

## SF DCCC Candidate Questionnaire Board of Education

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Are you a registered member of the Democratic Party? Yes

Have you read the California Democratic Party Platform? Yes

Will you fight for its implementation in policies? Yes

What office are you running for? Board of Education

Are you running for re-election? No

What other elected positions have you held previously? None

### **PART I: GENERAL QUESTIONS (200 words or less)**

#### **Why are you committed to serving on the School Board? What stake do you have in decisions made at the School Board (e.g. parent, student, educator, etc.)?**

I have spent 14 years in education utilizing my skills in mental health and tackling issues around truancy, push-out rates, trauma, youth development, social emotional learning, affordability and community schools. I returned to San Jose to pursue a Masters in Social Work while working full time at Burton High School and Carver Elementary. The outcome of this work led to the largest decrease in drop rates at Burton High School, and the founding of the SFUSD CARE Center, a school supporting students who were chronically truant to re-engage back into mainstream education. I also led a student athlete campaign with young men in SFUSD to promote consent in an effort to decrease rape. This effort led to nearly 3,000 student athletes receiving education and pledging to the consent campaign in two years. Today, I work closely with the SFUSD leadership team to create systemic changes to support Pacific Islander students. Finally, I was recruited by the Department of Public Health to build Wellness Centers in San Francisco Public Housing to address the violence, addiction, and mental health issues preventing our families from being able to live in safe and supportive communities. I currently work one day a week at Downtown Continuation High School providing trauma informed services for HOPESF students impacted by violence in their neighborhoods.

#### **Please describe your contributions to the Democratic Party and/or increasing civic engagement in the democratic process at the local, state and or/national level in the most recent years.**

In 2010, I co-founded the Youth and Government program for High School in the Bayview. I later, founded the Burton High School Youth and Government program which still exist today. The YMCA Youth & Government's program was established 70 years ago and continues to be the state's premier youth leadership and civic engagement program. It engages over 3,300 high school youth and close to 1,000 middle school youth each year from across the state. I also worked with School Board commissioners Cook and Mendoza to introduce a resolution which in March passed that will begin addressing the opportunity gap among Pacific Islanders.

**Are there any other civic causes or organizations that you are involved with? Please describe.**

In 2010, I developed the PUMA Prevent campaign to educate student-athlete males on consent to prevent rape on High School campuses. In its first two years, PUMA Prevent reached nearly 3000 student-athletes in SFUSD through workshops, conferences, and seminars. PUMA Prevent was recognized by the Board of Supervisors and also the Board of Education as a model program to implement in SFUSD middle and high schools.

**Please summarize your qualifications and experience for the office you are seeking.**

I have spent 14 years in education utilizing my skills in mental health and tackling issues around truancy, push-out rates, trauma, youth development, social emotional learning, affordability and community schools. I returned to San Jose to pursue a Masters in Social Work while working full time at Burton High School and Carver Elementary. The outcome of this work led to the largest decrease in drop rates at Burton High School, and the founding of the SFUSD CARE Center, a school supporting students who were chronically truant to re-engage back into mainstream education. I also led a student athlete campaign with young men in SFUSD to promote consent in an effort to decrease rape. This effort led to nearly 3,000 student athletes receiving education and pledging to the consent campaign in two years. Today, I work closely with the SFUSD leadership team to create systemic changes to support Pacific Islander students. I am currently working with commissioners Cook, Mendoza, and Walton to introduce a resolution in March that will begin addressing the opportunity gap among Pacific Islanders. Finally, I was recruited by the Department of Public Health to build Wellness Centers in San Francisco Public Housing to address the violence, addiction, and mental health issues preventing our families from being able to live in safe and supportive communities. I currently work one day a week at Downtown Continuation High School providing trauma informed services for HOPESF students impacted by violence in their neighborhoods.

**Please list any organizations or elected officials who have endorsed you. (You may attach a list and exceed the word count limit).**

United Educators of San Francisco, Service Employees International Union 1021, National Unions of Health Workers, Pissed Off Voters, Mayor London Breed, Former State Senator Mark Leno, Supervisor Sandra Fewer, Supervisor Rafeal Mandelman, Supervisor Asha Safai, Supervisor Hilary Ronen, Supervisor Aaron Peskin, Former Supervisor David Campos, Former Supervisor John Avalos, Former Supervisor Eric Mar, School Board Hydra Mendoza, School Board Stevon Cook, School Board Matt Haney, School Board Mark Sanchez, School Board Shamman Walton, CCSF Trustee Bridget Davila, CCSF Trustee John Rizzo, CCSF Trustee Thea Selby, Jefferson Board of Education Manufou Anoi, and Jefferson Board of Education Rosie Tejada

**If you are elected, what are your top concerns? How would you address these concerns?**

My two priorities during my term in office will be to close the opportunity gap and support our educators. I intend to do this by implementing mental health policies and programs that will address the trauma that has impacted our students and educators. Trauma has created high levels of anxiety, depression, and grief which has showcased itself in high push out rates, absenteeism, violence, homelessness and an opportunity gap consisting primarily of Black and Brown families. Over the last three decades, the ongoing economic inequality within San Francisco has created an unspoken array of mental health

concerns for our students, families, and educators which has gone unaddressed in SFUSD. These massive shifts have led to high turnover rates in schools for teachers and a shortage of educators to provide the needed quality education for our students. That is why supporting the overall well being of our educators through partnership and advocacy on the board is one of my two priorities. I plan to focus my efforts so that educators not only receive affordable housing today, but are also provided with the necessary life resources in order to have the option of starting or raising a family in San Francisco. It is important to me that educators' needs are put first, with the expectation that the success of our students is supported through the well being of our educators. Educators today are forced to live in homes where they share rooms or sleep on couches, with the expectations of providing high quality services for our students. In addition, 2/3 or our educators live outside of San Francisco and spend a great amount of time commuting and paying transportation cost which exacerbates the issue of affordability for them.

**The California Democratic Party Platform mentions building health, livable, and sustainable communities, what does this mean to you?**

I envision communities that are diverse and affordable for all our residents. There should be access to fresh produce, thriving public schools, transportation, parks, and community programs so that residents are able to safely and comfortably thrive in San Francisco.

**Would you support the idea of school districts using local accountability plans to grant funds to reach students with the greatest needs for whom they are most needed? Why or why not?**

Yes, this will help support SFUSD to allocate funding to the most needed schools. This can be viewed in the instructional allocations within SFUSD, one being instructional outgo that takes up to 14% of the budget. Efforts are being put out by high school leadership to better understand what consist of this budget and how to channel these resources back into instruction. The statewide average for instructional outgo is 2%, working with SFUSD to breakdown this budget allocation and funneling funds back into schools will be an effort I support. A collective effort such as the current collaborative between high school leadership is a method which I believe is impactful. Working together to address school wide issues, but being cognizant of each sites specific needs, will better inform how to utilize the LCAP to direct money back into the schools and classrooms.

**PART II: YES/NO QUESTIONS**

**ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

Do you support the divestment of public funds from Wells Fargo and other financial institutions involved in speculative and questionable banking practices? *Yes*

Do you believe that the government should provide foreclosure relief for borrowers who were victims of unethical financial service practices? *Yes*

Do you support the creation of a local municipal bank in San Francisco? *Yes*

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE/POLICE REFORM**

Do you support overhauling the bail system? *Yes*

Do you believe in ending mass incarceration and supporting the abolishment of capital punishment? *Yes*

Do you support using jails as mental health facilities and substance abuse treatment programs? *Yes*

Will you commit to encouraging “ban the box” to ensure that those formerly incarcerated are given an equal opportunity for housing and employment? *Yes*

Do you support the San Francisco Police Department being equipped with Tasers? *No*

## **CHILDCARE**

Do you support expanding affordable childcare to low- and middle-income families? *Yes*

Do you support expanding child care to include children aged 0-3 years old? *Yes*

## **EDUCATION**

Do you believe in a “debt-free college” and free community college (i.e. Education financed entirely without student loans)? *Yes*

Would you support the idea of school districts using local accountability plans to grant funds to reach students with the greatest needs for whom they are most needed? *Yes*

Do you support that teachers and professional staff deserve commensurate wages? *Yes*

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Do you oppose new fossil fuel infrastructure projects and supporting the divestment of fossil fuels? *Yes*

Do you believe in Free MUNI for youth? *Yes*

Do you support the Safe Routes to Schools program? *Yes*

## **HEALTHCARE**

Do you support a publicly funded single payer health care system for all people? *Yes*

Should SFUSD expand Healthcare Centers to all high schools? *Yes*

Do you support that all students have access to safe and reliable reproductive services and information without their spouse, judicial, parental, or guardian consent? *Yes*

## **CIVIL RIGHTS AND IMMIGRATION JUSTICE ISSUES**

Will you work to implement full Ethnic Studies courses and language immersion? *Yes*

Will you support Sanctuary policies and Due Process for All -- limiting the ability for local authorities to collaborate with Federal government on immigration enforcement which incites fear in immigrant communities? *Yes*

Do you support speaking out in public against all forms of racism, discrimination, hatred and violence and support standing in solidarity with movements that promote equity, including Black Lives Matter? *Yes*

Will you protect the right of all people to use facilities and participate in all aspects of society regardless of their gender identity and the gender assigned at birth? *Yes*

## **LABOR**

Will you support the push for a statewide minimum wage for at least \$15 per hour and living wages for areas that have high cost of living? *Yes*

Do you support that teachers and professional staff deserve commensurate wages? *Yes*

Do you support paid parental leave for school educators? *Yes*

## **CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM**

Do you support full disclosure of funding sources for political advertisements? *Yes*

Do you support full disclosure of funding sources for political advertisements? *Yes*

## **HOUSING, TENANT, & LAND USE ISSUES**

Do you believe that housing is a human right? *Yes*

Do you believe the split roll for Proposition 13 that treats taxes for commercial and residential property differently? *Yes*

Would you support repealing Costa Hawkins and the Ellis Act? *Yes*

Do you support use of SFUSD property to build affordable housing? *Yes*

Have you read the California Democratic Party Platform? *Yes*

Will you fight for its implementation in policies? *Yes*

## **PART III: SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS ON ISSUES (250 words or less)**

**1) What programs or initiatives would you undertake to address the educational disparities for SFUSD students?**

I identified key community concerns that must be addressed to close the opportunity gap. The first is supporting the well-being of our students, families, and educators through mental health services. The second is creating a community approach to schools that promotes collaboration between SFUSD, the City and County of San Francisco, and the communities surrounding our schools. Lastly, I want to support our educators through the provision of competitive salaries, affordable housing, and retirement packages. Our teachers deserve to live long and fulfilling lives now and after their dedicated service to San Francisco children and families.

**2) What would be your budget priorities for the School District?**

My top budget priority is to increase educator salary to the highest in the country. In addition, I will support revenue streams to schools so that they are provided the resources needed to adequately educate and care for our students. One example of this is with the two instructional allocations within SFUSD, one being instructional outgo that takes up to 14% of the budget. I support current efforts by high school leadership to better understand what consist of this budget and how to channel these resources back into instruction. The statewide average for instructional outgo is 2%, working with SFUSD to breakdown this budget allocation and funneling funds back into schools will be an effort I support.

**3) Do you believe that SFUSD's school assignment system needs reform? If not, why? If so, how would you change it?**

Yes, I believe this is a question of equity and resource distribution among our schools in SFUSD. Although I believe diversity is important, I also understand that we need to fully fund our public schools so that they are able to provide the proper education to all of our students and families no matter what neighborhood schools reside in. Black and Brown students consistently perform poorly whether they are in diverse or neighborhood schools. Growing up in San Francisco and attending public schools in the early 90's, I had the opportunity to experience an education process that was rich in ethnic diversity. It has made a long lasting positive impact on my life today, and I learned a great deal of cultural sensitivity through this experience. However, San Francisco historically has been a segregated city and the issue of diversity for me is not solely on SFUSD. I believe I can bridge the leadership between SFUSD, the City and County of San Francisco, and communities to address this ongoing concern of school diversity and neighborhood schools and properly fund our public school system. No matter what school students attend, these schools should be able to provide and meet their needs.

**4) What is your belief on Common Core Standards? In recent years, there has been controversy that the new methodology is placing some students at a disadvantage for high achievement and college preparation. How would you address this concern?**

I support Common Core Standards, its a step in the right direction. Evidence show that it has been effective in High School, however, there continues to be a need for improvement in our elementary schools. Building/redesigning a performance assessment to better align with a more student-centered and student-driven approach is a method I recommend. It is important that we are arming our students with the academic skills they need to be successful in their post-secondary life. Currently our elementary students are experiencing a high amount of testing.

**5) What do you think are the factors attributing to the teacher shortage in SFUSD? How would you address this?**

There are three factors which have created a teacher shortage in SFUSD. These factors are credentialing, student loans, and the lack of professional support and wellness services to sustain a health career. I would address these by allocating funding to professional development so that educators are financially supported attaining various credentials, especially in the special education programs. In addition, I would create secure funding through private and city and county resources to build a loan forgiveness program. Lastly, I plan to create an Educators Wellness Initiative to provide free mental health services for staff.

**6) What is your perspective about charter schools and their role in San Francisco? How would you advocate differently than SFUSD's current policies?**

I believe charter schools take away resources that are necessary to fully fund public schools. They have become instruments of elitism that deplete public school resources. Although they are public and secular, they elude the bureaucratic constraints of school districts. Recent studies show that charter schools do not outperform public schools. I find that in the current era of school choice, charter schools are also a white flight option. White flight persist within our public school system and that racially competitive processes occur within the contemporary educational process. These types of processes have been linked to employment discrimination, historical battles over bussing, and the social control of racial and ethnic minority groups. Charter schools have the opportunity to segregate schools even further. I believe in a community schools model where school districts; city and county departments and private corporations; and the community are working together to support our public schools. Community schools have proven to be effective to supporting public schools thrive.

**7) Do you support the Safe and Supportive Schools Policy at SFUSD? How would you further these goals as a School Board member?**

Yes, safe and supportive schools is an important policy that will benefit our students and communities. It should be the role of the board and superintendent to advocate on a local level with our board of supervisors and community members to assure that there are efforts in and outside of schools to support this initiative. Understanding that some issues such as these are also embedded in community development, will help support the district in finding solutions, resources, and partnerships to address these from a community schools approach.

**8) What role do you feel the Board of Education should play in sexual harassment and assault cases involving students? If elected, how will you address this concern?**

Currently SFUSD has one Title 9 coordinator that manages sexual harassment cases for the 55,000 students it educates. I would advocate for the expansion of the Title 9 program so that there are additional support staff to effectively address these issues. In addition, I would also build upon Title 9 and improve the implementation process so that staff are properly trained on how to assure students are not retaliated against or harassed.

**9) There is a perception that parent-led fundraising has widened the educational inequality gap among schools. What are your thoughts on this issue and how would you address distribution of school funds districtwide?**

I believe this is an opportunity to leverage resources to create opportunities for all our students in SFUSD. I recommend SFUSD develop a system that helps develop a program that can provide resources to support students and educators which are not able to be funded through their yearly allocated budget. This program would also allow parent-led fundraising to continue raising funds and benefiting from their hard work. These funds can be used to support wellness for teachers, special education, and other necessary expenses.

**10) What role do you believe SFUSD should play in the City's housing crisis? How would you address the needs of homeless or underhoused students and their families?**

There are two areas which I believe will support with affordable housing today. The current development of new homes for educators is a great start, however, the turnover of teachers in the district due to housing cost is an issue which we are facing today. One method is to provide rental stipend which will alleviate the pressure of cost for educators as new homes are being built. I believe the board can work collaboratively with the City and County to locate funding that will create the revenue stream in order to fund this stipend program. I plan to work with our city officials to draft policies that will secure an ongoing funding stream specifically to support housing for educators. This will go to supporting educators in purchasing homes, rental assistance, and the development of new housing. I also believe that we must continue working to protect our educators through implementing tenant policies such as the recent restrictions on evicting teachers and other school employees during the school year. In regards to our homeless population in SFUSD, I would fight to build a shelter for families with the current school property available.

**11) Beyond reforming school assignment program, what do you see as the greatest barriers or major issues for families and youth getting to school safely while reducing traffic congestion?**

Currently there are a few major issues for families and youth getting to school safely while reducing traffic. School start time at the moment pose a conflict for parents who are also traveling to work. In addition, early child care is not provided and can put children safety at risk in the early morning drop-offs. This issue creates traffic congestion which can lead to accidents. Public transportation can also be improved so that there are safer and timely routes for students traveling to school.