

# Palm Beach County DSA

## Congressional Candidate Questionnaire

Palm Beach County DSA asks candidates seeking our endorsement to complete this questionnaire. In the interest of transparency, all answers will be published. Submit to: [info@palmbeachdsa.org](mailto:info@palmbeachdsa.org)

### General Information

**Name and Office Sought:**

Sheila Cherfilus McCormick, U.S. House of Representatives, Florida District 20.

**Campaign Contact (Email, website & social media):**

[info@sheilaforcongress.com](mailto:info@sheilaforcongress.com)

Sheilaforcongress.com

Instagram: @sheilaforcongress

Twitter: @sheila4congress

Facebook: [facebook.com/sheilaforcongress](https://facebook.com/sheilaforcongress)

**Election type & date:**

Primary election. August 18<sup>th</sup> 2020.

**List your relevant leadership experience:**

CEO: Trinity Healthcare Services, 2010-present.

Director of Leadership: Haitian American Chamber of Commerce

Healthcare advocate lobbying Congress for Medicare for All since 2010.

## Priorities and Principles

### **Why are you running for office?**

I am running for Congress because I understand the needs of my community and have experienced their struggles. I was a single parent for 12 years raising a daughter with a learning disability. The developmental support she needed was not available. This medical debt coupled with my student loan debt made me feel like I was being cemented into poverty. I suffered in silence for years, while I watched my daughter's self-esteem plummet. This is the moment when I turned from a voter into an advocate. I have been advocating on the National level for Healthcare reform for over ten years. I have witnessed families become increasingly devastated by the lack of affordable and accessible healthcare. I am here to say enough!

I cannot sit by and let consistent Congressional inaction from our representatives continue to devastate this district. Our country is at a turning point. We are in the middle of a fundamental shift in which our commitments to freedom and equality are being tested. It is our responsibility to fight for an equitable government and society for all. It is our responsibility to ensure all people have access to health and human rights, and it is time for us to demand that Economic development for our community is prioritized.

### **What are your top 6 priority pieces of legislation if elected?**

If elected I will support legislation to ensure Medicare for All, mandatory \$15 an hour minimum wage, the Public Housing Emergency Response Act, the Green New Deal, legislation to establish Election Day as a federal holiday, and The College For All Act.

### **Why should people vote for you?**

Our country is at a pivotal moment when we are being forced to decide if we really believe in equality and justice. Congressional inaction from our current representative is continuing to devastate District 20. Our healthcare, economic, social justice, and education needs are being ignored while the interests of corporations and powerful lobbyists are being protected. It's imperative that this district elects a Democrat with fresh ideas who can lead from the frontlines and can go the distance. And I am ready on day one to be the change agent the district needs. I endured numerous hardships throughout her life and have overcome. This combination has

made me relentless, especially when it comes to fighting to ensure that everyone has a fair shot to succeed without discrimination, intimidation or retaliation. I am beyond ready to do the work that's required to transform the future of Broward and Palm Beach County.

## Open-ended Questions

These are some of our most important priorities in regard to policy. Please be thorough with your answers.

**Do you support Medicare-For-All, that is a government run single-payer health insurance provider that prohibits cost-sharing (e.g., deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments) and other charges for covered services, is free at the point of service, with automatic enrollment for all residents of the United States?**

I support a universal healthcare system and Medicare for All, that provides basic care including disease prevention, primary care, acute long-term care, mental health care, and health education. Access to quality healthcare is a human right, and now more than ever, our healthcare system desperately needs reforming. Over 30 million Americans are facing not only unemployment, but losing health coverage. If you lose your job, you shouldn't lose your healthcare too. And if you get sick, you shouldn't be put under a mountain of debt. Medicare for All guarantees healthcare to everyone, curbs costs, and improves long-term health.

**What is your plan to deal with climate change?**

I support The Green New Deal, a 10-year plan to mobilize every aspect of American Society toward 100% clean and renewable energy. I also support investing in infrastructure and programs to protect cities that sit on coastlines. I also support a definitive ban on fracking can release toxins and harmful gasses into our drinking water, and destroy our ecosystem. I have committed to refusing corporate donations from Big Sugar and the fossil fuel industry.

**Would you refuse donations from any special interest group? Who and why?**

There has been an increasing concern amongst the American people that members of Congress prioritize their own interests and serve their campaign donors over their constituents. In order to increase trust amongst my constituents and to prioritize their needs, I have refused

corporate donations. My campaign is grassroots funding and I am not beholden to the interests of industries such as big agriculture, big pharma, and fossil fuel companies. My platform is about putting the power of our democracy back in the hands of the people and it is impossible to represent the people when your legislative action is tied to corporate donations.

**Do you consider housing a human right? What policies and solutions do you support to guarantee that right? Would you expand public housing? How do you plan to handle the national housing shortage?**

Housing is an essential human right. Homelessness is one of the most significant issues in the South Florida area. In an effort to combat this, I support the acceleration of the permitting process, and include affordable housing as part of any federal infrastructure. I support incentivizing rent-to-own options in public and private housing, alternative financial structures, and technology innovations in modular housing. And I intend to ensure that we are providing shelter and other assistance to help reduce levels of homelessness across the country. I support stopping unjust convictions by guaranteeing legal counsel during eviction proceedings in order to level the playing field against well-funded landlords. I support the expansion of public housing to ensure every American has a safe place to live. I support incentivizing rent to own options in public and private housing, alternative financial structures, and technology innovations in modular housing.

**What will you, as both a candidate and an elected official, do to strengthen unions and unionization efforts?**

I support the right of employees to organize and collectively bargain via unions anywhere in the contiguous US or its territories and support ending the “right-to-work” status. Strong unions built the American middle class. Unions pioneered the 40-hour work week, paid leave, health care protections, a voice in your workplace. These policies were enacted because of workers who organized unions and fought for worker protections. Because of organizing and collective bargaining, there used to be a basic bargain between workers and their employers in this country that when you work hard, you share in the prosperity your work created.

**What will you do to curb labor Violations (e.g., wage theft, gig-economy loopholes, etc.) and protect workers in general?**

I support a fair, living wage (no less than \$15/hour) for all classes of workers. Raising the minimum wage across the country would reduce poverty rates and allow workers to make ends meet without risking their physical and mental health. I support paid sick leave, overtime pay after an eight-hour workday, and guaranteed paid vacation time. It is no secret that employees in this country are overworked. Increased Economic insecurity has made it so that workers risk their physical and mental health, working long hours to make ends meet. Paid sick leave, overtime, and vacation time promotes a healthier, more productive workplace which in turns benefits employees and the economy as a whole. We must prioritize workers by supporting policies that will guarantee these benefits for all workers. I support active enforcement of the Fair Labor Standards Act and universal paid family leave.

**The COVID-19 Crisis has exposed decades-long problems with our unemployment system. What would you do to ensure unemployment applicants are able to receive their benefits quickly and efficiently? What would you do to expand unemployment eligibility and benefits?**

Throughout the course of my campaign I have assisted members of my community in applying for unemployment benefits and receiving PPP loans. The process to file for unemployment is overcomplicated and serves to decrease access for those who need it most. I support legislation to overhaul and simplify the unemployment process. I also support legislation to expand unemployment eligibility and increase benefits to make it easier for people to make ends meet while they are in between jobs.

**What can you do to save and protect the environment?**

I support legislation to ban fracking in my home state of Florida and around the country. I also support the full divestment from the fossil fuel industry. I also support Everglades restoration efforts. The protection and conservation of the Everglades is an absolute priority. We need to continue to invest in infrastructure that will allow conservation efforts to expand and push crucial projects to be done in a timely manner, to ensure we are doing everything possible to protect this fragile ecosystem.

**How will you curb police violence and racial and socioeconomic bias (e.g. racial profiling)? How will you increase police transparency and accountability?**

Like any industry that continuously engages in wrongdoing we must fight for greater regulation of police forces across the country and tie meeting said regulations with funding. I also support the reallocation of funds away from an overmilitarized and police and reinvested in the community programs such as social services. I support legislation to end harmful qualified immunity and stand-your-ground laws. I support strong Congressional oversight of particularly problematic police departments through hearings and proceedings that fully investigate the extent of racial bias in law enforcement.

**How will you address systemic racism in our legal system, and the rise of mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex?**

I support the abolishment of for-profit prisons, ending mass incarceration, and ending the war on drugs. I pledge to defend wrongfully incarcerated individuals, and advocate for a reformative system of incarceration. Other policy I will support under the realm of criminal justice reform include ending the death penalty, ending life sentences without possibility of parole, ending mandatory minimum sentences, decriminalizing activities that are byproducts of poverty and homelessness (such as sex work and drug use), ending solitary confinement, expanding Pell Grants, paying incarcerated people at least the Federal minimum wage for labor, and ending the use of cash bail. I strongly support ending the federal prohibition and lack of federal policy on marijuana and support immediately releasing and expunging the records of those who are currently imprisoned, under parole, or on probation for nonviolent drug offenses.

**Do you believe reparations for black Americans are necessary? How would you help achieve this.**

As a country, America has yet to acknowledge and rectify its long history of racism. The effects of slavery are still present around the country today through generational trauma and poverty. In order to promote the upward mobility of slave descendants I support reparations to those whose ancestors were slaves. I will fight for this issue in Congress and work with my colleagues to come up with the resources to achieve it. This country has no shortage of available wealth and funds. If we use them to uplift our most marginalized citizens we can truly fulfill our promise of liberty and justice for all.

**Do you consider quality education as a human right? How would you work to? guarantee that right to everybody?**

Quality education is undoubtably a human right. I support free higher education and trade schools to all who wish to pursue them. Rising tuition costs have made college and trade school inaccessible for millions and forced millions of others to take on significant student loan debt. That is why I will work to make our public college system affordable once again. We need to prioritize funding HBCUs, and all public University systems. I also support student loan forgiveness programs so that young adults do not have to force themselves into mountains of debt to obtain an education.

**Explain your positions on public education and charter schools. Should bilingual curriculum and teaching be adopted in schools?**

I support increased funding and prioritization of public education systems, particularly in school districts that are consistently ignored by state funding. I also believe that a bilingual curriculum should be adopted in schools because all children have the right to learn in an environment they feel most comfortable. Further, studies have shown that learning two languages can improve brain function and prevent degenerative neurological diseases.

**Who would support for Speaker/Minority Leader of the House?**

I believe that Speaker Pelosi has done a fine job as the leader of our party and Speaker of the House but I also maintain that it is time for new leadership in the Democratic party to ensure a vision that benefits all people, not just the interests of specific Democratic elite.

**U.S. economic sanctions against the people of Venezuela and Iran discourage banks and other financial entities from doing business with these countries, depriving them of vital supplies and infrastructure and causing tens of thousands of deaths. Do you support ending the economic sanctions against Iran and Venezuela?**

I support ending the strict economic sanctions against Iran and Venezuela which are destabilizing their economies and harming the citizens we are trying to protect. Instead I believe that strong and smart diplomacy should be maintained between the governments of both nations to prevent further hostility against the U.S.

**What is your position on defense spending and the military?**

American foreign policy is overmilitarized and overfunded. I support reducing defense spending and investing in other sectors of our society including the Green New Deal, affordable housing,

and Medicare for all. Reducing the Pentagon budget by a fraction will provide the U.S. with the ability to provide for all of its people and limit senseless violence abroad.

**Would you oppose any military deployment that is not specifically authorized by Congress?**

No president should wage war without congressional approval. I will support and protect our service men and women, commit to not engaging in unnecessary conflicts, and will never support putting our soldiers in unnecessary danger.

**Do you support ending the current Authorizations for Use of Military Force that were originally passed in 2001 and 2002 to give the President authorization to use force against those believed responsible for the September 11th attacks, and have been abused by Presidents for decades to conduct unrelated war operations all over the world?**

The conflict in the Middle East has gone on for far too long. It has destabilized the region and resulted in thousands of deaths of our servicemen and women and even more deaths for civilians in the region. The War on Terror has allowed Presidents in all administrations since it began to abuse their power and justify unconstitutional and even illegal action. I commit to ending the War in Afghanistan, removing U.S. troops from the region, and working with local civil society and our diplomats to sustainably rebuild.

**What else will you do to reassert Congressional authority over war powers which are provided solely to Congress under the U.S Constitution?**

I support strong Congressional oversight of the executive branch to ensure that it does not operate in secrecy when it comes to foreign policy, while simultaneously protecting our national security. I will use my power in Congress to hold members of the executive branch accountable and ensuring a strong Congressional representation in foreign policy matters.

**Please describe, generally, your views on what US foreign policy should be.**

America's foreign policy is currently overmilitarized, and we must work to regain full range of our power. The current administration has hurt our diplomatic corps, missions, and focused on military intervention over diplomatic discussions. America must regain its strong international diplomatic reputation. This is why I commit to working for our diplomats, and pledge to seek and support diplomatic solutions over military action. Without greater military restraint and far-reaching institutional reform, U.S. policymakers will have an increasingly hard time persuading Americans to support the global leadership role essential to protecting the security and

economy of the United States. Human rights should be increasingly integrated into the larger U.S. foreign policy strategy by engaging with civil society, investing in humanitarian programs, and working with allies to promote human rights in regions where they are most at risk. As the predominant global democratic power, the U.S. has a responsibility to promote foreign policy consistent with its international human rights obligations.

## Multiple Choice Questions (Yes/No/Other)

If other, please elaborate.

Do you believe health care is a human right?

Yes       No

Other:

Will you introduce or co-sponsor legislation that ends qualified immunity for law enforcement?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support ending the 1033 program, which transfers excess military equipment to civilian law enforcement?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support decriminalization of all drug related offenses?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support commuting sentences and expungement of records of all those currently serving sentences for drug-related offenses?

Yes       No

Other:

Would you vote against an NDAA bill that increases military spending?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support an increased top marginal income tax rate and wealth tax on the ultra-wealthy?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support the unhindered right to an abortion?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support extended paid vacation time, sick time, family leave and childcare time off for all workers?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support the establishment of public banks and postal banking?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support fossil fuel divestment?

Yes       No

Other:

Should contract/gig workers receive minimum wage?

Yes       No

Other:

Should contract/gig workers receive labor protections?

Yes       No

Other:

Would you encourage the development of worker-owned cooperatives?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support public universal pre-K?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support tuition free colleges and universities?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support funding free high-speed internet for low-income communities?

Yes       No

Should undocumented residents have the same rights and access to...

Public services?

Yes       No

Other:

Worker protections?

Yes       No

Other:

Right to live in this country.

Yes       No

Other:

Should law enforcement cooperate with ICE?

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support BLM and the Movement for Black Lives' platform?

<https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/>

Yes       No

Other:

Do you support restored voting rights for felons, both freed and incarcerated?

Yes       No

Other:

Are you for the death penalty?

Yes       No

Other:

Would you expand unemployment eligibility and benefits?

Yes       No

Other: