

## **Shomari Figures**

### **COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ALABAMA LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 2**

#### **Why are you running for this seat?**

I'm running to represent the new District 2 in Congress because I want to continue working to better the lives of the people and places that matter most to me, and that's always been the People of Alabama. I've worked in all three branches of government, and I'm the only candidate running who has ever worked in Congress. I know how Washington works because I spent 10 years in Washington – working with President Obama, the first Black woman Attorney General Loretta Lynch, Attorney General Merrick Garland, Senator Sherrod Brown and the Biden-Harris team – taking the values of service instilled in me by my parents and my education from the University of Alabama and University of Alabama School of Law to make an impact in the lives of others. Now, I'm taking the relationships I've built in Washington and the experiences I've been blessed with to go to Washington and fight for the issues that matter most to us: Healthcare, Education, Jobs and Opportunity, and Stronger, Safer Communities.

#### **How do you plan to address disparities in educational opportunities and resources among different communities within our district?**

Unfortunately, Alabama's disparities in educational opportunities and resources have become far too common and ignored. Rural communities face challenges in accessing capital to grow businesses and improve schools so that they can compete with urban communities, and urban communities struggle to receive the resources they need to pay workers a living wage and combat issues like gun violence. Beyond that, educational disparities continue to move our District and state backwards. Our teachers do not receive paid parental leave when they decide to have children of their own, despite caring for everyone else's children each day. Children of color continue to be disproportionately impacted by educational disparities, only 28% of kids in Alabama are reading proficiently, just 1 in every 5 kids in our state are proficient in math, and a majority of our children are attending schools that lack the modernized technology and infrastructure needed to be successful in the classroom.

In Congress, I plan to address disparities in educational opportunities and resources with a comprehensive approach – focusing on the diverse needs of every community throughout the District, from Mobile to Montgomery and every rural and urban county in between. That approach looks like supporting tax credits and equitable access to capital to support small businesses in struggling communities and leveraging public-private partnerships to bring more businesses and job opportunities to the places in D2 that need them most. In education, that approach looks like advocating for increased teacher pay on the federal level so that Alabama

can recruit and retain the very best educators for our students. Additionally, I'll fight to expand resources in schools to combat disparities in opportunity – resources like mental health experts and modernized technology so that our kids have the tools they need to compete in an increasingly modernized world.

In order for each of us in District 2 to move forward together, we can't continue looking at government as "one size fits all". We've seen that approach, and it's exactly why disparities exist. In Washington, I'll advocate for the right resources to go to the right places so that no community or family continues to be left behind.

**Given the rising cost of housing in our area, what measures will you support to ensure affordable housing options for all residents, including low-income families and individuals?**

Working in Washington, I had the opportunity to watch government work for people, especially in housing. While housing costs continue to rise in our District, I know first-hand of the programs and funding opportunities that exist to support residents – particularly low-income families and individuals – with finding affordable housing.

In Congress, I'll work across the aisle to advance measures that combat predatory home lending and increase tax incentives for developing affordable housing. Additionally, I'll work beyond Congress and with agencies like the Department of Housing and Urban Development to advocate for more federal funding and grants to be funneled into our District so that we can develop opportunity neighborhoods and developments where people want to live.

**With budget constraints, how will you prioritize funding for social services, such as mental health programs, addiction treatment, and support for vulnerable populations?**

Budget constraints have unfortunately shown us what is a priority in Congress and what is not. To me, social services like mental health programs and support for vulnerable individuals must be a priority. That's why, in Congress, I'll build on the legacy of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to allocate funding that supports the expansion of healthcare networks and ensures every person in every community across D2 – no matter their income level or zip code – can receive quality, affordable care on time, every time. I'll also advocate for increased federal funding and community partnerships so that we can increase access to mental health and treatment programs and address disparate healthcare and life outcomes for vulnerable populations.

**What steps do you think government should take to address police brutality against communities of color?**

I served in the U.S. Department of Justice in the aftermath of Ferguson and saw just how detrimental gun violence and police brutality could be to a community, a state, and people of color specifically.

I believe wholeheartedly that government should take strategic steps to address police brutality against communities of color, beginning with more sensible gun laws and resources that support improved police and community relations so that safety is enhanced and communities are safely policed. In Congress, I'll work to strengthen and propose legislation that protects individuals in police interactions and expands training for law enforcement to be better equipped with tools to police diverse communities.

**Do you support an individual's right to reproductive rights?**

Yes. Plain and simple. I trust people to make their own decisions for themselves and their families. The federal government got it right in Roe v. Wade, but we took a sharp turn in the wrong direction when it was overturned. Now, women and families in Alabama and states across the country continue to have their rights and access to safe, nondiscriminatory healthcare violated. Further, our medical professionals and providers now fear retaliation and criminalization for performing life-saving medical procedures.

No one should feel as though they're fighting an uphill battle when deciding what they know is best for themselves and, in Congress, I'll work for an Alabama where women have equal rights, have access to reproductive health care, and have the ability to make decisions for themselves, their families, and their futures.

**Will you make it a priority to get the John Lewis Voting Rights Act passage?**

Yes. We've seen what happens when our right to vote is violated and, despite the passage of the Voting Rights Act, people of color and low-income individuals continue to have their right to vote challenged and hindered. When working as an Advisor and Counsel to then Attorney General Lynch and Attorney General Merrick Garland, I was proud to be a part of efforts that protected and expanded voting rights. In Congress, I will work with colleagues to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and continue fighting to ensure every person in D2 – a District that was the outcome of years-long advocacy for fair voting – can have their voice heard at the ballot box.