

# DAN HELMER

## DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR HOUSE DISTRICT 40

### **Tell us briefly why you believe that your candidacy would be compelling particularly to NAKASEC Action Fund members:**

The support of the Korean American and broader Asian American community is incredibly important to me, especially having one of the largest Asian American communities across the Commonwealth. We face a tough re-election campaign, especially against a Korean American Republican challenger, and the support of NAKASEC Action Fund members will be especially important in helping our campaign with the Korean American and Asian American community across the 40th. If re-election, I am committed to working with NAKASEC Action fund members and continue to promote and champion policies that lift up the Korean American and Asian American communities across the 40th and throughout the Commonwealth.

#### **1. Economic Justice**

While Virginia has a graduated personal income tax structure, the top rate starts at \$17,000. In other words, someone who earns \$17,001 pays the same effective tax rate as someone who earns \$250K. Those at the top received huge federal tax cuts under the Trump administration, at the same time that hundreds of thousands of Virginians lost their jobs and livelihoods. Recovering from COVID-19 will require additional funding. According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Virginia has the 33rd most unfair state and local tax system in the country, meaning that lower-income households pay a higher share of their family income in state and local taxes than the top 20%.

#### **Do you support adding income tax brackets above \$17,000?**

Yes

No

#### **Do you support a millionaire's tax?**

Yes, through taxing capital gains of "millionaires" at the same rate as a working person's wages or through a

Virginia sur-tax on the federal tax on estates over \$25 million excluding family farms and businesses.

No

#### **Comments:**

- All House Democrats got behind HJ567 and launched a long-over 2-year study of Virginia income tax regressivity
- A detailed study is essential, especially for Northern Virginia taxpayers because our extremely high cost-of-living (over 134 vs under 100) drives households into higher tax brackets even though it takes 1/3 more to cover the same basic expenses as it does elsewhere

- Because of so many business deductions, businesses make up a large portion of filers in the lowest bracket. Adding a higher tax bracket won't create greater equity between individuals and business. We need to consider if there are better ways, such as making the Virginia's standard deduction the same as the much higher federal's.
- Many Northern Virginian homeowners are hurt the most because the 2019 non-urban Republican majority refused consider making Virginia's standard deduction match the federal's. (Northern Virginians have to pay a higher combined federal and state income tax total because they aren't able to itemize items – such as high real estate taxes – if the total is more than Virginia's low standard deduction but less than the federal's.)

**2. Language Access**

Virginia is an increasingly linguistically diverse state. 20% of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) households identify as limited-English proficient (LEP). The LEP rate is higher depending on the specific ethnicity and/or language population. This issue is one that touches many people, including Black, Middle Eastern, and Central American immigrant, refugee, and indigenous communities as well. Yet multiple Virginia state agencies continue to use machine translation, such as Google Translate, solely without appropriate human review which often results in serious inaccuracies and offer phone menu options only for English and Spanish speakers. With the creation of the Office of New Americans, it is time that the state expand meaningful language access beyond English and Spanish.

**Do you support the following:**

**Increasing state funding for interpretation and translation services for programs funded and/or administered by the state, including hiring more bilingual/multilingual staff?**

Yes       No

**Hiring a state-level language access director?**

Yes       No

**Developing a coordinated and comprehensive plan that incorporates best practices, including the provision of real-time oral interpretation in any requested language, requiring ongoing staff training on policies and protocols, and ensuring accurate data analysis and collection?**

Yes       No

**Comments:**

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**3. Data Disaggregation**

The Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) community is extremely diverse, composed of more than 50 ethnic groups with varying immigration histories, languages, and socioeconomic statuses. However, the "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander" groupings present a homogenous picture and obscures socioeconomic, social, physical, mental health, and civic participation disparities between ethnic groups,

at substantial risk of those communities being underserved. In order to reveal the true state of AANHPI communities, disaggregated data should be collected on AANHPI ethnic groups, analyzed, and made publicly available.

**Do you support data disaggregation for the AANHPI communities, starting with the Department of Health and Department of Education?**

Yes

No

**How would you implement it? Comments:**

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#### **4. Healthcare**

Undocumented residents typically seek care at emergency rooms, or through a patchwork of resources and organizations making exceptions to find creative solutions for patients, or not at all. All people should have access to health care services and should not suffer financial hardship when obtaining these services. In Virginia, 25% of undocumented immigrants come from Asian countries.

**Do you support the expansion of healthcare for all undocumented residents across all age groups?**

Yes

No

**Comments:**

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#### **5. Public Education**

The debate surrounding admissions reform to governor's schools has highlighted the disparities faced by Black and Latinx students, and lower-income students, including Asian Americans. Reforming admission policy is a step in the right direction for education equity. However, the vast majority of students do not attend publicly funded Governor's schools. In order to better support low-income students and students of color, it is crucial to ensure funding is distributed to schools that need the resources the most. Public education is not a brand, like Governor's schools have become. Adequate funding for the public K-12 public education system is important in closing gaps in remote learning, providing students with mental, physical, and academic support, and creating a safe school environment for educators and students should schools reopen. Additionally, distribution of resources should prioritize the schools and students who need them most, and provide additional assistance to students who need specialized services and were at particular risk while schools were shut down, including students experiencing

homelessness, students in foster care, English language learners, students with disabilities, Indigenous students, and students residing in juvenile justice facilities.

**Do you support the following:**

**100% lottery admissions to Governor's school to increase access for Black, Latinx, and low-income students (including Asian Americans)**

Yes       No

**Race and class conscious admission policies to increase access for Black, Latinx, and low-income students (including Asian Americans)**

Yes       No

**Gradual closing of Governor's schools and re-distribution of those resources to the most high-need high schools in each region**

Yes       No

**Continuing efforts to make curriculum and school environments more inclusive and reflective of Virginia's history and current demographics**

Yes       No

**Comments:**

I support increased access to governor's schools and increasing the quality of education at all schools. I support increasing opportunities in all schools, but don't believe that support exists today within our community for ending governor's schools. Nor do I necessary see increased focus on raising the quality of education for all students while continuing to maintain access to centers of excellence as necessarily opposing. I will continue to fight to increase equitable access to quality education, including at governor's schools.

## **6. Marriage Equality**

The Supreme Court has ruled that the U.S. Constitution guarantees same-sex couples the right to marry, but Virginia's constitution still defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Replacing the ban on marriage equality with an affirmation of rights will better reflect Virginia's values and would reaffirm that all Virginians are entitled to equality in every aspect of their lives and in their state's laws.

**Do you support amending Virginia's constitution to affirm marriage equality for all adults, regardless of their gender identity?**

Yes

No

**Comments:**

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### 7. **Paid Sick and Paid Family Leave**

In Virginia, unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 55 percent of working people, with evidence showing that many eligible employees do not take leave when they need it because they cannot afford it. As the COVID-19 pandemic made clear, the lack of paid sick and paid family leave has had devastating costs to Virginians and their families, public health and the economy.

Starting July 1, 2021, Virginia will mandate paid sick leave for home health workers, but it is crucial to extend paid sick leave and paid family medical leave to all employees in Virginia so no Virginian needs to pick between having a job and taking care of their family. The long-term consequences of the pandemic have emphasized the importance of ensuring a robust, equitable recovery for Virginians' health, caregiving needs and economic stability.

**Do you support expanding paid sick leave and paid family medical leave to all employees in Virginia?**

Yes

No

**Comments:**

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### 8. **Reproductive Rights**

Since 2008, anti-choice politicians have introduced or passed more than 170 restrictions that limit access to abortion and reproductive health services in Virginia. AAPI women face various health disparities often due to immigration status, language barriers, and income level. AAPI women experience some of the highest rates of cervical cancer, and high rates of uninsurance. Additionally, there is evidence that AAPI women use hormonal birth control at lower rates and have high rates of unintended pregnancies. As a result, access to comprehensive health services is a key issue for AAPI women and the community as a whole. The Reproductive Health Equity Act (RHEA) would ensure that regardless of what happens to the federal Affordable Care Act, reproductive care will be fully covered and respected in Virginia. The RHEA would establish comprehensive coverage for the full spectrum of reproductive health services, including family planning, abortion, and postpartum care for all Virginians, regardless of gender identity, immigration status, employer, income, or type of insurance.

**Do you support the Reproductive Health Equity Act?**

Yes

No

**Comments:**

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**9. Climate Change**

There are many ways global warming as well as polluting industries and institutional policies' lax regulation of these industries disproportionately harm communities of color, from lack of access to clean drinking water to higher exposure to pollutant emissions from transportation, power generation, and other industrial and agricultural emissions. These environmental factors result in communities of color suffering greater rates of health problems. Virginia has taken steps to reduce emissions, such as passing the Clean Cars Act, but these commitments and actions still fall short of what is needed to limit the rise of global temperatures and avoid the worst effects of climate change. With global climate impacts that are already unfolding under today's warming, from devastating heat waves and more intense storms, it is becoming increasingly urgent and crucial to work toward net-zero emissions.

**Do you acknowledge that human actions are a major contributor to climate change?**

Yes

No

**Will you support measures to transition Virginia to a net-zero carbon footprint by 2045, including the transportation and building sectors?**

Yes

No

**Comments:**

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**What is one measure you would take to address environmental racism?**

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