



Union County Pride, Inc

Dear Candidate:

On behalf of Union County Pride, Inc, I write respectfully to request that you respond to the questions submitted below regarding your agenda for the LGBTQ+ kids and their families living in Union County. Union County Pride Inc. is the foremost organization working to promote a thriving LGBTQ community in Union County, North Carolina.

The questions and answers, if received in time, will be published verbatim at www.unioncountypride.org on **September 15**. To meet our publication deadline, your responses must be received by no later than **September 5**. If you do not respond, the publication will state *Did Not Respond*.

Please submit your responses through the online survey. As a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, we cannot support or oppose any candidate for public office. We hope that you will take this opportunity to communicate your views on how you as a political candidate will deal with policy and investments regarding LGBTQ+ kids and their families.

Sincerely,

Union County Pride, Inc

Candidate Name	Jodi McConkey
Email	jodi@jodi4ucps.com
Campaign Website	www.jodi4ucps.com
Party Affiliation:	<input type="text" value="Democrat"/>
Level of Government	<input type="text" value="School"/>
Political Position	Board of Education, District 4

What would you do for LGBTQ+ people in your political area?

I will treat them with respect and support, as all people should. We have free will, we know who we are, and we know what our hearts tell us. Nobody has the right to dictate that for us.

What would you do to for LGBTQ students?

I will treat them with respect and support, just as I will for all students. As a Board of Education member, I will respect others' beliefs and represent what's best for all UCPS stakeholders combined. I will expect no different from students and staff, with no bullying policies enforced and including protection for all students. School must be a safe place where all students come to learn and are treated as equals, no matter their sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, race, or any other class. This includes the right to extracurricular activities that enable students to gather with others that they relate to. If there are clubs allowed for religion, there shall be clubs allowed for LGBTQ+. Clubs such as these stand for unity and acceptance. We must all learn to accept others' differences, no matter our personal beliefs.

How would you vote on policies or laws regarding books in schools with LGBTQ+ characters?

I will always support age-appropriate literature in our schools. LGBTQ+ characters in books serve the same purpose as cis characters, by representing the real-life differences in all of us. They are just as important to the story as characters of different races or religions. Great books include details that are relatable to the reader, so directly disallowing LGBTQ+ characters is discriminatory and will ostracize those students who identify as such. It's important to the developing brain that children know they are accepted for who they are in society. In addition, disallowing such characters will teach our children that if someone is different than themselves, the other person and their views must be wrong. Our public schools are not, and never should be, a place for intolerance. Instead, our children learn in school how to work together and accept each others' differences as equal to their own. After all, respect goes both ways and nobody wants to be told that their personal identity is wrong.

Would you vote for a policy or law similar to the Florida Don't Say Gay Bill or NC HB 755 at the school, state, or other government level?

No, not in HB 755s current state.

Please explain your answer.

Let me start by saying that there is no more important team member for a student than their parents, and a child's education is ideal when both teachers and parents work together for the child's benefit. In the current state of NC HB 755 there are many valid points made, most of which are already rights that parents have. In my personal experience as a teacher, many parents are truly unaware of how many rights they indeed have, so a formal document listing these rights can certainly be very beneficial to have.

That said, no policy or law should ever involve discriminatory language. In §115C-76.18, "Age-appropriate instruction for grades kindergarten through third grade," stating that "instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity shall not be included in the curriculum" is both discriminatory and completely unnecessary. Not only does this put a negative spotlight on any child who may be questioning their own sexuality (whether out or in secret), sexual orientation and gender identity aren't a part of any current curriculum in the first place. Because of this, adding this type of language only creates negativity, assumptions, and rumors. In fact, the only curricula in which these topics MAY be included are mentioned in §115C-76.6, which states that parents have "the right to consent or withhold consent for participation in reproductive health and safety education programs." Therefore, parents who don't want their children learning about sexual orientation and gender identity, for any reason, already have the right to opt their children out. They do not, however, nor do our politicians, have the right to take this choice away from other parents.

How would you vote on policies or laws regarding books in schools with LGBTQ+ characters?

YES TO BOOKS WITH LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS. Why not?!?!

A book is age-appropriate when it contains words, comprehension, and subject matter that aligns with the reading level and maturity of the "average" child. An LGBTQ+ character is simply that... a character, just like any other. What makes a book inappropriate would be the situations these characters are put in throughout the storyline. For example, a book about sexual relations, between any type of couple, would certainly be seen by many as inappropriate for a first grader. However, a character being a part of the LGBTQ+ community simply gives us information about them, just the same as a character who is cis or heterosexual.

Would you vote for a city, state, or state anti-discrimination ordinance or law that covers the protected classes including sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTQ+) people?

Yes

Please explain your answer.

Of course!!!

How would you vote if Marriage or Relationship Equality becomes a state or local issue?

For

Please explain your answer.

Everyone has the right to love who they love. Nobody has the right to tell you otherwise. Period.

Please explain your current and past actions towards the LGBTQ+ community.

I have always been about equality, even as a child. It's not my place, nor anyone else's place, to tell someone else who they can and cannot love. We are all equally human and our rights should reflect as such. I attended the Charlotte Pride Festival before the pandemic, with my husband and child in the parade, and I'm proud to represent at the first Union County Pride. My support will never change!

Please tell us anything else you would like the public to know about you and the LGBTQ+ community.

I'm a mother and a teacher, and as a Board of Education member my first priority will always be that all UCPS students receive a comprehensive, fair, and welcoming educational experience. Curriculum is not everything when it comes to learning. The classroom environment is equally important and in a classroom where a student feels unsafe or uncomfortable, no amount of teaching will break through that shell. I will always advocate for a safe environment above all else!

I plan to attend the Friday, September 16 Candidate Meet-up and Art Show at East Frank's in Monroe.

Yes