

## Assembly District 17 - Candidate Questionnaire

### 1. Why are you running for this office?

I am running for California Assembly because my broad, diverse and extensive professional experiences will make me the most effective, progressive legislator in Sacramento among the candidates in this race. I have been tested more than anyone running.

I am running because representation matters. San Francisco hasn't elected a Latino or Latina to represent it in the California Legislature since the 1800's. It is time to change that. Given the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had on the Latinx Community and communities of color, it is time that someone who personally understands this suffering and sacrifice represents San Francisco in the Capitol. At a time when Dreamers and immigrants are scapegoated and under attack, the fact that a formerly undocumented person like me could represent San Francisco would make a huge difference for Dreamers and immigrants in San Francisco and throughout California.

Lastly, this is the seat that Harvey Milk ran for more than 40 years ago. For many in the LGBTQ Community it is critical to once again have LGBTQ representation in this seat. Prior to the current Assemblymember, this seat was held by Tom Ammiano, Mark Leno, and Carole Migden, three incredible queer leaders who were trail blazers for the community. Having someone from the LGBTQ Community means that the person will be a leader who isn't afraid to push the envelope the way Ammiano, Leno and Migden did for so many years.

### 2. What are your values and how did you get them?

My political philosophy has always been that as a society, we are only as strong as those who have the least. This comes from my personal experience. When my family first came to the U.S. we lived in a one room apartment. But my parents never complained about the conditions in our home, which included mold and rodents, because we lived in fear of eviction — neighbors who complained were evicted. For anyone who has never felt the fear of losing your home to eviction, it can be hard to describe. It's also difficult to describe the fear of your documentation status being found out, or the fear of going hungry at night because you don't have enough resources to put food on the table. I have dedicated my career in public service to fighting for those people.

### 3. What communities do you represent and how do they hold you accountable?

As a formerly undocumented, gay man of color who has spent his career fighting for the most marginalized in our society, I represent many communities. I represent immigrants in our fight for equal rights and pursuit of our common dreams. I represent the Black, Latinx, and API

communities in our fights against racism and discrimination. I represent renters who need a champion in government. I represent the marginally housed and homeless who need dignity, respect, and real solutions not rhetoric. I represent seniors like my parents who have given me so much. I represent the LGBTQ community in our fights for civil rights and a life free from fear, and I represent our children and young people who deserve a planet that has not been destroyed by the greed and selfishness of the fossil fuel industry and the politicians in their pocket.

For the last 20 years of my career, I've worked directly with members from every single one of these communities. I have worked hard to ensure that these groups know that I am accessible. If they call, I answer. If they march, I march with them. If they need me to vote on an issue or push for reforms, I use my position to champion their key issues. I am proud that these communities have held me accountable and I am proud of the work that we've accomplished together. Our campaign is 100% corporate-free because I believe that is the only way I can prove to each and every one of the communities mentioned above that I am accountable to them and them alone.

4. What three endorsements are you most proud of?

The Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club

The San Francisco Tenants Union

The majority of the Board of Supervisors (Chan, Peskin, Mar, Preston, Mandelman, and Ronen)

5. What do you think David Chiu's top accomplishment was as Assemblyperson for AD-17?

I was impressed that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, David Chiu worked tirelessly to protect renters. Many of the rent forgiveness programs and eviction protection laws that were passed with relative ease in San Francisco were virtually impossible to pass at the state level. And while we needed a longer eviction moratorium, and a system that put the burden of rent forgiveness more directly on the banks that can easily afford it, the work of Assm. Chiu and others in the legislature kept thousands and thousands of families in their homes.

6. Can you describe an instance where you would have done something different than David Chiu as Assemblyperson for AD-17?

I, along with the League of Pissed off Voters, worked tirelessly to take things in a fundamentally different direction 7 years ago, and we were defeated by corporate interests. As an Assemblymember I would have tackled the crippling inequality in our state more directly, working to eradicate poverty, end hunger, and keep people in their homes.

Supporters of ours in Sacramento have told me that "the same coalition of business interests" that supported Assm. Chiu is preparing to support my opponent this time around.

7. What three policy changes at the state level would have the biggest impact on California's housing crisis? Specifically, how would you work for these policy changes if elected?

- 1.) **Repeal Costa-Hawkins.** We must expand rent control in California. As Chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party I worked hard to try and pass state props 10 and 21, but ultimately we were unsuccessful. We must continue to push, and as Vice Chair of the CA
- 2.) **Repeal Article 34.** We need to get serious about building a massive amount of social housing across California, and if we are going to do that we must repeal Article 34 statewide so that we are not forced to go the ballot locally in every jurisdiction with measure's like Dean Preston's Prop K last year (which I enthusiastically supported).
- 3.) **Create a permanent stream of funding for affordable housing.** Finally, in order to truly solve our state's housing crisis we must create a permanent stream of funding at the state level through statewide housing bond so that we are no longer solely reliant on local jurisdictions which, as we have seen, cannot adequately keep up with our needs.

8. What piece of legislation or policy are you most proud of having worked on?

There are a few pieces of legislation that I have worked on over the years that were, in many ways, a kind of love letter to my community. I was so proud to have worked on policy that protects due process for undocumented youth. Being detained at a young age for crossing the border with my family in search of the American Dream had a profound impact on me, and being able to work on policy that will protect undocumented youth for generations to come was incredibly important to me. I am also proud of the work we did to close a loophole in the universal healthcare system here in San Francisco and force companies to actually provide healthcare for vulnerable workers instead of just pocketing money. And finally I will always take pride in the work we did to stop the evictions of families and educators during the school year.

9. Could you share a favorite San Francisco holiday tradition?

One of my favorite holiday traditions this time of year is going to see the Christmas tree and decorations in Union Square with my husband, then going to find presents for our bulldog, Nacho. Every year, we wake up on Christmas Day, enjoy a cup of coffee together, then take Nacho on a walk around Bernal. It's nice to take a moment with your loved ones and reflect on the year and all that we have to be grateful for, living in and fighting for the future of the wonderful, beautiful city of San Francisco.