

The Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club Questionnaire for November 2020

Required Information

Full Name: Matt Alexander

Office: Board of Education

Mailing Address: 2227 42nd Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116

Phone: (415) 347-9268

Email: mattalexandersf@gmail.com

Website: mattalexandersf.org

Political Party: Democrat

Are you a Member of the Harvey Milk LGBTQ Club?: No

If so, since when?:

Do you identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ)?: No

PART 1:

Questions for All Candidates

1. Describe your qualifications for the office you are seeking. Feel free to add anything that you would like our Members to know about you and your candidacy.

I have 20 years of experience working in SF public schools, including a decade as a teacher and a decade as a high school principal. I have a track record of leading innovation, facilitating democratic decision-making, and organizing for real change.

Some of my accomplishments include:

- In the late 1990s I worked with parents, youth and educators in a multi-racial movement for small, community-based schools, leading to the founding of June Jordan School for Equity.
- At JJSE, I led a student body that was more than 80% low-income and nearly 30% special education students, and Black and Latino students graduated and were accepted to college at rates exceeding nearly all other schools in SFUSD.
- At Faith in Action Bay Area, I have organized citywide campaigns to get immigrants released from ICE detention, for housing subsidies for low-income seniors who face eviction, and to protect our homeless neighbors during the COVID-19 crisis.

2. Do you have any key endorsements that you would like to share? Why are these endorsements meaningful to you?

I am proud to be endorsed by United Educators of San Francisco because I want to represent the interests of the people who do the work, day in and day out, in our classrooms and schools.

I am proud to be endorsed by the Coleman Action Fund because I want to represent the interests of Black and Brown parents and students in SFUSD.

I am proud to be endorsed by Supervisors Fewer, Mar, Preston, Haney, Ronen, and Walton, because they are progressive leaders fighting for change.

And I am proud to be endorsed by School Board President Mark Sanchez, Vice President Gabriela Lopez, and Commissioners Collins, Lam, and Moliga. If I am elected I will be working closely with them, and it will be the first time the Board of Education has both an educator majority and a parent majority at the same time in the history of SFUSD.

3. What do you see as the most important short-term and long-term solutions to SF's homelessness crisis? What can you do in your office to help end homelessness?

Homelessness in San Francisco is really about the lack of affordable housing. If we want our students and their families--not to mention our educators--to be able to live in San Francisco, SFUSD must engage more actively to make safe, dignified housing affordable to all.

SFUSD is a powerful civic institution and the second-largest landowner in the city. In the short term, we can continue to offer district land for shelter and push the City to increase

eviction prohibitions and rental subsidies. In the longer term, we must address the fact that 70% of the housing built in recent years has been priced for people making over \$100,000 a year, and that we allow 30,000 housing units to sit empty as investment properties. We should push the City to purchase hotels and apartment buildings and also offer SFUSD land to begin to create a system of social housing.

4. What work have you done to address economic inequality and housing unaffordability in San Francisco? What will you do to address them if elected?

At Faith in Action Bay Area, I organized with immigrant elders last year to win rental subsidies for seniors, to make city-funded “affordable” housing actually affordable to low-income elders. This year we are pushing for \$50 million in individual rental subsidies to prevent homelessness for the 5000 seniors paying more than 70% of their income in rent. In addition, I am supporting our clergy in leading the fight to push the City to open hotels for unhoused people.

To bring in more revenue to support housing affordability, in this fall’s elections we are working to support Schools and Communities First, and locally we are supporting several revenue measures including Supervisor Preston’s proposal to double the real estate transfer tax and invest funds in affordable housing, while also protecting vulnerable families by providing an incentive for landlords to forgive rent debt.

5. Describe your work addressing racial injustice, economic inequity, and police brutality in San Francisco.

I was honored to contribute to writing the resolution passed by the School Board June 23 which declares SFUSD schools a sanctuary space from law enforcement and calls for the City to divest from policing and invest in other areas including school-based social workers, restorative practices staff, Community School Coordinators, and community-based violence prevention programs. When I was principal at June Jordan School for Equity, we already were implementing many of these approaches and I saw first-hand how effective they are: Our graduation and college access rates for Black and Brown students far exceeded SFUSD averages.

In my current job as the SF Lead Organizer at Faith in Action Bay Area, I bring people together across race, class, age, and language to build relationships and build collective power. We are developing a vision we call Reclaiming the Soul of San Francisco--a dream of a city where everyone truly belongs.

6. How have you supported LGBTQ San Franciscans, and how will you continue to do so if elected?

In the early 2000s, I helped lead the grassroots organizing effort which founded June Jordan School for Equity. When the school opened in 2003, it did not yet have a name, and we facilitated a process by which the students themselves voted to name the school after June Jordan. We were proud to name the school after such a brilliant poet, essayist, teacher, and activist, who was also a queer Black woman.

In the subsequent years, we worked to live up to June Jordan’s legacy by making the school a safe and inclusive place for everyone, and especially LGBTQ students. The school has always had out and proud staff members, a culture of celebrating everyone’s full humanity, and a commitment to raising the voices of historically marginalized communities. If elected, I

will continue to fight alongside the LGBTQ community to make our city live up to its inclusive values.

7. Describe your work addressing the climate crisis, and what specific steps you would take if elected to confront climate change and environmental injustice.

Five years ago, when I was principal at June Jordan School for Equity, I supported our teaching staff to develop and implement a school-wide, interdisciplinary, project-based unit on climate change. This was the first time all classrooms in the school had engaged in studying the same topic at the same time, and we did it because we knew that climate justice was the biggest collective challenge facing our society--and that we needed the youth to lead us all to a better future.

SFUSD currently has sustainability targets, but they call for carbon neutrality only by 2050. I believe we need a San Francisco Green New Deal that includes a more rapid transition to carbon neutrality, coupled with guaranteed housing, jobs, and health care; the City needs to lead on this but SFUSD can play a key role as a large public institution, employer, and landowner.

8. Describe a time when you worked against an established power structure or entrenched authority to achieve progressive change. How was this positive change accomplished?

Four years ago, after Trump's election, I worked with an immigrant student of mine named Maria Zaragoza to organize a group of undocumented students and their allies from across SFUSD high schools, and the students re-wrote the Board of Education policy supporting undocumented students.

At a critical moment, SFUSD lawyers objected to the students' demands around keeping ICE off campus. The students negotiated with the attorneys but did not get the protections they needed. Instead of accepting defeat, we took the fight to the Board of Education members, turned out a big crowd at the Board meeting, and got the Board to pass one of the strongest policies protecting undocumented students in the country.

We won because we had directly impacted people leading, we had organized effectively, and we had allies on the School Board. As a Board member myself, I will support people-powered fights like this one.

Only School Board Candidates

1. Do you support charter schools in San Francisco? Why or why not?

I am opposed to charter schools. The original intent of charter school laws 30 years ago was to provide a space for grassroots innovation which would benefit the public school system. But these laws have been co-opted by corporate entities intent on undermining public education.

I will not support efforts to open any more charters in San Francisco. I believe we need fewer charter schools and am launching a campaign to get charters to relinquish their charters and join SFUSD. That way, their staff will be UESF members, and they can collaborate on innovation with district schools. Joining SFUSD will also ensure that schools have fair admissions processes and do not push out students with IEPs or other students who may be struggling. June Jordan School for Equity and San Francisco Community School, among others, show that small, innovative schools can flourish within the district; charters should join them.

2. Do you support Common Core education standards?

The Common Core Standards were developed by a small group of people without significant input from teachers, parents, or students, and then promoted heavily with hundreds of millions of dollars from Bill Gates. States and school districts then spent billions on new curriculum materials and tests--most of which went to for-profit companies or nominal nonprofits with highly paid executives. The Common Core Standards have many good elements, but the overall effort was an incredible waste of resources.

The push for Common Core also incorrectly assumed that the main problem with our public schools was a lack of standards. The truth is that our public schools struggle due to a lack of investment, both in the schools themselves and in housing, jobs, and health care for the families of public school students.

3. What is your plan to address the bullying of LGBTQ students, as well as students of traditionally marginalized communities?

SFUSD has a 30-year history of being a leader in supporting LGBTQ youth, and there are many schools where queer students feel safe, but there is still work to be done, especially at the middle school level.

When I was principal of June Jordan School for Equity, we prioritized creating a culture that was inclusive for all through proactive community building, restorative practices, and teaching the entire school community about the harm of anti-LGBTQ, racist, and misogynist language and bullying. We also taught about the history of struggles for justice led by marginalized peoples, and how those struggles have benefited everyone.

We can do better district-wide by following a similar path: All schools need to have a plan to proactively address anti-LGBTQ, racist, and misogynist language and bullying, and to teach

students about the proud history of marginalized communities including local LGBTQ leaders.

4. How will you address the needs of homeless students?

There are approximately 2000 homeless students in SFUSD, and the district has been trying for years to improve services to these youth and their families, including developing the Stay Over Program at Buena Vista Horace Mann, which is a model that could be expanded. Unhoused students also need more social-emotional supports, and I will fight for increased funding for Wellness services and establishing Community Schools coordinators at every school.

In the longer term, we need to move from a reactive approach to addressing the root cause of homelessness among SFUSD students, which is that housing is too expensive. As I noted above, SFUSD is a powerful civic institution and the second largest landowner in the city, and we need to engage much more actively with the housing crisis facing our city, including developing a publicly-owned system of social housing so that we can eliminate homelessness once and for all.

5. What are your plans to protect undocumented students and their families?

In 2016-17, in the wake of Trump's election, I supported students from high schools across San Francisco in a community organizing effort to re-write SFUSD's Sanctuary Schools Policy. The students pushed the School Board to pass the Undocumented, Unafraid, and United Resolution, which significantly strengthened protections for undocumented students in three areas: social-emotional support, college and career access, and legal protections. The policy includes a requirement that if ICE requests access to our students, records, or property, SFUSD must explore all options for legal challenges before complying--which provides undocumented students with the strongest legal protections of any school district in the country.

Unfortunately, many of the support systems in this policy have been implemented inconsistently by SFUSD. We need to educate undocumented students and their families about the rights that they have under the policy, and ensure that it is implemented with fidelity.

6. What are the most important actions that you can take in your office to stabilize and support African American students?

A thriving Black student population benefits all students in SFUSD. It is a loss for children of all races that the number of Black students in SFUSD has declined from 25,000 in the early 1970s to less than 5,000 today.

The Black students who remain face an extreme opportunity gap. Initial steps to close that gap could include:

- Training for all educators in antiracist practices and pedagogy, including an understanding of Black history and cultural strength
- Increased resources for schools serving Black students, especially low-income Black students

- SFUSD openly prioritizing the recruitment and retention of Black families and Black educators
- SFUSD taking more of a leadership role in addressing the housing crisis that has been driving Black families out of the City, including stabilizing rental housing and promoting Black homeownership so that the generation of Black elders who own their homes are not the last to do so

7. Do you support alternatives to a student’s suspension in instances of disruption or willful defiance?

Yes. When I was principal at June Jordan School for Equity, we prioritized restorative practices and a trauma-informed approach to student discipline and student support; I saw first-hand how effective these approaches are.

The challenge for SFUSD as a whole is that we support these approaches on paper, but we have not invested in the necessary staff training and resources to actually implement them effectively. In 2014 the School Board passed the Safe and Supportive Schools Resolution, and for a few years SFUSD prioritized training and staffing at the school site level. Six years later, training is inconsistent, and many schools do not have adequate staff to provide the follow up and student support which restorative practices requires.

For the sake of all our students, and especially our Black and Brown students, we must provide the resources needed to make these proven approaches the norm rather than the exception.

8. Do you support the removal of the *Life of Washington* mural at George Washington High School? Why or why not? If yes, what form of removal do you support?

I do not support racist public art, and I do not agree with the argument that changing public art is censorship. Unlike art in a museum, public art is a reflection of a community’s values and of power. It is appropriate that public art should change with the times, and it is important for all students, especially students from marginalized communities, to feel safe in school.

I support the painting over of the Washington murals, but I also do not believe it is feasible or appropriate for the Board of Education to spend time deciding the fate of every piece of public art in SFUSD. In my view, the Board should set guidelines for public art which reflect SFUSD’s social justice values and ensure that all students feel safe on campus, and lay out processes by which school communities can make decisions about art within the boundaries of those guidelines.

PART 2:

Yes or No Questions

*(Please check **Yes** or **No** for each question.)*

| GENERAL | YES | NO |
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| Are you registered to vote as a Democrat? | Y | |
| Have you ever sought elected office before? | | N |
| Do you have a campaign consultant or other main point of contact? If so, who? _____ | | N |
| Have you ever sought a Milk Club endorsement in the past? | | N |
| LGBTQ ISSUES & SEXUAL LIBERATION | | |
| | YES | NO |
| Do you support codifying various relationship structures as a protected class? (For example, a law that would prohibit discrimination against people in consensual nonmonogamous relationships in employment, housing, education, and healthcare.) | Y | |
| Do you support public funding for workforce programs, specifically for transgender job-seekers? | Y | |
| Do you support public funding to expand access to PrEP? | Y | |
| Do you support decriminalizing sex work? | Y | |
| TENANTS, HOUSING, AND HOMELESSNESS | | |
| | YES | NO |
| Do you support immediate rent cancellation and mortgage forbearance for all tenants and homeowners impacted by COVID-19? | Y | |
| Do you support the creation of an independent commission to oversee the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Services? | Y | |
| Do you support the split-role repeal of Proposition 13? | Y | |
| Do you support the repeal of the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act? | Y | |

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| Do you support the repeal of the Ellis Act? | Y | |
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| Have you ever evicted a tenant? | | N |
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| Do you support the sweeps of homeless encampments by the Department of Public Works or SFPD? | | N |
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| Do you support the public acquisition of hotel rooms for permanent shelter and/or supportive housing for the homeless? | Y | |
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| Did you support Measure D, the vacant property tax, this year? | Y | |
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| Would you support a licensing system for landlords in San Francisco? | Y | |
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| Do you support a public municipal bank in San Francisco? | Y | |
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| Do you support this year's proposed real estate transfer tax for properties valued at or over \$10 million? | Y | |
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IMMIGRATION JUSTICE ISSUES

YES NO

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| Should U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement be abolished? | Y | |
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| Do you support San Francisco's Sanctuary City status? | Y | |
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| Do you support due process protections for immigrant youth accused of crimes? | Y | |
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| Do you support allowing undocumented San Franciscans to serve on City boards and commissions? | Y | |
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| Do you support increased funds for immigrant defense services? | Y | |
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RACIAL & SOCIAL JUSTICE

YES NO

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| Do you support the death penalty? | | N |
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| Do you support the use of tasers by law enforcement? | | N |
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| Do you support requiring an independent investigation of all police officer-related shootings? | Y | |
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| Does your campaign accept contributions from law-enforcement associations, unions, or organizations? | | N |
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| Do you support disbanding the SFPD and requiring officers to reapply to a newly constructed, less violent police force? | Y | |
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| Should the San Francisco Police Officers Association be disbanded or at least have its political influence in the City severely curtailed? | Y | |
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| Do you support qualified immunity for police officers? | | N |
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| Do you support reparations for Black San Franciscans? | Y | |
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| Do you support the implementation of supervised injection/consumption sites? | Y | |
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| Do you support extending voting rights in local elections to currently and formerly incarcerated people? | Y | |
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| Have you ever crossed a union picket line or ignored a union boycott? | | N |
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| Do you support the right for public sector employees to go on strike? | Y | |
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| Do support repealing California's Proposition 209? | Y | |
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| Do you support the California App-Based Drivers Regulations Initiative? | | N |
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| Do you support rebuilding the county jail at 850 Bryant? | | N |
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ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

YES NO

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| Do you support dissolving Pacific, Gas, & Electric and replacing it with a publicly-owned utility agency? | Y | |
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| Do you support expanding the CleanPower SF program? | Y | |
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| Do you support a plan to provide free transportation citywide? | Y | |
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| Should the mayor continue to appoint all commissioners to the SFMTA? | | N |
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PUBLIC CORRUPTION & POLITICAL TRANSPARENCY

YES NO

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| Did you support the <i>Sunlight on Dark Money (Prop. F)</i> measure on the November 2019 ballot? | Y | |
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| Do you support expanding SF's public financing program to all City and County elected offices? | Y | |
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| Do you support Supervisor Matt Haney's ballot measure to split Public Works into two departments, each with its own oversight commission? | Y | |
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| Do you support Supervisor Gordon Mar's ballot measure to create an Office of the Public Advocate? | Y | |
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PART 3:

Support of Other Candidates

(Please answer whom you support or supported in each race. If you made a ranked endorsement or voted for more than one candidate using IRV, please indicate the rankings.)

| 2020 | Candidate |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Democratic Presidential Primary | Bernie Sanders |
| CA State Senate, District 11 | Jackie Fielder |
| District 1 Supervisor | Connie Chan |
| District 3 Supervisor | Aaron Peskin |
| District 5 Supervisor | Dean Preston |
| District 7 Supervisor | Myrna Melgar or Vilaska Nguyen |
| District 11 Supervisor | |

| 2019 | Candidate |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| District 5 Supervisor | |
| San Francisco District Attorney | Chesa Boudin |

| 2018 | Candidate |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Mayor | Jane Kim |
| District 4 Supervisor | Gordon Mar |
| District 6 Supervisor | Matt Haney |
| District 8 Supervisor | |
| District 10 Supervisor | Shamann Walton |