



Latino Democratic Club Questionnaire
November 2019 Candidate Endorsements

1.) Why are you running for this position?

When I was fourteen months old, my parents were incarcerated for driving the getaway car in an armed robbery that tragically took three people's lives. My mother spent twenty two years in prison. My father may never get out. Growing up, I had to go through metal detectors and steel gates just to give my parents a hug. Visiting prisons and working as a public defender has taught me that our criminal justice system is broken. It is broken for victims who all too often have nothing to show for the billions of dollars we spend on punishment; it is broken for the children, like me, left behind when parents commit crimes; it is broken for communities of color that are overtargeted and overprosecuted; it is broken for communities that are torn apart by mass incarceration in ways that actually increase crime; it is broken for the taxpayers that foot the bill for this failed system with recidivism rates above two thirds.

As public defender, in order to enact change I had to file writ after writ, with the hopes of success. In order to fight against money bail, I filed writs and led litigation efforts that resulted in a case currently pending before the California Supreme Court, that has promise to change the way the state determines pretrial incarceration. In order to change the way we treated immigration cases, I helped launch the immigration unit in the public defender's office and worked with the sheriff to stop police from honoring ICE holds. As I did all these things, I realized that the way to enact real change, to completely reform the system, is to elect a bold and progressive district attorney. I'm running for DA to enact reform, because the justice system should not treat people differently depending on the color of their skin, their job title, or the size of their bank account. I am running for DA because I know how to fix this system that has so shaped my life.

2.) What are you going to do for the Latino Community as an elected official?

The Latinx community has been one of the most impacted by both crime and mass incarceration. The stakes are particularly high for immigrants. I will fight to defend and protect the immigrant community and to uphold our Sanctuary City policies. I will end the racial disparities that plague the system, protect victims of labor abuse and unlawful evictions, and hold police officers accountable for misconduct.

The very first cases in San Francisco where the Sheriff declined to honor immigration holds (ICE detainers) were my clients. The first one was a Salvadoran grandmother of US Citizen children and grandchildren who was charged with shoplifting Christmas presents from the Gap. I persuaded the Sheriff that he had the power and the moral imperative to refuse to cooperate with ICE, and to allow this woman to return to her family. After successfully getting ICE holds lifted for several individual clients in 2013, I persuaded the sheriff to stop honoring ICE holds on all clients.

My life partner is an immigrant. I have visited every Latin American country and speak fluent Spanish. I studied abroad in Latin America and lived in several foreign countries. I worked as a professional interpreter and translator. During my entire law school career I participated in the Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic with Professor Michael Wishnie. My commitment to immigrant rights is unwavering.

As DA I will support state and local policies that prohibit local law enforcement from notifying ICE about release dates of people in local law enforcement custody, from transferring people to ICE, and from holding people for ICE. Cooperation with ICE not only wastes limited local law enforcement resources but it also undermines public safety by deterring immigrants from reporting crimes. I will hire a diverse staff that includes immigrants as well as formerly incarcerated individuals, provide training to all my staff about immigration consequences to plea deals, and create a policy with a presumption towards offering immigration-safe plea deals. I will make every effort to assist victims of crime in obtaining U visas, and to ensuring that immigrants receive the full protection of local law enforcement without fear of being handed over to ICE.

Finally, we must remember Luis, Alejandro, Amilcar, and so many others. As District Attorney, I will enforce the law equally--regardless of job title or star number. A badge will never elevate someone above the law.

Housing:

3.) Can you tell us your position on SB 50 and your reason for that position?

While I support the general concept of adjusting our zoning laws and of increasing the number of housing units, I oppose SB 50 because it will accelerate gentrification and displace long-term San Francisco families in the interest of real estate developers. Rather, we must increase the number of housing units available in tandem with policies that protect vulnerable communities against displacement and require a large percentage of affordable units. Chicago already experimented with the SB 50 approach and it did not work for working communities, communities of color and the long-standing residents of the impacted neighborhoods.

4.) Do you support sustaining the shelter for students and their families at Buena Vista Horace Mann? What should we do to expand this program city wide?

I support sustaining the shelter for students and their families at BVHM. It is critical to remember that the BVHM emergency shelter is a pilot program, and that the purpose of pilot programs is to test innovations. Indeed, many elements of this pilot have been hugely successful in providing some of our most vulnerable with emergency shelter. If the emergency shelter itself is underutilized, then we should explore (i) expanding it to other parts of the city, and (ii) opening it up to families outside the immediate BVHM community. We know there is a desperate need for emergency shelter. I support creative ways to use existing infrastructure and resources to get kids and families into safe places to sleep at night.

5.) Should the Affordable Housing Bond be \$500 million or \$1 Billion in the next upcoming San Francisco election? Why do you support that amount over the other?

I support a \$1 Billion dollar bond. We know that we have inadequate affordable housing compared to market rate housing, and that we must immediately invest in sufficient affordable units to meet demand for communities being displaced from their homes every day. In order to maintain vibrant, livable communities and a resilient, dynamic economy, we must maintain the diversity of our city by providing housing affordable to a variety of income levels.

6.) Do you oppose the Monster in the Mission? Do you support the Marvel in the Mission?

I oppose the Monster in the Mission and support the Marvel in the Mission.

Education:

7.) About 50 non-citizen parents voted for school board in 2018. What can you do to expand the access and security for Immigrant Parent Voting (Prop N 2016) for the 2020 School Board Election?

I will support increased non-citizen voter turnout by 1) publicly encouraging the vote, and 2) building trust between the District Attorney's office and immigrant communities. The disastrous and inhumane policies of the Trump administration--including betrayal of DACA-recipients--have stoked anxiety and dissuaded full civic participation. As a city, San Francisco must ensure that non-citizens are protected from the worst impulses of this administration, and we must earn trust by standing strong in our commitments as a Sanctuary City. As described above, I've played a leadership role in helping to ensure non-citizens are not handed over to ICE from the San Francisco County Jail. We need to continue that work and ensure that every San Francisco resident knows we have their back against Trump, knows they can fully and safely participate in society.

8.) Spanish speakers comprise almost half of English Learners (ELs) in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), yet only 8% were re-classified in the

2015-16 school year. This is only halfway to the goal and outcomes for other English Learners. How can you support bridging this disparity?

We know that many communities, particularly Latinx communities, are disadvantaged by inadequate language access and cultural competence within city agencies. That is why I am committed to increasing diversity in my staff and ensuring cultural competence within the DA's office, so that both suspects and victims receive adequate, equitable service. My brother has been a sixth grade public school teacher in the Bay for the last 14 years and my uncle retired after 25 years of public school teaching. I have already been endorsed by the principal of Mission High School. I am committed to working with our educators to empower and better serve the Latinx community.

9.) Latinos went without an elected school board member from 2004 to 2016 (12 years), yet comprise the second largest SFUSD population at 27%. Do you believe district elections for school board elections can bring more equitable representation to latino parents?

If a thorough demographic and political analysis showed that district elections would increase ethnic representation, specifically for the Latino community, I would support it. So much depends on how the districts are drawn, and district elections drawn incorrectly could actually diminish the diversity of representation - we've seen how congressional district gerrymandering across the country has dramatically empowered and privileged conservative white voters.

Immigration:

10.) Asylum seekers at California border ballooned from 17,284 in fiscal 2017 to 38,269 in fiscal 2018. A backlog has grown to more than 820,000 CA immigration cases, each takes several months to process. San Francisco has done a great job supporting legal defense for asylum seekers. What should San Francisco's role be to provide social services to asylum seekers while awaiting justice?

I do not want to unnecessarily correlate asylum seekers with criminal justice issues (my mandate), or feed into the Trumpian myth that asylum seekers threaten public safety. That said, I believe that robust investment in social services for vulnerable communities is wise, necessary, and ultimately cost-effective. Currently, much of our spending on criminal justice and law enforcement would be better and more effectively utilized by social services. I am open to exploring creative partnerships with the immigrant to use the power of the DA's office to push back on Trump administration policies.

11.) Would you have have you advocated for a Clean Dream Act that includes TPS recipients?

Yes. When the Trump administration took the unprecedented step of "de-legalizing" nearly a million residents, among them were more than 195,000 Salvadorans who have been granted this type of immigration relief for over nearly two decades. They are the parents of nearly 200,000 U.S. citizen children. Their deportation would cost the U.S.

economy over \$100 billion in the next 10 years. This policy was cruel, inhumane, and undermines public safety in our communities by destabilizing families..

12.) Do you have any plans to advance the rights for undocumented immigrants to receive housing services?

Yes. As District Attorney, my focus on this issue would be to ensure that undocumented immigrants have equal access to all diversion programs and collaborative/alternative court programs, where housing would be a component of treatment in every case. I plan to expand access to these programs so that more people can benefit from them.

By increasing the focus in the DA's office on treatment and diversion rather than incarceration and conviction rates, we add more stability to people's lives so that they have an easier time obtaining resources like housing services.

Criminal Justice:

13.) Are you for or against tasers for use in San Francisco?

Against. The promise made by Taser proponents is appealing: that officers can use a less-lethal weapon in place of their guns, and in this way reduce incidents of officers shooting and killing suspects. Unfortunately, data makes clear that this promise is an empty one. First, studies show that officer involved shootings either go up or hold steady with the introduction of Taser weapons. The police aren't using Tasers to replace guns, they are using them to replace other alternative options, like de-escalation. Second, Tasers are not safe, they are classified as "less-lethal," rather than non-lethal, because they can, and not infrequently do, result in death. Last year, three people were killed by police use of Tasers in San Mateo County alone. Law enforcement misuse of force is not a problem that will be solved by giving police another deadly weapon, it has to be solved through structural reforms including robust accountability measures.

14.) What is your plan to add supportive services and reduce recidivism?

Right now, more than 2/3 of people who are released from state prison come back into the system within a few years. In San Francisco county jail the recidivism rate is over 100 percent in a three year period. 85 percent of bookings into county jail are a person suffering from serious drug addiction, mental illness or both. If we treat the root cause of crime and prioritize treatment, we can actually prevent crime and make our city safer. This requires offering more diversion opportunities to help people move forward with their lives rather than holding them back. We must also invest in schools and social services in the community rather than simply waiting for broken families and communities to result in broken laws.

Here are some of my specific plans to add supportive services and reduce recidivism:

1. Create a diversion program specifically for parents;
2. Create a restorative justice program to focus on accountability and healing;

3. Seek treatment rather than jail whenever possible to promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism;
4. Expand access to current pretrial diversion programs and alternative/collaborative courts so that more people can participate;
5. Never seek cash bail.

Equity:

15.) How would you support cannabis and alcohol parity for the Mission and Excelsior with other san francisco neighborhoods?

Currently, there are dramatic inequities and disparities in the cannabis industry. Black and brown communities that were most impacted by War On Drugs mass incarceration remain underrepresented. People locked out of the formal industry continue to be targeted by law enforcement, despite cannabis legalization. As District Attorney, I will not accept use, possession, or distribution of cannabis as probable cause for search.

16.) How would you and how have you supported Latinx parity for Commissioners, Elected Officials, and Legislative Staff?

I am currently supporting a young Latinx organizer in their application for a position on the Youth Commission, and I have actively supported numerous Latinx candidates for public office over the years. I will actively support Latinx parity for elected positions and appointments, and I plan to hire, retain, and promote a diverse staff that represents the community I serve.

17.) How do you measure the Latinx community receiving equity of San Francisco resources? How would you ally to help the Latinx receive equity?

I am committed to intensive data collection and transparency, so that inequities in our criminal justice system may be easily identified, and we can be held accountable in our efforts to eradicate discrimination. In order to address inequities affecting the Latinx community, we must have Latinx advocates at the table. Beyond diversifying the office of District Attorney, I believe it is critical that our office create and maintain strong relationships with stakeholders and community leaders. The individuals and organizations already working every day to advance the needs of Latinx communities must be involved in the policy process.