

Immigration Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire

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Name Michael Hardy

Date 7/29/2021

E-mail Address m.willhardy@gmail.com Phone Number 216-374-0323

Municipality Cleveland

Office/Office Seeking Cleveland City Council – Ward 11

If different specify here _____

Home Address 12908 Guardian Blvd. City Cleveland State OH Zip 44135

Work Address 6393 Oak Tree Blvd. South City Independence State OH Zip 44131

Party Affiliation Democrat Website www.hardyforcle.com

Background Information

Are you aware that neighbors across our community have businesses being started by people who were not born here? They take risk, they pool resources, they provide wonderful things like restaurants as well as important services. What would you do to increase immigrant entrepreneurship?

The city of Cleveland has a rich history of immigration dating back over 130 years. Over this period immigrants and their descendants helping to transform Cleveland into what it is today and shaping into the future. Immigration continues to play an important role in Cleveland and our surrounding communities. These immigrants are vibrant and diverse coming from every continent and bringing with them unique cultures and experiences. Not only this, but they work in important fields, open businesses, and create jobs. They weren't born here but Cleveland becomes their home to. As an individual running for or holding an elected office, it is key to understanding the international community that calls Cleveland home. At Global Cleveland we work to make Cleveland a place that is open and welcoming to all. We hope that you found the following statements informative and the questions thought-provoking. Most of all we hope that you will join us in this mission to continue making Cleveland a better, greater city and home for all its residents.

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Personal Experience with the International Community

What is your experience serving and interacting with the international community in your own community and NEO at large? How has this shaped your understanding of your community and your role as a leader?

I have had the fortune of spending several years of my life teaching in Asia. This has provided me with an international perspective of governing and of community.

I grew up in a Ward with a nice mix of students whose parents were born overseas. My father was an interpreter during his military service and served many years overseas. He encouraged everyone in the house to learn a foreign language and he practiced what he preached by speaking Korean to the entire family when we were growing up. Also, we had different ethnic foods growing up. My parents' colleagues would provide them with delicious food gifts.

During my undergraduate years, I studied Spanish as a minor, interacted with Spanish-speaking students (as well as other international students), and joined Los Latinos Unidos the last months of my senior year. Also, I participated in a study group that was made up of mostly foreign students. My last undergraduate term was spent in Spain where I lived with a family and became borderline fluent in Spanish.

In the mid-90s, I moved overseas (South Korea and Taiwan) and lived for nine years, working as teacher, teacher-trainer, and director. Since returning to the USA, I have frequented Chinatown, as well as other international markets, restaurants, and shops.

Besides frequenting our area's international establishments, most of my involvement with the international community occurs in classroom settings and school buildings, conversing with students, parents, and building staff. When I talk to people from the Middle East, we discuss hummus, falafel, tabouli, and other favorites from the region. When I communicate with people from different countries in Asia, we might discuss tom yam soup (from Thailand), aloo gobi (from India), bibimbap (from South Korea). Or, the discussion might turn to birthplaces and favorite cities like Hong Kong (China), Bangkok (Thailand), Vientiane (Laos), Saigon (Vietnam), Nairobi (Nigeria), and Madrid (Spain). I could go on and on. The important thing is I'm able to make a connection with people from different parts of the world. This enables me to put people at ease regardless of their cultural and religious perspectives. In the end, we are all relaxed despite any differences.

My overseas' experience, working as a foreigner in a setting with the countries' nationals (South Korea & Taiwan), has forever impacted my way of thinking and leading when interacting with people born and raised in other lands. I can interact easily in a way that makes them feel very comfortable. I know what to say and how to say it.

The international community is oftentimes misunderstood. Since I've been misunderstood at times, both here as a minority and abroad as a foreigner myself, I'm able to literally put myself in their shoes, communicate, lead, or positively influence. I understand the importance of feeling comfortable and having real cultural connections. I feel I'm a better person because of this.

Transform Cleveland into an International Hub of Innovation

Annually, hundreds of international students graduate from Case Western, TRI-C, and CSU with in demand skills who are not being retained in the area to contribute to population and economic growth. Can you share what policies you will support to address this?

My overseas' experience showed me that people work in a variety of ways. Effectiveness is usually the common goal but sometimes we take different routes.

I think there must be more events and information on international workers in the community. Although hiring practices may be fine, it must be recognized that the international workers must relate to fellow workers as they do their jobs. In addition, the company must make their workplace welcoming to the international workers.

Including more international cultures within diversity training would be very helpful. The city can lead on making the treatment of international workers and inclusiveness a priority and/or a category when making top-/best-company lists. Local publications already do this. Maybe the stories can be highlighted more. It is crucial that newcomers become a part of the community and are comfortable in the city.

Locally, we must reimagine and rethink our economic policies and attract companies to the area who are looking for applicants with the in-demand skills the international students have. Also, we must reimagine and rethink our approach to education so more students, particularly younger students, have these in-demand skills and can be set up in mentorship programs where the international workers mentor area kids. This would be a win-win-win situation for both international workers, students, and businesses of all ages.

Cleveland has sister cities all around the world such as Ibadan, Nigeria; Lima, Peru; Gdansk, Poland; and Bangalore, India. What is your game plan for making Cleveland a more open and international-facing city to strengthen and grow these relationships?

First, we must research and thoroughly analyze what has taken place in other cities. Second, we must take what could work here on a local level and implement it. Before starting the implementation process, short- and long-term goals need to be set.

We have a development policy that attempts to integrate the sister cities program into the life of Cleveland. The city must develop an image of being a culturally diverse international city. I do have an Economic Development idea to make this work in my Ward that I am not going to reveal at this time.

Our population loss from 2010-2018 would have been even worse if not for the 37,000 immigrants who moved into Cuyahoga County during that time. These new residents have offset the population loss by 45%. How can we attract more immigrants to move here to continue this important trend?

There must be an education process on both sides of the water, here and overseas. Having more cultural information placed into our school curriculum would prepare us domestically. Similar cultural classes should be taught overseas to prepare the immigrants for life in the USA. This is already taking place in many study-abroad programs, both here and overseas (for people coming to the USA). The classes for new arrivals could focus on areas of difficult adjustment and culture shock.

Making immigrants feel welcome is the key. However, immigrants also must be willing to get to know their new neighbors. What the city can do is support organizations like yours that can develop programs to deal with those issues. I believe there are a lot of people with great ideas. These ideas could be implemented and very effective.

On average, 500-700 refugees are resettled to Cleveland every year, from countries such as Nepal, Afghanistan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia. The Biden-Harris administration announced they will increase refugee admissions to 125,000 a year nationally, up from 15,000 this year. This means Cleveland's three refugee resettlement agencies will receive 3-4x as many families as they did this past year. How do you plan to open Cleveland for these new residents and provide refugees with the opportunity to contribute to Cleveland?

We need to have a committee that will meet and assess our readiness at the local level. We will have to increase staffing, but also must increase neighborhood-engagement activities. Some of this works best at the neighborhood level but the City must utilize its resources to make sure the neighborhoods' community development organizations have what they need. I will work in my Ward to make it more welcoming. That benefits both the immigrants and the longtime residents.

[Set the Table for Internationalization and Economic Growth](#) ← **What is this???**

There are over 1000 immigrant entrepreneurs in Cleveland, are 38% more likely to be entrepreneurs than U.S. born residents. What portion of the economic development office in the City of Cleveland would be devoted to supporting immigrant entrepreneurs under your leadership?

I would research what other cities are doing and see what can be brought here. Immigrant entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs should be able to access information easily via the City's website. So far, I haven't seen this on the City's economic-development website. There should be a visible online tab or link for immigrant entrepreneurs to click on. Plus, there should be a specific point person or people with staff that deal specifically with immigrant entrepreneurs.

Active engagement with immigrant communities should allow an organic and natural evolution for these entrepreneurs. We must determine if there are barriers that prevent the community from partaking in the services now provided. We know for example in some situations there are language barriers that can be addressed. It is also important that the City work with all small businesses by increasing general engagement and inviting or encouraging groups from various communities to work amongst themselves in mentorship-like programs. Organizations like yours could advise local Community Development Corporations on how they can better serve this community.

As evidenced by this information, immigrants are a key part of building a successful and strong regional economy. With a spending power of over \$3B, how will you support integrating this powerful demographic into a regional growth plan?

In addition to the mentorship programs identified in a previous question, I believe that engagement is key. Historically, there have been cultural activities that help integrate different groups in the community. Increasing those types of activities help the immigrant populations get to know each other and it encourages the integration into the community. We should actively seek immigrants with the skills the region needs, as identified by Workforce Development. This should be done with the goal of making sure the environment is welcoming and comfortable for them to want to be here long term. However, this must be done while working with your local communities and their institutions.

There are too many false rumors and narratives about how the government favors immigrants. We should not be in the business of elevating those false narratives. We must make sure the environment is welcoming and comfortable for immigrants. This would make them want to be here long term.

Embrace and Cultivate a Culture of Inclusion and Shared Prosperity

The important and paramount 'diversity, equity and inclusion' conversation happening right now often does not include members of the international community living in Cleveland. Would you support policies in the private and public sectors that take into consideration the voices of this diverse and important constituency? Would you vote for and promote policies in government to achieve these goals?

Yes. Remember that none of this can be successful without our residents buying into these policies. If we do not combat the false narratives and eliminate the idea that immigrants are favored by the government we will run into problems. We have to make sure the public is informed and educated about immigrants. We can achieve this via information campaigns, workshops, and modifying our educational curriculum so that our kids learn about this at a very young age and become informed adults.

Midwest cities leading the way in city wide growth and development through the inclusion of immigrant communities, such as Detroit and Pittsburgh have created taskforces or commissions to analyze the effects of immigration on their city, examine the challenges facing immigrants and immigrant communities, and promote immigrant success and build strong relationships between native-born and immigrant communities. Would you support the creation of such a taskforce or commission in Cleveland made up of city representatives, immigrant community leaders, business leaders, and members of Cleveland's non-profit community?

I would support that, and I would seek to experiment to see if we can do something on a neighborhood basis that can further the goals alluded to in the question. Historically, the building of strong neighborhood ties has been important to immigrant communities.

It would be very helpful to thoroughly research and analyze what they did in Detroit and Pittsburgh and implement the measures here. By not having to recreate the wheel, we could get a lot accomplished in a timelier fashion and have more of an immediate impact in a shorter amount of time. This could accelerate our progress both city-wide and regionally (Northeast Ohio).

Would you support adding members and staff to the Community Relations Board that represent the changing immigrant population in Cleveland such as an African Immigrant Community Liaison and Arab Immigrant Community Liaison?

I certainly support that. But those involved must be able to relate to the various communities. This is where education, information sharing sessions, and festivals are important. It is important for our various Wards and neighborhoods to understand the value of the immigrant community. This must be a two-way street and that can only be accomplished if there is a vision that starts with the desire in neighborhoods.

Were you aware that in 2017 Cleveland created a [Language Access Plan](#) that outlines how to engage with ESL (English as a Second Language) and ELL (English as a Learning Language)? How would you ensure implementation of this plan, as such services are mandated by [Title VI](#) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act?

I would research and see what's being done in other cities and states. Also, I would seek out and build, and hopefully lead strong alliances at City Hall and other places that are dedicated to making sure our City has implemented the Language Access Plan. From a leadership perspective, buy-in, benchmarks, and deadlines are key to bringing the plan to fruition in a reasonable timeframe.

Educators must be encouraged not only to implement the plan, but to come up with creative ways to engage such students in activities where they can comfortably use

their new language skills. Department heads and administrators would play a key role.

Having worked overseas in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) field and with current interaction with people (students, teachers, families) in the ESL and ELL arenas, I am familiar with engaging foreign-language learners. I would use my background and experience in the field to help assist or even lead on the issue.

Would you support expanded language training in public schools for English speaking students as well as contextualized ESL support for English language learners at all levels of education and workforce development?

Yes. I am particularly interested in making sure any workforce development plan includes language-skills development as part of its program. Also, we need to make sure literacy (both traditional and digital) is strongly emphasized in our education system as well as workforce development.

Do you support more immigrants, refugees, and international students moving to Cleveland/Cuyahoga County? If no, why not? If yes, how?

Yes, I would the city to be as diverse and thriving as it can be. We need to create more cultural programs and make cultural education part of our educational curriculum. This will make immigrants more comfortable and make current residents more comfortable with the immigrants.

Would you like to receive information and data on immigrants and refugee populations and communities in Greater Cleveland? **YES** NO

Would you be interested in receiving more information from Global Cleveland and our partners? **YES**
NO

Thank you for participating in this survey. We hope you have found this informative and useful as a guide to local policy advancement.