



## **Latino Democratic Club Questionnaire**

### **November 2019 Candidate Endorsements**

#### **1.) Why are you running for this position?**

It was my honor to be appointed to the San Francisco Community College Board of Trustees last year. I am running to finish the term so that I can help accomplish three top priorities for our city and our students: 1) to make the Free City College initiative permanent; 2) to stabilize the financial status of City College as a whole, and 3) to make the reforms needed to close the achievement gap. We need to have the needs of our students of color in mind with every decision we make so they are given the best possible chance to succeed.

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

As a trustee and as a legislative aide, I have consistently worked to ensure that policies serve all San Franciscans, and in particular those most underserved or underrepresented. As a former immigrant rights' attorney for more than a decade, I have always fought in partnership with the Latinx Community to work towards equal access and fairness under the law. At City College, we have been advocating on the federal level to be recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) which is based on our college's commitment to increase the numbers of Latinx students and support their educational success. Latinx students now comprise at least 25% of our student population and we are committed to increasing those numbers so that City College serves as a bridge to more opportunity for our Latinx population.

For this Latinx community, we recognize that they are struggling with a lot of the same issues being faced by the Latinx community at large: housing insecurity, economic challenges that stand in the way of opportunity, lack of equal access to services because of language and cultural barriers, and trying to navigate systems that do not work for working people. My work at City College so far has been to try and address those challenges by advocating for the college to build student housing on-site, by fighting to make sure that the Free City program included additional financial aid for students with

proven unmet financial needs even after receiving free tuition, by raising the issue of language barriers and advocating that the college's materials be made accessible to non-English speakers, and continuing to offer courses that will fit into a working person's schedule. Last but not least, I want to work on diversification of our college's faculty. Our faculty demographics do not currently reflect the college's student composition and I believe that they should.

### Housing:

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

I do not support SB 50 in its current form. I believe our City has a responsibility to ensure that all new developments include as much affordable housing as possible so that our long term residents, our seniors, our teachers, and our lower and middle-income residents are not displaced. In its current form, SB 50 rewards communities that have not invested in public transit and demands nothing from them based on the fact that they do not have public transit. SB 50 also does not provide for any additional resources for the infrastructure and services that additional residents will inevitably need. And it does not require that new developments include housing that is affordable for low- and middle-income families. In fact, it undermines local provisions that require more affordable housing.

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?

In a city as wealthy as ours, it is unacceptable to have any unhoused children or families. The shelter program currently in place at Buena Vista Horace Mann has been an initiative that has helped children and their families and was an initiative that highlighted the compassion and unity of this school community. But before taking a position on sustaining the shelter and expanding it citywide, I would want to know how the people most impacted, the students and families served, felt about their experience.

Through my work as an immigration attorney, I know that there have been initiatives that seemed to be a great idea but when you actually spoke with the individuals most impacted, it became clear that there were changes needed. For example, several years ago, "Family Justice Centers" were proposed to address the needs of domestic violence survivors. These FJCs were supposed to function as a one-stop shop for survivors to obtain all the services and information that they might need to exit a domestic violence situation. But the FJCs failed to consider that immigrant domestic violence survivors may not want to seek out law enforcement because of the risk of identification by immigration authorities. But federal and state funders of domestic violence programs supported the FJCs as a great idea and much of the resources available to community-based organizations were funneled to the FJCs instead - to the severe detriment of the immigrant community. Therefore, any policy or program that the City wants to create has to be informed by, and centered on, the needs of the community

being served. Students and their families know better than anyone else what their needs are, whether the resources being provided are effective, or if we can do better.

All that being said, the ultimate goal is to exit these families out of homelessness and into safe and stable housing and if this initiative can achieve that outcome, it is an idea that is definitely worth exploring for the rest of the city. Every option and creative idea has to be on the table for us to be able to effectively address homelessness. As a parent of three school-age children, I think every school should have a plan in place to address the needs of its students and their families who are without stable housing.

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?

The Affordable Housing Bond should be the maximum amount that can be successfully passed in the next upcoming San Francisco election.

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

I value community and neighborhood input highly with regard to new developments. Self-determination is something that has been historically denied to marginalized communities and I believe strongly that communities should have a powerful voice when it comes to land use decisions.

As it currently stands, I oppose the Monster in the Mission. My understanding is that the current developer has not provided accurate depictions of the project and through years of missteps has lost the community's trust. At the last Planning Commission meeting in the Mission on this project, Planning Commissioner Myrna Melgar stated on the record that she was disappointed with their presentation, partially due to the fact that the developer asserted that they were purchasing two plots of land in the Mission neighborhood in order to increase the affordability of the project and yet they had not discussed this purchase with either of the owners of those two plots of land.

Moreover, I believe in the community's right to self-determination. The work that Plaza 16 has done to develop a community-based and community-centered proposal, the "Marvel in the Mission," has resulted in a draft plan to maximize the 60,000 square feet of land at issue to provide 100% affordable housing for residents vs. the 25% affordability being proposed by the "Monster 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?

**As a civil rights attorney who has worked on both voting rights and census issues, as well as having represented hundreds of undocumented survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, I am very sensitive to the fine line between access to government services and putting community members at risk. In general, I would work with trusted community-based organizations to facilitate outreach and education to the community.**

**I also think San Francisco has underutilized its City ID program and we should examine whether the City ID program could be a part of the strategy to protect our immigrant communities. For example, if every San Francisco resident was provided with a City ID, it would be much more challenging if not impossible for non-citizens to be targeted.**

**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?**

**Since joining the City College Board, I have been focused on the low graduation and transfer rates of Latinx, African American, and Pacific Islander students from City College. At City College, students of color have been disproportionately placed into remedial math and English courses that serve as unnecessary obstacles to matriculating and graduating in a timely fashion. We lack counseling and tutoring services, proven to support student achievement, on demand. Finally, our facilities must be updated and upgraded; it is difficult to focus when you are forced to sit on the ground while listening to a lecture or have to wade through water to get to your classroom. As a Trustee, I have been leading on the efforts to address these very issues.**

**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?**

**Elected boards should represent the diversity of our community. Last year, I was proud to early endorse Gabriela Lopez, a Latina Spanish bilingual candidate and the only public school teacher candidate in the race.**

**I'm open to the discussion of district elections for the School Board. However, when I look at the history of school board elections, there were no Latinx candidates who ran for school board in 2010 and 2014. Bobbi Lopez ran in 2008 and despite declaring on the last day to file, came in 5th place out of 15 candidates, just missing the top four by .5% votes. More important than changing the current election system, we need to mentor and support future Latinx candidates to run in future Board of Education races and run early. When we run, we can win citywide.**

**I will continue to endorse and support candidates who represent all members of our community and will work with and look to the Latino Democratic Club for direction and**

leadership. Both the Latinx and Asian American communities have suffered from a lack of representation. I believe communities of color should and can work productively together to make sure all our voices are heard.

*For clarification purposes only, Commissioner Mark Sanchez served on the San Francisco Board of Education from 2001-2008.*

**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?

As an attorney who represented asylum-seekers and immigrant crime victims, including domestic violence and human trafficking survivors, I appreciate the importance and value in providing holistic representation of clients who have suffered trauma including social service support, shelter/housing, job training, child care and education. Through SFILEN and other networks, I have had the privilege of working with so many community organizations such as the African Advocacy Network (Joe), CARECEN, the La Raza Community Resource Center (Melba) and Mujeres Unidas just to name a few. I know that many of my clients would never had made it through the long legal process if they didn't have the support of these community partners and the comprehensive legal and social services network that we were able to provide by working together.

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

Yes

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

As a Board, we are affirmatively trying to build student housing on City College property that would be available to students regardless of immigration status.

**Criminal Justice:**

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

I support the implementation of the recommendations of the Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing. While I think that the San Francisco Police Department has made enormous strides in terms of implementing parts of the plan, from a layperson's perspective, I think there is still substantial room for improvement in terms of the police

department's interactions with communities of color, communities of limited English proficiency, and individuals in mental health crisis. Until and unless the department can demonstrate marked progress in these areas, I am against adding another instrument of force. There are no shortcuts in community-based policing, the long term answer is in improving police-community relations and not in any particular tool.

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

Law enforcement experts agree that City College is one of the primary paths out of recidivism which is why I am so focused on making sure that we fight for classes which help students achieve their GED, help students with job training, and steer them towards high-paying jobs or a four-year college to break the cycle.

In today's economy, a high school diploma is no longer sufficient to compete for jobs with a career ladder. Free City College has been and continues to be the path towards real and meaningful employment.

**Equity:**

**15.) How would you support cannabis and alcohol parity for the Mission and Excelsior with other San Francisco neighborhoods?**

While I was working in the office of Supervisor Jane Kim, I was able to work in partnership with neighborhood residents in the Tenderloin to address the oversaturation of stores primarily selling tobacco and liquor products and the dearth of fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, and grains available. Residents fought to convert corner liquor stores into healthy corner stores and store owners were open to the idea of selling healthier products once they could see that they could still earn a living and take care of their families without selling tobacco and liquor. Community engagement on this issue is key because the residents and workers and small business owners are the ones who have to buy in to the idea and act as anchors for these changes in order to achieve long-term impacts. While the state controls issuances and approvals of liquor permits, the City has zoning controls to allow, or disallow, uses that serve the public in a specific way - zoning and land use regulations are tools that we can use to support the parity desired by the community.

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

I believe there is tangible and intangible value in supporting candidates that have a track record of serving their community, whether it is a candidate for city government, city commission or advisory committee, elected office, or legislative staff. In my career as a community advocate and attorney, I have actively sought out relationships and partnerships with other communities of interest. We have to work in coalition and not

allow ourselves to be used against other communities of color.

As a member of the Rose Pak Democratic Club, I supported the club's early endorsement of Gabriela Lopez during the last school board election despite the fact that there were Asian American candidates also running who did not receive early endorsement for the reasons stated above in question 9. I supported the election of my fellow trustee, Brigitte Davila, who has deep roots in both higher education and the Latinx community. I advocated for and supported hiring Bobbi Lopez and Jon Jacobo, also both bilingual, as legislative aides in Supervisor Jane Kim's office. Having individuals who have served their community and know the community's concerns, needs, and aspirations is incredibly important because only with that on-the-ground knowledge can you identify and develop the most effective policies in partnership with the community.

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

As a trustee, I have advocated for an equity analysis for significant changes that are being proposed for the college. For example, as the college moves forward a bond measure to address the long-deferred maintenance and lack of seismic safety of the college's facilities, I asked for an equity analysis of the proposed list of priority projects to ensure that we are centering the needs of our students of color as we make those decisions. I have also affirmatively sought the counsel of leaders in different communities that I do not know as well as the API community because I believe that the best way for me to be an ally to the Latinx community is to build bridges and keep those relationships strong. That is why my kitchen cabinet includes leaders in the Latinx community, such as Myrna Melgar, Brigitte Davila, Jon Jacobo, and Bobbi Lopez.