

GIONA PICHECO

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Dear Neighbor,

When life has taken me to unexpected places, I've always leaned on what I learned from my parents: the value of hard work, and the importance of sticking up for people who are different.

These lessons hit home in 2017. I was on a submarine, serving in the United States Navy, having completed one deployment and preparing for a second. I'd recently been promoted to manage the combat systems on my ship, while supervising and training ten other sailors. I had also gotten the confidence to accept and live as my authentic self—a woman—for the first time.

That's when a discriminatory ban against transgender people like me from serving our country was put into place. **At exactly the same time that my commanding officers were asking me to lead, the divisiveness of our politics had reached the point that even our own service members were under attack just for being who they are.**

Then, when I finished my service honorably and returned home, I could see that something had shifted in our country. One thing my parents taught me was to always respect people for their differences, and serving in the military means working with all kinds of people. But I came home to find a sea of rising anger toward immigrants, women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community. The Republican far right was pushing more division, more hatred, and more people were being left behind. I was worried about the divisiveness I was seeing, so I got involved.

Organizing with neighbors here in Cranston, I found joy and purpose in making a difference. We got the city to invest in green energy. We helped establish a permanent diversity commission. We helped elect local champions to fight for affordable housing and public education. We pushed back against the NRA and helped win common sense gun safety measures at the State House. And I joined allies from across the state to protect our LGBTQ+ community.

Time and time again, I've seen how what my parents taught me really is true: the solution to prejudice lies in neighbors coming together to reject division and hate, and working hard for what our community really needs. That is why I am running for State Representative.

I grew up in Ansonia, Connecticut, right outside New Haven. For many years, my father owned a cleaning company, and my mother worked as an X-ray technician. When my mother's health kept her from working, my dad had to close his company and found work driving a bread delivery truck. This past Father's Day was our first one without him, and as I remember my dad, I think about how there are many families like mine throughout our community. People who work hard to make ends meet, give better opportunities to their kids, and do what they can to teach them these life lessons along the way. **The truth is, if more politicians worked as hard as our neighbors and focused on the things that actually matter, things would be a lot better.**

After high school, I couldn't afford college without taking on substantial debt. I ended up working in part-time retail jobs more than 60 hours a week for minimum wage and no benefits. I felt how hard it was to pay the bills, and I saw that the lack of a degree kept me from reaching the jobs I dreamed of. To find purpose and a better future, I enlisted in the United States Navy.

It was in the Navy where I met my partner, Kyle, who is the most supportive and loving person I know. After serving our country through multiple deployments, Kyle and I bought a house on Cavalry Street in Cranston. For us, things were finally good: we have stable jobs, great neighbors, and a fenced backyard for our dogs, Sam and Leia, to run around and play.

And I am finally finishing my college degree. I've gone to public schools my whole life, including now at URI, so I know how important it is to invest in education. My heart breaks when I see how our local schools like Gladstone and Arlington continue to be neglected. **You can count on me to demand more funding for public schools, public universities, and more pathways to good jobs for all young people.**

Through the organizing I've done locally, I have seen how the State House fails to deliver for working people. I've stood with advocates for gun safety bills—because I know deep down that weapons of war shouldn't be in our community—**and yet banning assault weapons is still stalled at the State House and our Rep. has sided with the NRA over teachers and parents.** I've also organized with neighbors to call for federal COVID funds to go toward housing our neighbors and supporting essential workers, even while our current representative led the charge to undermine the protections that our nursing home workers rely on.

For 30 years, our district has had a representative more interested in dividing our community and siding with Republicans than in delivering for us. Either we can keep settling for this division, grandstanding, and more of the same, or we can elect a new voice to focus on the real issues our children, families, seniors, and veterans face. **I know that our community can do better, and that's why I'm asking for your vote.**

I'm already out walking our neighborhoods and knocking on doors to introduce myself and learn what issues are most important to you—I hope to meet you soon. If you have any questions or ideas to share please feel free to contact me at hello@gionapicheco.com or (401) 287-4092.

Having the privilege to represent our community at the State House would be an honor. **I look forward to the chance to earn your vote in the Democratic primary on September 13th.**

Sincerely,



Giona Picheco
Candidate for State Representative