



## **Mayoral Candidates Disability Questionnaire 2023 – Ja'Mal Green**

Over the last several years, candidates running for office nationwide have learned that disability voters have an intense interest in a wide range of substantial issues. Furthermore, about one in six voters is a person with a disability according to the [American Association of People with Disabilities](#)---that's 16.4% of the voting electorate nationwide.

In Chicago, there are over 300,000 people with disabilities, with countless friends and families who also consider themselves disability voters. The areas of the City with the highest numbers of people with disabilities are also areas that tend to be Black and brown neighborhoods with historic disinvestment or underinvestment.

Disability language: We strongly recommend that you be mindful regarding the terms you use about disability in your responses. The language that the disability community has used to describe ourselves has shifted over time. These days, we prefer either "person first" language or "identity first" language. This means we typically say "people with disabilities" or disabled people. These are also the terms used in civil rights law. The National Center on Disability and Journalism also offers a [disability language style guide at this link](#).

### **QUESTIONS**

#### **Disability Platform**

*Background: Disability voters often check to see whether candidates have a platform on disability issues, or if they frame their issues with a disabilities lens.*

**Does your campaign have a disabilities issues platform? Yes/No**

GREEN: Yes

**If yes, where can the public find it?**

GREEN: We will be releasing a comprehensive list of policies regarding the disability community on our website at [gogreenchicago.com](http://gogreenchicago.com). This includes, but is not limited to; making every single voting, polling, and government building accessible to those with disabilities, reforming the CPS curriculum and budget to increase accommodations for learners with disabilities, and introducing a city government committee that employs people with disabilities from the Chicago community. Many of our current public policies; such as making CTA transportation cleaner, safer, and faster (even free), and modernizing city government with current technologies, will have input from the

disability community to ensure the implementation will not leave the community behind.

**If you had one big idea to make Chicago the most accessible city in the nation, what would that be?**

GREEN: Modernizing and reforming the voting system in Chicago. Making every single voting and polling center and government buildings accessible to those with disabilities. Having vote by mail ballots ready to go well in advance of regular elections. While 90% of voting sites in Chicago were not accessible to those with disabilities, Ja'Mal Green will make it a priority to make sure this civil liberty is accessible to all.

**The Disability Data Crisis**

*Background: Collecting data is important to understand community needs, and to secure government funds for underinvested communities. However, disability is often not included when city agencies collect demographic data. Lack of such data weakens the City's ability to measure and improve outcomes for Chicagoans with disabilities.*

**How will you work to ensure that city agencies collect accurate demographic data on disability?**

GREEN: With the modernization of city government, data collection on the Chicago population will be streamlined and will reflect reality. Along the same vein, if anyone with a disability seeks to file complaints, get information about city operations, and add suggestions that go directly to the city hall, the modernization policy will guarantee that as well.

**City Community Support Services**

*Background: The City of Chicago operates a wide range of social services used by people with disabilities and seniors. City services can be particularly important for disabled people who are either undocumented or homeless, but depending on the availability of the services, people may or may not have their needs met.*

**The Mayor's Office on People with Disabilities (MOPD) currently provides six hours of home services a week to people with disabilities. For many people with disabilities, six hours does not provide the level of support that would keep them out of nursing homes. Would you support an increase in the maximum number of hours people can receive from MOPD's Program? Yes/No**

GREEN: Yes

**In what ways would you expand city community support programs to improve the lives of disabled Chicagoans?**

GREEN: One of our main issues we want to take on is allowing people from their communities an actual voice when it comes to the making and implementation of policies that affect their communities. This same rule will apply to the disability community. It's really offensive for city representatives to craft policies that are inadequate in servicing the disability community. Introducing a Committee for People with Disabilities and employing people with disabilities onto this committee will increase actual representation and appropriate policy crafting.

**Economic Justice**

**1. Banking**

*Background: Thousands of Chicagoans with disabilities live with both chronic economic insecurity and what we call the "disability tax", the extra expenses that come along with living with a disability. Disability tax expenses can include paying for meds, equipment, supports, or extra fees beyond what insurance may cover. This situation is exacerbated for Black disabled Chicagoans by our historic legacy of land grabs, redlining, and other tactics used to rob Black Chicagoans of money and property---a situation that has given rise to calls citywide for reparations. Finally, for Chicago's immigrants with disabilities, immigration status can have a deeply negative impact on their ability to earn and acquire assets/savings.*

**In what ways will you lead the City to develop or expand initiatives that remove barriers to accessing traditional banks and the services they offer? An example of one such barrier is the debt-to-income ratio currently used by banks to approve loans, which is deeply problematic for many low-income, disabled Chicagoans.**

GREEN: In what ways will you lead the City to develop or expand initiatives that remove barriers to accessing traditional banks and the services they offer? An example of one such barrier is the debt-to-income ratio currently used by banks to approve loans, which is deeply problematic for many low-income disabled Chicagoans.

One of our main policies is the radical implementation of a publicly owned bank, the Bank of Chicago. Profits made off this public bank feed back directly into the city and it's equitable development. Loans will be given out on a needs basis rather than some arbitrary minimum requirement such as credit scores or debt-to-income ratios. Our ultimate goal is to eradicate poverty from the face of Chicago in any and all communities.

**2. Employment**

*Background: People with disabilities face multiple barriers to work, including discrimination based on disability within the hiring practices and accommodation requests on the job.*

**What strategies would you use to hold Chicago employers accountable for hiring and effectively managing employees with disabilities?**

GREEN: We are so happy that Illinois ratified, into its constitution, the right to collective bargaining and organization. We will promote all kinds of unionization across this city in all industries. A strong union base is a sign of a strong middle class and workers protections. As mentioned earlier in the modernization of city gov, if anyone with a disability seeks to file a complaint about employers it will be heard and acted on.

**3. Cash Assistance Pilot Program**

*Background: The City of Chicago's cash assistance pilot program benefitted over 400 disabled Chicagoans who rely on SSI. The Social Security Administration allowed SSI recipients to benefit from the pilot without damage to their existing benefits, because the cash assistance pilot program was based on COVID recovery dollars.*

**Would you support making the cash assistance pilot program permanent? Yes/No**

GREEN: Yes

**How would you urge the federal Social Security Administration to allow cash assistance flexibility on a permanent basis?**

GREEN: We will use our collective bargaining power, centralized in the Bank of Chicago, as a way of pushing the federal government to match funds and get the policies our people deserve. This will include permanent flexible cash assistance to those people with disabilities.

**Education**

*Background: Less than 40% of Chicago Public Schools are fully accessible for students, staff, and parents with disabilities. Furthermore, more than 40,000 CPS students have disabilities, and over half come from families whose first language is not English. Students with disabilities, particularly Black disabled students, are also more likely to enter the school-to-prison pipeline. The graduation rate of students with disabilities is 13% less than the general population.*

**As Mayor, will you commit to working closely with Chicago Public Schools leadership to develop and fund a robust ADA accessibility plan to make every school accessible? Yes/No**

GREEN: Yes

**In what ways would you work with CPS to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities?**

GREEN: Well firstly by increasing the CPS budget we will increase accommodations to students and learners with disabilities. The expansion of community-school networks by

increasing school open hours, afterschool programs, and overall give students and their families more connection to the area they live in. The main education policy we will champion is Universal 3k, making sure every child has the right to quality education starting at 3 years old.

**How would you work with City departments and related agencies to reduce the number of students with disabilities who become involved with the criminal justice system?**

GREEN: Criminal justice reform will be something our administration will tackle and we will do this from any angle we can find leeway in. Education reform to ensure education equity, establishing healing houses to look at mental health holistically, adding a Youth Intervention Department (YID) to city government to put at risk youth on the right path. We don't need to police children and lock them up behind bars to make them better people.

**What are your plans to improve the CPS bussing situation that has left too many students with disabilities without transportation to school?**

GREEN: The Progressive Future of Transit is a platform we are also hoping to champion in this administration. Making CTA transit faster, cleaner, and safer, redrawing and auditing bus and train lines to make travel times more efficient, finishing the redline tracks past 95th, are just some of the things we will do, if elected. All in all, it'll be a win-win for students.

**Emergency Response/Public Safety**

**1. Mental/Behavioral Health Emergencies and 911 vs 988**

*Background: Communities across Chicago have called for mobile mental health crisis units that do not involve law enforcement. The Chicago Department of Public Health has begun rolling out some pilots to test this kind of program. Access Living also passed a new statewide law, the Community Emergency Services and Supports Act (CESSA), to ensure that 911 can begin dispatching mobile crisis units that do not involve police.*

**Would you support the State requirement that calls for mental health support are transferred from 911 to 988? Yes/No**

GREEN: Yes

**More generally, what is your view on the position that police involvement is not appropriate for the majority of emergency calls related to mental or behavioral health crises?**

GREEN: The above policy is actually one of policies Green has talked about. We will set up new emergency hotlines that connect people to the appropriate response team and

divert calls away from police. We will introduce YID to give appropriate response to at risk youth. We will expand an unarmed social services work force that connects people to the services they desperately need. All of these policies are based on the fundamental truth that policing does not stop crime and infact is escalatory in many situations where armed policemen are not necessary at all.

## **2. Appropriate Accommodations during Arrests or Detainments**

*Background: People with disabilities have a higher likelihood of interaction with law enforcement. When law enforcement is neither trained nor provided with structural support for such interactions, the consequences can be costly and/or deadly. When a person with a disability is arrested, the precinct is the first opportunity to address any disability needs.*

**Currently there is need to improve the process and capacity for local police districts to assess and provide necessary accommodations for people with disabilities following an arrest. How will you work with the Chicago Police Department and other appropriate agencies to solve this problem?**

GREEN: One thing we really need to look at is the mental health of officers themselves. There is currently a CPD suicide epidemic going on in the police department. To solve both problems, comprehensive education on disability and mental health should be required to join the CPD. This will be a win-win for officers mental health in a stressful environment, and for the fair treatment of those arrested with disabilities.

## **Healthcare**

*Background: The Covid-19 pandemic hit people with disabilities and seniors especially hard. Thousands of those who survive Covid-19 face the prospect of living with long Covid, which can create barriers to basic life activities; in other words, disability.*

**In what ways will you create City support and programs for people with long COVID?**

GREEN: This is a major public health concern and we will fund research and support programs to monitor the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic in our city.

## **Housing**

### **1. Affordable, Accessible Housing in Chicago**

*Background: Help to get affordable, accessible housing is the top request we receive every week at Access Living, but citywide, there is a dire shortage of such available units, especially units that will accept housing vouchers. Many people with disabilities are also parents; many may be homeless. Lack of accessible housing, shelters and support services exacerbates a crisis that has been ongoing for decades.*

#### **How will you lead the Department of Housing, in coordination with the Chicago Housing Authority, to create greater access to housing vouchers and more affordable, accessible housing units, especially in new housing developments?**

GREEN: The Bank of Chicago will be giving out loans to anyone who seeks to attain homeownership. Infact, we will add 10,000 new first time homeowners with a Single-Family mortgage bond. When working with CHA we will hold developers accountable to make sure the community is getting the buildings they actually need, rather than letting them run around developing sites for their own profits.

#### **How will you work to ensure that the Affordable Rental Housing Program and the Shelter Program are accessible to people with disabilities?**

GREEN: We will work with the disability community and give them the voice they need in regards to access of affordable housing and shelters. When we expand our unarmed social services work force we will also need to make sure the supply of housing meets the demand.

#### **In what ways do you envision creating more support for ending homelessness, specifically for disabled people?**

GREEN: We at the Green campaign believe that housing is a fundamental human right. Homelessness is something we can no longer afford to tolerate in this city, it has lasting effects on the health of the individual, the community, and the city, it also poses a public safety risk to everyone. Missisipi is one of the only states to have a housing first program (their state homelessness rate is the lowest in the country), and we are developing plans to mimic their successes.

## **Immigration**

*Background: Since September, Chicago has received asylees who were bussed or flown here as a political stunt. At least some of these asylees have been identified as having disabilities.*

**How will you ensure that immigrants with disabilities in Chicago – including mental health disabilities – are welcomed with the proper community supports, medical equipment and medical treatments that they require?**

GREEN: The city of Chicago identifies as a sanctuary city and unfortunately we have not been keeping with our promises. Equal treatment for migrants will be a top priority of ours which includes equal access to housing and healthcare.

## **Transportation and Infrastructure**

*Background: Data shows us that both people with disabilities and women who are heads of households tend to be most concentrated on the South and West Sides, and both groups rely on community amenities and services being close by. Chicago has been a national leader in planning to make its public transportation system 100% accessible through the All Stations Accessibility Plan (ASAP). However, much work remains to make all stations accessible, and to ensure that existing accessibility features such as elevators and escalators remain in a state of good repair.*

**Sidewalk and curb cut snow clearance is one of the top accessibility and quality of life issues for disabled Chicagoans in the winter. Will you support the municipal Plow the Sidewalks initiative? Yes/No**

GREEN: Yes

**As Mayor, would you commit to making our CTA rail system 100% accessible (beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act) and fight for necessary investments to improve and maintain accessibility? Yes/No**

GREEN: Yes

**In what further ways would you work to improve accessibility of transportation for the South and West Sides, which are the neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of disabled people?**

GREEN: As mentioned before the Progressive Future of Transit is a platform we are proposing. This includes making transit safer, cleaner, and faster, expanding the redline past 95th st, adding more express lines to O'hare, redrawing and auditing bus and train lines to optimize travel times.