



# 2018 Pennsylvania CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

**Candidate Name:** Lindsey Williams

**Running For:** PA Senate

**District:** 38

**Party Affiliation:** Democrat

**Charitable nonprofits include groups like food banks, Habitat for Humanity, YMCAs, religious institutions, hospitals, museums, libraries, child care centers, and many more. What has been your personal experience with nonprofits (ex: as a board member, employee, volunteer, or donor)? How do these experiences shape your policy positions?**

Charitable nonprofits hold a key place in our society. While ideally, all of our residents would have access to medical care, quality education, and a living wage, the reality is that there will always be a need for the specialized services provided by charitable nonprofits. These organizations often represent the best of our humanity, encouraging artistry, preserving our environment, and meeting the needs of the less fortunate among us.

In 2005, I founded the Dickinson College U-Turn Community Yard Sale, an annual charity event that collects 20 tons of items typically discarded by students at the end of the school year. Food items are donated to the local food pantry and other items are sold at the community yard sale, proceeds of which go to the United Way. This event raises about \$13,000 per year for the United Way. I am especially proud of this event, as it not only raises tens of thousands of dollars for charity, it also protects the environment by keeping tons of items out of landfills. This early experience taught me that people will enthusiastically support charitable nonprofits, especially when these organizations can make it easy to do so.

I began my professional career at a nonprofit organization, the National Whistleblowers Center (NWC). Like most nonprofit employees, I wholeheartedly believed in my employer's mission and I worked tirelessly to help achieve it, feeling grateful that my passion could also pay my bills. Although I was dedicated to protecting workers' rights, I also strongly believed in holding my own employer to those same standards. When my coworkers and I were denied promised benefits, I attempted to organize a staff union and was illegally terminated for doing so. My experience working with the NWC taught me that we must support both the mission of charitable nonprofits and the employees and volunteers carrying out that mission.

**What is your position on the following tax issues that affect charitable nonprofits:**

**Do you support preserving state and local sales and real-estate tax exemptions for charitable nonprofits?**

I support preserving state and local sales and real estate tax exemptions for charitable nonprofits, provided that these entities are actually performing a substantial service to their communities and not merely recognizing monetary gains that far outstrip any benefits they provide. Because the vast majority of charitable nonprofits pass such a balancing test with flying colors, we must craft these regulations carefully so that they do not become overwhelming or overburdensome to small nonprofits.

**Do you believe that nonprofits should be required to provide Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) or Services in Lieu of Taxes (SILOTS)?**

I am open to some degree of implementing the use of PILOTs or SILOTs; however, I do not believe that all nonprofits should be required to make these payments. As with state and local sales and real estate tax exemptions, I would advocate for carefully crafted regulations so that nonprofits can focus on their charitable missions and not on overburdensome payments or paperwork.

**Would you support additional state tax revenues dedicated to fund nonprofits providing contracted government health and human services?**

I would have to carefully review any proposed legislation providing additional state tax revenues and consult with key stakeholders to determine the real-world impacts of such legislation. A balanced state budget is extremely important to planning for our state, counties, and municipalities; any additional expenditures would need to be viewed in the context of the entire budget and the needs of Pennsylvania residents.

**Additional comments about tax policies that affect nonprofits:**

**Nonprofits provide more than 720,000 jobs in Pennsylvania (15% of the state's workforce). What policies would you propose to promote continued job growth for private employers, including both nonprofit and for-profit business?**

Supporting small businesses is extremely important to me and to the economy of Pennsylvania. I believe that investing in quality public education will prepare Pennsylvanians not only to meet the changing needs of a modern workforce, but to take the lead and start small businesses of their own. I will advocate for affordable and quality healthcare, which will not only help employers with their costs for employee's health care but will also create a healthier population and cut down on lost productivity costs. Additionally, I would like to see our tax system close loopholes that allow the wealthiest individuals and corporations to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, thereby lessening the burden on startups and small concerns.

**Would you favor legislation that would reduce the likelihood of a budget impasse in future years? If so, what type of legislation?**

I believe in creating a balanced budget that fully funds necessary programs that benefit all Pennsylvanians. This includes increasing revenue in a responsible manner and cutting spending where prudent. Ultimately, I am unsure that any additional laws or regulations would be effective in forcing legislators to pass a balanced budget, as the Pennsylvania Constitution already requires the passage of the same and legislators are ultimately responsible to their constituents. I am open to reviewing any such proposals.

**Would you support regulatory changes that increase efficiencies and nonprofit-government partnerships. (Proposed regulatory changes could include reducing redundancies across state agencies - e.g. common pre-award processes, budget templates, use of a single audit, reporting template and central depository vault)?**

Studies have shown that one of the most effective ways to increase efficiencies is not to increase regulation, but to provide for more robust whistleblower protections. When employees do not fear retaliation for reporting waste, fraud, and abuse, they are more likely to come forward and report violations of existing regulations. My first priority would be to increase whistleblower protections, which are not only extremely effective, but also often enjoy broad bipartisan support.

**If elected, what would be your top three policy priorities?**

My top three policy priorities are fighting for working families (including raising the minimum wage and providing paid sick leave), investing in public education to ensure that every child receives a high-quality education from pre-K to post-secondary programs, and expanding access to affordable, quality healthcare