If elected, give examples of how your priorities will support the liberation and protection of Black lives locally and across the state?

As we tackle economic recovery amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, I support policies that will create and expand equitable economic opportunities in Washington, including expansion of job creation and workforce development programs, increased access to affordable child care, improved physical and mental healthcare access, and tenant protections and housing policy that prevents evictions and homelessness. I also support measures to increase transparency and accountability in our police departments to protect Black lives and reduce over-policing in Black communities.

Do you believe racism is a public health crisis?

Yes. Racism restricts access to opportunities and exacerbates social determinants of health, creating health disparities for many people of color. The American Public Health Association calls racism a barrier to health equity, and I wholeheartedly agree. We have seen a stark example of this during the COVID-19 pandemic, which as disproportionately impacted communities of color due to underlying racism in our society.

Do you support defunding the police?

Police funding is a mostly local issue, but I fully support funding community services to reduce the reliance on our police forces for non-criminal matters, and I have previously sponsored and passed legislation to improve community-based mental health care. I also support reforms including use of force restrictions, independent investigations and a number of others. Moving forward, I also support improving accountability and transparency in policing to rebuild trust and end police brutality.

What is your position on charging officers with bodily harm-related crimes when excessive force is used? Explain your answer. They should be held to account.

I believe we need increased accountability and transparency in our police forces, up to and including charges for officers whose conduct grossly exceeds justified use of force. Our police officers have hard jobs, but they should not be above the law, and they should be held accountable when they create harm through excessive use of force. We also need independent investigations to determine if police actions are justified.

How does your racial identity shape your perspective of public policy? Explain your answer.

As a white man who grew up in Flint, Michigan and now represents some of the most racially and ethnically diverse communities in the state, I am aware of the privilege bestowed by my racial identity. Racial tension and bias were a daily part of growing up in Flint. I saw it in our schools, in the job market and in the political system. I have to admit it wasn’t as clear back
then, but I see it far more clearly today, and I see it in Washington, too. As a policymaker, I strive to use my privilege to create equitable opportunities for our state’s marginalized and vulnerable residents to advance racial and social justice goals.

Do you support the restoration of voting rights for Washingtonians who are incarcerated or have been previously incarcerated or owe fees and fines? Explain your answer.

Yes, I believe all citizens of legal age have the right to vote. Disenfranchisement as punishment is antithetical to a well-functioning democracy, and I have seen how it has been used to disempower the poor and communities of color.