




LeVon Barnes

CANDIDATE FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER

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REASON FOR RUNNING FOR OFFICE

I want to be your next County Commissioner because while things seem great in Durham the value of a persons success still lies in what zip code they reside in, what race they are, what their sexual identity is. As a proud Durham Public Schools teacher I see everything that is right and a lot of what is wrong in our county. Being a teacher has prepared me for this moment. It's the stories of families just trying to make it day by day with little to no money. My students who confide in me that they have to sleep on the floor because of the danger of getting shot while their sleeping. The families who have no access to mental health care because they don't qualify or after graduation choosing between going to college or work because of affordability. But it's also the story of perseverance, the grit that's in them to graduate and go to college to make it better for their families. This is why I'm running because we are not doing enough, we need someone in the County Commissioners office that see's things from the lens of the working family, that has a level of humanity to the bridges in place to make Durham a place for all.

TOP 3 PRIORITIES

Free Community College Tuition starting in 2021. Free tuition will be provided by increasing the Durham Tech Promise from \$1,000 to up to \$4,000 per year. This increase will provide students with an opportunity to break the cycle of generational poverty by eliminating a major barrier for students who cannot afford to further their education and account for expenses such as textbooks and other related expenses that can be funded as an education expense. Ultimately, this change will make our local workforce more attractive to employers coming into the county and provide additional access to higher education for students who are completing or recently completed high school. As I stated in the previous question, we are already critically behind in closing the wealth gap and th only way this can be accomplished is through education. By 2020, 67% of the jobs coming into the state are going to require a post secondary certificate or degree.

Accountability & Increased Funding in our Social and Human Services Department with a specific focus on mental health and chemical dependency. Building partnerships with community partners like Blue Cross Blue Shield, STARR program, and other state agencies is vital. By creating a pipeline with NCCU Social Work Department to increase the number of social and mental health case workers, it will lessen the caseload of current employees and build a positive experience for citizens who are in crisis. In this department, the emphasis on being effective, efficient and equitable have to be a priority.

Focus on Public Safety. This focus will include a Re-Entry Wing within our jail in partnership with our Sheriff's office. In addition, public and private partners including the Criminal Justice Resource Center (CJRC) will provide services while in jail. Ultimately, focus will work to end the high levels of recidivism (which is the tendency for a convicted criminal to reoffend) that we see in Durham County. Further according to a report done by the Indy over 1,000 residents re-entered the Durham County Jail ten or more times since 2011 with an average length of stay nine days at \$125.00 per day. The cost is more than \$1,100 per stay. We have to do better and we will.