunk from attending Cleveland State,

a particularly “affordable” state school—I dream of funding free two- and four-year degrees at our state/public schools. I was half-orphaned at 7, spent more than half of my childhood homeless, and I'm a foster care alum. There was no college fund for me, so predatory debt was the only path, and it shaped my future. Fourteen years since I got my master's degree, I find that the current higher ed system has only gotten more out of reach for so many like me, and for students in our middle class. Education changed my life, and everyone should be given that same opportunity. So let's make those early degrees obtainable!

Please Provide A Short Bio.: I'm not a politician, even if I'm a lifelong Democrat and shouty progressive. I grew up in abject poverty during the 80s and 90s, when public schools were still largely funded, but it was still too easy to fall through the cracks. I survived and thrived through hard work, education, and because people in a position to help me chose to help me. I've always tried to pay it forward, and this campaign might be my biggest attempt yet. I was born at Fairview Hospital; early childhood was in Strongsville before years of bouncing around, as my mother called our chronic homelessness, in and around Berea. I graduated from Berea High School in 1997 and Cleveland State University in 2006, and attended graduate school at the University of Southern California, graduating in 2010 I've done most of the things I set out to do and a bunch of things I never expected to do—like run for and win this seat. I've gone viral for a hashtag I created to save a homeless teen's future. Seriously! We got on Ellen and the Today Show, and were in People magazine twice. Once that dust settled, I kept helping that guy, and a few other young people like him, navigate college. I built a whole model around the unique needs of students who endured childhood homelessness, and eventually I shared it with the national higher education community via two years of presentations at their professional conferences. My accidental little project helped guide structural change. It's literally the best thing I've ever done or will ever do, and I'm not afraid to say so. Beyond that, I've worked my entire career in either restaurants and bars or the media, and after that whole hashtag-turned-mentor thing, I shifted from entertainment to media that sought to make a difference, in 2015. I've been working at Daily Kos, the nation's largest progressive media and organizing hub, since 2017, which has given me the opportunity to share space and conversation with remarkable progressives from Deb Haaland to Elizabeth Warren to Dolores Huerta! I've never worked anywhere before that so shared my values. And since we have the benefits we think everyone should have, I finally know what it's like to have health insurance and paid sick days. One more thing: My life was forever changed by a spinal injury in 2018. My physical abilities are less than they used to be, but my passions for equity, accessibility, and opportunity have only grown. I'm writing this biography just for you, dear progressive caucus. It's just me on this team as I write this, because it's been just 12 days since I was recruited to run for this seat, and 8 days since I made the ballot, with Christmas right smack dab in the middle of it all. So while it's easy to distill my candidate bio to “Disabled Black xennial woman who grew up homeless and ended up in foster care,” you're getting something a bit more candid. Did I mention I have two dogs?

When You Are In Office, Will You Commit To Coming To Two Meetings A Year With Ccpc Membership? This Could Be Either An Appearance At Our Quarterly Membership Meetings Or Meetings Scheduled Directly With You.: Gosh yes! Of course I want to hear from my fellow progressives! I think at least one of each would be the best way to do things, assuming y'all have time for me!