

# Assembly District 17 - Candidate Questionnaire: Matt Haney

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

For over 15 years, I've fought for progressive policy change—for workers, tenants, students, families, immigrants, and small businesses. I'm not afraid to take on San Francisco's toughest challenges or stand up to the wealthiest and most powerful interests. Whether it's getting people into housing and services, taxing billionaires and big corporations, standing with organized labor and workers to fund public services, bringing more staffing and resources to our schools, calling out corruption and fighting for accountability and transparency in government, or expanding health and mental health services, I've been a consistent, accountable, progressive legislator and I've delivered.

The crises of wealth inequality, homelessness, housing affordability, and impending climate catastrophe are intersectional and require California to step up in unprecedented ways: build massive levels of affordable and social housing, expand transit and clean energy infrastructure, dramatically grow the social safety net and public services to protect the most vulnerable, grow and stabilize the middle class by ensuring every job has a living wage, pension and health care, and force big corporations and billionaires to pay their fair share. We've done those things together and made progress on the local level, but there is so much work left to do. I am running for the State Assembly because these problems require big, bold solutions at the state level, and accountable, progressive elected officials with the track record, vision, and leadership to get it done.

I was raised here in the Bay Area by a single mom. I went to public schools and a public university. I live in the Tenderloin as a renter. My whole family is here, including my Grandparents who live here in San Francisco and have been here my whole life. They taught me to see the opportunities and possibilities of California, but also that there is so much left to do, and that our responsibility is to spend a life of service fighting alongside our neighbors to make it more fair and just for everyone.

After graduating from UC Berkeley, my first job was in the state legislature as a state senate fellow and legislative aide. I learned there how important the work of the California state legislature is, but also that far too often the politicians there are not accountable, and work more for lobbyists than for the people. After law school, I turned down a job at a big law firm, and instead served as Executive Director of the UC Student Association, where I led advocacy and outreach on behalf of the 200,000+ UC students across the state, winning multiple tuition freezes and helping pass the California DREAM Act. I co-founded and led #cut50, fighting and delivering on criminal justice reform statewide and working to end mass incarceration. I taught human centered design at Stanford, and defended families as a pro bono eviction defense

attorney.

I served for six years on the San Francisco Board of Education, including as Board President, where I expanded computer science education to all students, ended racist school discipline policies with the Safe and Supportive Schools policy, fought for affordable educator housing, and secured additional funding for public schools across the city.

As Supervisor, I've kept my commitments to my constituents, including our most vulnerable residents, and delivered on progressive policy goals: together we passed Mental Health SF which dramatically grew our social safety net for people in need of behavioral health care and treatment, delivered on universal eviction protections for all residents, we set the cap at 30% of income as rent for SRO supportive housing tenants, we introduced and dramatically expanded 24 hour bathrooms, street cleaning, and trash cans, we housed thousands of people in new affordable housing and thousands more in shelter in place hotels, we implemented traffic safety measures to protect pedestrians and people biking and lowered the speed limits, we passed new revenue measures like the Overpaid Executive Tax to invest in services for those in need, we fought corruption and to restore integrity and accountability to our government, we brought new parks and open spaces and safety initiatives, we protected our small businesses and cherished music and entertainment venues, and we passed a budget that made historic investments in mental health, the API, Latinx, Black and LGBT+ communities, treatment and housing. I would bring this same relentless commitment to my constituents as your state Assemblymember.

Throughout the pandemic when workers were facing some of their most dangerous and vulnerable moments, I did not just talk about being there for workers, I showed up for workers. I collected tens of thousands of masks and gloves and delivered them to frontline staff.. I authored legislation to ensure private sectors were guaranteed sick leave and protections. I was the only Supervisor who showed up and worked as a Disaster Service Worker in a COVID shelter in place hotel, because anything we ask others to do, we should be willing to do ourselves. When some in our city government wanted layoffs or cuts, I was the first Supervisor to stand up and say no. I stood strong with labor throughout the pandemic, refusing to accept austerity that would balance the budget on the backs of our city's workforce. I fought to make sure we fully funded the minimum compensation ordinance, and walked the picket line with every union that was in a contract fight, at hospitals, the airport, and at the doors of big companies like Uber and Lyft.

I authored the Overpaid Executive Tax (CEO tax), and we passed it with an overwhelming majority, which will bring an expected \$80+ million a year to fund essential services like nurses, social workers, librarians, and educators. I know that we can work together to deliver similar solutions at the state level.

We are at a pivotal moment in California: we must reverse soaring inequality, fully fund our schools and colleges, build more affordable housing, confront the threat of climate change, deliver guaranteed health care for all through Medicare for All, and push for transformative innovations like high speed rail and clean energy infrastructure. These huge challenges and big ideas require state leadership — they cannot be accomplished by one city or district alone. We need the entire state to build housing, provide health care and mental health care, build public transportation infrastructure, create middle class jobs, and administer services for those in need, and to be held accountable to do so.

The pandemic saw some people do very well, as billionaires grew their wealth exponentially. But everyone else struggled: workers, students, small businesses, communities of color. Black and Latinx residents were excluded from our state's prosperity even more so than before, and API residents were under attack from xenophobia, hatred and violence. Those are the folks I will fight and deliver for, and I'm not afraid to take on the biggest, most powerful interests to do it. I am proud to have the support of both Assemblymember Ash Kalra, Chair of the Progressive Caucus and the Labor Committee, and Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez, and these are two elected officials that I would model my leadership on as a State Assemblymember.

In the community that I represent now and especially in the Tenderloin, SoMA, and Treasure Island, we know better than anywhere that when the state fails, and when other cities and counties fail to take care of people, they often end up here. We can't continue to accept that. We will take care of everyone that we can, but at some point we have to go up the river and build the systems, housing and services we need so that people aren't tossed aside. The destructive forces of hate, discrimination, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, transphobia, inequality are what we are up against. But we can grow the circle of compassion so that no one is discarded. With determination, hard work, and innovation, our state can provide that leadership, and together I believe our community can lead that fight.

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

My family has influenced my deep rooted values of empathy, compassion, transparency, and commitment to public service. My grandparents were civil rights activists who were close friends and confidants of Martin Luther King Jr. and his family. My grandfather was an educator and civil rights activist, my dad works to end the death penalty and solitary confinement, my mom spent her entire career advocating for children's health care, and my sister is a public defender.

My whole life I've been surrounded by family members who instilled in me the mandate to stand up against injustice and for people in my community who were being excluded or treated unfairly. They taught me my values and the responsibility to spend a life of service fighting alongside our neighbors to make our community more fair and just for everyone. In line with this

approach, I have always remained committed to equity and collaboration in policy making decisions.

Growing up in a single parent household in the Bay Area, we moved 12 times by the time I turned 15. I lived in a lot of different apartment buildings, and saw firsthand the challenges that were faced by my neighbors and friends. I also saw very quickly that many of my friends, particularly if they were Black or Latino, were treated differently than me in school and were often punished or excluded from school all together. One of my closest friends, Kevin, was suspended, expelled and then ended up in juvenile hall and jail, and committed suicide at age 19. I have worked since then to do everything I can to make our institutions more fair and compassionate, so that we don't discard or undervalue people in the way that our schools and criminal justice system did to Kevin.

A big part of my value system is transparency and accountability. I believe that anything that I know, any information that I can gain, should be shared with the public. I believe deeply that people will make the right decisions for themselves if they have access to information and a seat at the table. With that, I believe in holding individuals, corporations, and the government accountable on behalf of the people that they represent. I'll always fight for a more accountable, responsive, and connected government that truly serves public needs. That is why in the wake of San Francisco's corruption scandals I called for sweeping reform to demand more accountability, oversight, and transparency in our city departments. I introduced anti-corruption legislation to put an end to shakedown donations and close the loopholes in city policy that were being abused by bad actors involved in the scandals.

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

In my current position as Supervisor, I am accountable to the constituents I represent in District 6. This includes all of my constituents, including those who are often excluded from government or power—SRO tenants, people who are currently and formerly homeless, people who are sick, disabled, or addicted, the elderly, children,immigrants, small businesses, tenants. I have been deeply connected and accountable to all of these constituencies. They hold me accountable with regular forums open to the public, which I've held in every neighborhood in my district multiple times. I always make myself available to meet individually with constituents or with groups or organizations. I communicate regularly on social media and am always available for questions or feedback. I also walk my district daily, as I don't own a car, and talk to my constituents everyday. I'm accessible and transparent with all of my constituents, not solely the wealthy or powerful.

In this race, I have also received the broad and overwhelming support of working people across the district. Over 40 labor unions have endorsed me in this race, representing over 1.5 million workers statewide. I am accountable to working people through close relationships and regular ongoing dialogue and partnership with labor unions.

#### **4. What three endorsements are you most proud of?**

The three endorsements I am most proud of include:

- (1) Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California (including SEIU Local 1021, SEIU Local 2015, SEIU United Health Care Workers (SEIU UHW), SEIU United Service Workers West (SEIU USWW), CFA (California Faculty Association), CSUEU (CSU staff union), SEIU Local 87 (Janitors), and the SEIU Committee on Interns and Residents (CIR))
- (2) AFSCME 3299 (UC staff union, who I've worked with for over 10 years)
- (3) Ash Kalra, California State Assemblymember, Chair of the California Legislative Progressive Caucus and Chair of the Labor and Employment Committee

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

I am grateful for the work City Attorney Chiu has done in the Assembly. I believe his top accomplishment was the work that he did to prevent evictions and support tenants during the pandemic. He was a relentless champion, when many others were silent, to stop evictions and extend rental assistance to those who had pandemic related rent debt. It is critical that we have an Assemblymember who continues this work for tenants.

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

Assemblymember Chiu did incredible work to extend eviction protections amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. I believe we need to build on this work, with even more permanent, widespread, and transformational solutions for tenants.

We need universal just cause eviction protections for everyone in California. I have delivered on this locally, authoring Just Cause Eviction Protection legislation at the Board of Supervisors, which requires landlords to have just cause for evicting tenants from units built after 1979. AB 1482 was a huge win for tenants statewide, but it still excludes thousands of tenants by leaving out all buildings built in the last 15+ years, now and in the future. In addition, AB 1482 only goes into effect after you have been a tenant for a year, and has exemptions for certain types of housing. In San Francisco, our legislation included everyone, and doesn't require the one year minimum. We need a clear, uniform standard statewide so that no one has to live in fear of arbitrary evictions, and this is something I would do to build on the critically important work that Assemblymember Chiu did with AB1482.

Out of 120 legislators in California, only two are tenants. I would be the third, and the only tenant that lives in rent controlled housing. It is critical that we have the perspective and experience of tenants represented in the state legislature.

**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 absolutely need to be able expand rent control and vacancy controls to more units and more areas across the state.
2. Tax corporations and the super wealthy to fund affordable housing.
3. Massive expansion of social housing. The state needs to take more units off of the speculative market with innovative financing mechanisms in order to address the housing needs of our state.

In order to accomplish these goals, I will work to build power for tenants, vulnerable communities, and working people. It will require both coalition building inside the building and outside across our state. I believe there is a strong desire from the public to see these solutions implemented, the question will be the political will and accountable, progressive elected officials who can deliver. I will seek to join the Housing Committee and I will be a strong champion for tenants, for affordable housing, and for innovative solutions, as I have been for my 9 years in elected office.

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

In 2020 I authored Prop L—a first-in-the-nation Overpaid Executive Tax (CEO tax) on any corporation that pays their top executive over 100 times their typical worker. The drastic pay inequities that we were seeing in San Francisco and across the country was astonishing with the very wealthy getting richer during the pandemic, while everyone else remained stagnant or worse off. We saw this inequity skyrocket as thousands of residents across the city lost their jobs during the pandemic, while the biggest companies continued to make billions of dollars. At the same time, we have been struggling to pay our healthcare workers and hire more nurses, mental health workers, and other frontline workers. Prop L received 65% of the votes and won in nearly every precinct. It will generate tens of millions of dollars to the city annually to help offset the impacts of these inequities and invest in public services.

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

One of my favorite holiday traditions in San Francisco is the Boeddeker Park tree lighting. The first annual holiday tree lighting in Boeddeker Park was in 2018, and I have been proud to lead the countdown alongside residents and community leaders. The tree is decorated by ornaments representing the many faiths of the community, some of which are crafted by neighborhood seniors and children. I am proud to be a resident of the Tenderloin, and grateful to all the community partners who have worked so hard to make this event a success.