

Jennifer Williams, candidate
Alameda Unified School Board
August 26, 2016
Responses to Green Party of Alameda County's endorsement questionnaire

1. Motivation – Why did you chose to run for School Board? I chose to run for the Alameda School Board because I have a strong calling to public service. My mother is a retired school nurse and held office for the California School Nurses Association. My father's side of the family served in the Navy. My paternal grandfather was the Commanding Officer for President Jimmy Carter, who writes about the influence my grandfather had on him in one of his books. Public service is a value I have grown up with and it is important for me to contribute to my community in a positive way. My husband and I have two children in public school in Alameda and I have been active in their education since kindergarten. I am motivated to work for strong educational outcomes for all children in Alameda.

2. Program and Priorities -- Elected office provides the opportunity to proactively lead by placing new ideas on the agenda for consideration and development. What are some specific ideas you intend to pursue if elected? What do you believe are the main priorities for the School Board?

My priorities for the School Board are to train, attract, and retain high quality teachers; provide innovation in educational programs and opportunities, and to work with collaborative communication and fiscal responsibility. I would like to have greater career technical opportunities for Alameda students as well as partnerships with the building and trades so that students have options when they graduate from high school.

3. Qualifications -- Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of School Board. If you are an incumbent, what issues can you point to in your time as an incumbent that have had a positive impact? As an incumbent what can you tell us about your service on the school board, and share with us the decisions you have made in this capacity that you believe made a difference in the functioning of the school district?

In 1990, I graduated from UC Riverside with a degree in Political Science and in 1993 from McGeorge School of Law with a law degree. I passed the California Bar that year and have been a member of the California Bar in good standing ever since. I have been a public sector lawyer for 23 years, working primarily with government agencies serving children who are the victims of child abuse and neglect. I was General Counsel to the San Francisco Human Services Agency for over a decade, and am now an Administrative Law Judge for the City and County of San Francisco working primarily with indigent adults.

My husband and I have been married for 17 years and have lived in Alameda for 16 years. My husband has been a San Francisco Police Officer for 20 years. We have two beautiful children who attend public school. I have been actively involved in their education from the beginning, volunteering weekly in their classrooms. I have been an active member in the PTA, including holding the offices of Parliamentarian and PTA President for two years. Through that work I became involved in issues at the District level. I am a member of the AUSD Measure A Oversight Committee and the AUSD LGBTQ Equity Roundtable, a position I have held since 2012. In that capacity I have worked closely with District staff to implement policies that, among other things, protect the rights of transgender youth consistent with the Safe Schools and Opportunity Act of 2013 (AB 1266). I am also the President-elect of the Alameda Social Service Human Relations Board, a Board that oversees the RFP process for the City of Alameda's Community Development Block Grant process and coordinates the homeless count for the City of Alameda. I was appointed to the Social Service Human Relations Board in 2012 by then Mayor-Gilmore. Public service is a value that I have grown up with and I continue to strive to make my community a better place for all Alameda families.

4. There has been a concern over the cost of the school district lease in Marina Village which houses the district offices. What are your thoughts about this situation; have you considered a more economical solution to this cost?

The cost of the school district lease in Marina Village is \$500,000.00 per year and an unacceptable use of general fund dollars. I would encourage the District and its counsel to attempt to renegotiate the remaining term of the lease or review the lease to see if there is a way to get out of the terms early. A more economical solution to this cost would be to house district staff in property owned by the District that can accommodate staff or find new space

at a reduced rate.

5. There are close to 4,000 housing units on schedule to be built along the north shore of Alameda. What solutions would you suggest to accommodate the increased number of students this housing would generate and what ideas would you propose to cover the cost of these new school buildings?

In terms of the new development at the prior Navy base, many of Alameda's schools are already impacted and the current AUSD school portfolio cannot accommodate the number of new students that 4,000 housing units will bring. Although AUSD will receive funding for each new student under Local Control Funding formulas, AUSD must develop a master plan in partnership with the City of Alameda to build new schools. As new housing developments are built, impact fees should be negotiated with new developers to accommodate the need for new facilities.

6. How did you perceive the district's refusal to obtain appraisals for the tidelands swap with the city?

I think the District should have had the tidelands appraised before it entered into the agreement with the City of Alameda to swap it for other property at Alameda point. Although the tidelands are property held in public trust and as such have limits on its use, an appraisal would have given the District additional information on the true value of the property before it entered into negotiations with the City that could have verified a fair deal for AUSD.

7. The teachers turned down a contract proposal at the conclusion of the school year. This necessitates negotiating a new contract to settle the dispute. It is our understanding the issue is class size. What suggestions would you offer to settle this dispute and obtain an agreement with the school district teachers?

The community of Alameda values small class size and we must make sure that we are not overburdening our teachers with larger classes that are detrimental to student learning. Given that we have a parcel tax on the ballot in November that is crucial to the overall health of AUSD, it is imperative to have labor piece going into that election to show a united front by the District and the union. We need to work collaboratively with our teachers to figure out both a near term and long term plan to accommodate growth.

8. Accountability -- Concretely and specifically, how will you make yourself accountable to the voters who elect you? How can the voters participate in holding you accountable if you are elected?

I will make myself accountable to the voters that elect me by being accessible to them. This includes having meeting times to be available for face-to-face meetings and being available via email and phone. As PTA President it was important to me that all PTA issues were transparent and the information and budget was readily available for review. I disagreed with PTA policy and posted the PTA budget online so that the budget and the PTA monthly expenditures were open for review by the very people funding the programs. I will take the same approach to Board of Education information as long as the information is not confidential under state or local laws.

9. Campaign Funding -- How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from? Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any).

I have approximately \$10,000.00 for this race. I plan to raise approximately \$15,000.00. I am raising money from friends and people who support my priorities and values in this campaign. I have held many house parties and am meeting many people who have donated to my campaign efforts. I will not take money from any organization or person that has values that are not consistent with mine.

10. Anything else? I would be honored to have the Green Party of Alameda County's endorsement. My current endorsements include Assemblyman Rob Bonta, Alameda City Council Members Jim Oddie and Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft; Alameda Board of Education Trustees Barbara Kahn and Phil Hu; Democratic Central Committee Member Roberta Kreitz, and Alameda Hospital Board Director Jim Meyers. I am also endorsed by the Alameda Education Association, California School Employees Association, Chapter 27, the San Francisco Police Officers

Association, and the Alameda Labor Council. I have been a Democrat for 30 years and support Democratic efforts to preserve the environment. I would be grateful for your support.