

POLICY QUESTIONS

CAMPBELL VISITS UTEC



COURTESY OF THE ANDREA CAMPBELL CAMPAIGN

Attorney general candidate Andrea Campbell, right, listens to UTEC Senior Director of Strategy Sako Long discuss how the program conducts street outreach and violence intervention on Monday. Campbell visited UTEC — a Lowell-based organization — to hear from justice-involved young adults and answer their policy questions.

Attorney general candidate wants young leaders ‘at the table’ to make a difference

By Cameron Morsberger
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LOWELL » Police accountability, gun violence, housing and more were all on the table at UTEC Monday afternoon, when attorney general candidate Andrea Campbell met with justice-involved youth to discuss how she can best serve them if elected.

Campbell toured the Lowell facility — complete with a performance stage, outdoor event space, dance studio and more

— with the young adults and participated in an introductory roundtable with youth organizers and members of UTEC’s street violence prevention program, before sitting for an interview on key policy topics.

As the group sat down, the young leaders started with a “mood check,” inviting its members and Campbell to share how they’re feeling and some of the things they love the most. Campbell described herself as “a 10” out of 10, to a

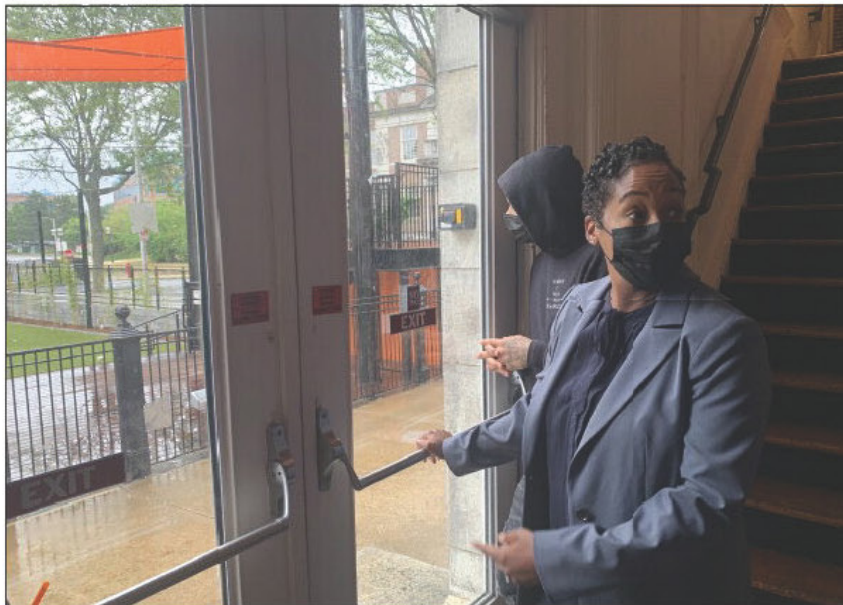
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CAMERON MORSBERGER / LOWELL SUN

Attorney general candidate Andrea Campbell, center, chats with youth leaders during a tour of UTEC in Lowell on Monday. Campbell is the first of the attorney general candidates to participate in UTEC’s candidate forums this election cycle.

Andrea Campbell, candidate for attorney general, looks at UTEC's outdoor space during a tour of the Lowell facility on Monday. Campbell is the first of the attorney general candidates to participate in UTEC's candidates



Campbell

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round of applause.

During the interview portion, Campbell said she supports statewide funding to address gun violence, aims to help youth “build wealth” and find housing — Campbell herself is now a first-time homeowner in Mattapan — and hopes to expunge the records of those locked up for cannabis charges.

When asked about how she will engage young people in Massachusetts, Campbell had two words: “hire you.” That, she said, will ensure that she and other leaders can “break cycles of violence” and truly make a difference in the community by including the voices of those who are directly impacted.

“I truly believe if you’re going to be an effective leader, you surround yourself with other leaders, young people leaders,” she said. “I think that policymaking, the co-creation of policy together, is critical.”

UTEC works to connect with and provide resources to youth impacted by violence, poverty and the criminal justice system. The organization and its leaders provide programs for workplace development, education assistance, mental health services and violence intervention.

Monday’s forum was entirely youth-led and organized, as members of the group formulate interview questions, plan the candidate’s trip and tour and decide how best to invite

them in.

This was the first in a series of discussions UTEC is hosting with attorney general candidates — Shannon Liss-Riordan and Quentin Palfrey will visit the site on Aug. 24 and Aug. 30, respectively.

In Lowell specifically, Campbell said she plans to address “discrimination” in various forms, including in housing, jobs and hate crimes. In speaking with Mayor Sokhary Chau at the Lowell Southeast Asian Water Festival over the weekend about these very issues, Campbell said she is determined to “bridge communities of color.”

“I have been stressing the power of what an attorney general can do to help average residents,” Campbell told The Sun. “As AG, I would absolutely be a leader that collaborates, that builds those coalitions and shows up to do the work and partnership.”

Campbell isn’t the only attorney general candidate who has been spending a lot of time in Lowell ahead of the Sept. 6 Democratic primary. Liss-Riordan also recently visited the Merrimack Valley Food Bank and Mill City Grows, and was scheduled to hold a meet-and-greet at Warp and Weft Monday night.

Over the past 12 years, UTEC has held a number of candidate forums for local and state elections, covering 10 City Council races and several School Committee and gubernatorial races. This year, however, was the first time the program has met with potential attorneys general, said UTEC CEO

Gregg Croteau.

The entirety of Campbell’s interview with the organization will later be available on their social media pages.

With 150 youth between 17 and 25 years old actively enrolled, 12 of which are on the program’s organizing crew, UTEC is uniquely poised to civically engage young people across Lowell, Haverhill and Lawrence, Croteau said.

“Because of the issues affecting young adults, this is really important,” Croteau said of the forums. “(We) work with young adults who may be involved in the justice system, allowing them to have a voice of how to decide what the policies are that might impact them.”

Aiden Rodrigues, 23, known as “Bluetooth,” participated in the Campbell forum on Monday, as he often does when he is not assisting UTEC’s culinary manager. He joined UTEC in 2019 and said he has “excelled and grown” as a result, calling the program his “second home.”

Rodrigues was incarcerated several years back, and because of that, he said he cares deeply about justice reform and affordable housing for young people like him. He said he’d like to see the next attorney general raise the age for juvenile incarceration and make it easier for youth to become homeowners.

“Our vote is what matters the most, the younger generation,” Rodrigues said. “We’re the ones who are going to make a future, so we might as well craft the future the way we like.”