

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY 2016 ENDORSEMENT DECISION

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#### 1. Motivation -- Why did you choose to run for School Board?

I am the current school board member for Oakland's District 5 in my first term on the school board after being elected in 2012. I am a mother of a child in public schools, a senior at Oakland Tech and I was a product of public schools in Stockton. I feel that getting an education is the key to get out of poverty and as a criminal defense attorney running my own law firm since March 2004 in Oakland when I moved here from Stockton where I was a prosecutor, I have lots of experience with those who dropped out. We need to serve all students from all economic and racial backgrounds and meet them where they are to advance their lives so they can pull out their inherent skills and live a life of security and dignity in a career suitable to them. I am running for re-election because I have accomplished a few key policies like Ethnic Studies as an A-G course for UC system eligibility; Kindergarten to College part of the Oakland Promise; and I voted for the highest teacher raise in decades, yet I have much more work to do. Such as my current work to create a teacher pipeline that will diversify the workforce of teachers by growing our own who are also multi lingual. I also want to continue growing parent voices so that all kids are being served adequately whether in the flats or the hills.

#### 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?

In addition to the above accomplishments my priorities while on school board have been around improving access to post-graduation opportunities especially for students who college isn't an option via a pre-apprenticeship program through the local trades unions, and on that note I want to bring about more technology based internships and diversity the tech industry that is booming in Oakland now and into the future. I was instrumental in ensuring that OUSD's local hire policy is better focused on deliverables and accountability ensuring minimums are met, and increasing funding for STEM classes so that our students have the computer, coding, and programming skills necessary in our workforce.

If re-elected I will continue to fight for our students to make sure that OUSD reflects their needs and their identities with the offerings of elected classes, and the reclassification required of our English Learners so they can thrive and head to college. I will continue to work towards a school system that works for all of our students throughout the district and eliminate disparities of funding for parts of town. Specifically, I want to ensure that OUSD continues to incorporate restorative justice practices

for disciplinary actions and continue to increase parent involvement by having language-specific forums and townhalls around important issues and navigating OUSD. During my first term I held the first Spanish language townhalls on two occasions for parents which were greatly received as training to develop parent capacity to be not only engaged in schools but actively involved as decision makers of the programs they want to see meet the students needs. Parents are key partner.

3. Qualifications -- Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of School Board member. If you are a current School Board member, what issues can you point to in your time as Board member that have had a positive impact? As a Board member what can you tell us about your service on the 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 Board?

I am the current school board member for District 5. In addition to the above items I've already discussed I have supported the expansion of dual immersion classes at higher grades while making changes to how we approach reclassification process in order provide equity in our schools for English Language Learners. As a mother, a small business owner, and a school board member I have to constantly prioritize my time to ensure that I'm fulfilling my responsibilities to each. I frequent have site visits at schools within my district, meet with parents, teachers, and administrators, I try to attend as many events as possible in our schools – letting parents and students know that I'm invested in their education. During my tenure on the board I have worked to be an objective voice weighing both sides before making a decision or voting on an issue. I believe that this has created greater input and insight into topics such as charter schools, common core, and other, often, politicized issues.

4. School Ratings and Evaluations -- How do you rate the Oakland schools? Name the success and shortcomings?

I'm so proud of how far Oakland schools have come over the last few years. Together we have improved student outcomes at several schools. The reality is though that we have a long way to go until we can really say that Oakland schools are the success that our students need them to be. Bringing the Oakland Promise to OUSD is one of our success stories. Through the Oakland Promise, the Kindergarten to College program will give incoming kindergarten students savings accounts with matching funds, while providing parents financial literacy to better plan for college from an early age of their children and there is proof that an early savings plan leads to higher graduation rates and college attendance. We have piloted successful programs in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math to better prepare our students including having Fremont High be the only recipient of a gift for technology from CODE.ORG. We've focused on coding and programing classes as a priority for students not just an elective.

In the 2012-13 school year our graduation rate was about 67%, that number needs to continue to rise. We cannot afford to fail out children and allow many to slip through the cracks. Our schools also lack consistency across the board. Our parents and students need to know that no matter what school they enroll their children in, that they will receive a high quality education just like any other student in the district.

5. Budget -- What changes to the OUSD budget would you suggest? (include changes to revenue).

I think that more so what we need are changes to the budget process. Stakeholders need a bigger voice and more opportunities to weigh in on the budget which LCAP requires. The OUSD Board should maintain regular budget committee meetings to continually plan and shape the budget while receiving community feedback. Through it all, open and transparent practices should be maintained

in order to foster trust with the community. Residents, parents, students, and teachers are invested in the process of our budget and schools planning will be better invested in education.

6. LCFF & LCAP -- How do you see the impact of the new Local Control Funding Formula and the role of staff and parents/community in LCAP?

Staff and parents/community are critical in the LCAP process and Oakland has done numerous engagements which other districts are looking at to emulate. We can always do more however, since our city is vastly different in some neighborhoods. Without community and parent input the process just does not work. Understanding the real needs of each community around each school should inform the goals and standards set in the LCAP, which then informs the funding received through LCFF. I see this whole process as an opportunity to really engage parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in the local budget process. With correct oversight, outreach, and engagement the process has the potential to transform how we approach the dollars spent at our schools.

7. School Properties: What are your thoughts on maintaining current OUSD sites/properties? Should any sites be shared with charter schools?

Our schools should serve as centers for the communities they are in and the goal would be to have the resources to upgrade them but with the restraint on the budget as CA is 46<sup>th</sup> in funding due to the long term effects of Prop 13, we badly need to find creative fund upgrades. Currently there is a new facilities chief who is preparing a master plan which is long overdue in OUSD to assess where we are and what the greatest needs are now. The students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members affected the most by facilities issues must also have a voice in vetting what proposals we aim to achieve and I feel strongly and have vocalized that student voice is paramount to the process as we serve them most of all. As to the leasing of sites to charter schools, the current state law requires that we provide them options to sites first as a first right of refusal such that we cannot bypass charters that wish to locate on a site under utilized currently.

8. Discipline: Do you believe the current OUSD policy on suspensions is effective? What role do you envision for restorative justice programs?

In the 2013-14 school year nearly 2000 students had one or more days of suspension, that's 2000 students who are missing school for sometimes small infractions. We know that when a student begins the path of contact with law enforcement, there is a greater chance for repeat contact that inevitably leads to juvenile detention or prison. Therefore, we must continue with our restorative practice as a pedagogy embraced by the entire school community and it can be used as a culture shift to prevent issues from arising to begin with. In addition my concern to rush on statistics of reduced suspension must also include the data on having kids leave the class temporarily as discipline which is equally harmful in that the loss of precious minutes of instruction for many student that cannot afford to miss any school, is of great concern to me.

9. Truants and Drop-outs -- What do you suggest we do about the truants and those who have dropped out?

Chronic absences at our schools is an issue, but I don't think that enough is being done to address the root causes of such absences. In speaking with parents and teachers I've learned that sometimes there are issues with gangs, bullying, threats of violence, having clean clothing, reliable transportation, and overall poverty that many students have to work to help parents pay rent or buy food to feed the whole family. Poverty is a major factor that the city leadership can assist with such that summer jobs for teens would keep them busy as crime may spike when they are idle, but saving

over the summer to avoid working during the school year would possibly result. We also need to do a better job of making sure that students and parents know about resources available to them, such as free bus passes, free backpack giveaways, or working with local community-based organizations, and we need to get this information into the hands of those who need it such that my townhalls have served this purpose. At my Spanish language townhalls, we had resources from OUSD and community-based organizations, as well as the City of Oakland available to parents and students most import was free computers from OTX since tools for success are key. Continuing parent engagement and resource outreach is a key component to solving our truancy and drop-out rates.

10. Charter Schools -- What should Oakland's policy be around charter schools? What would you propose, if anything, in lieu of Charter schools? Do you distinguish between the different types? Would you support putting charter schools under the union contract? What are your views on 'common enrollment' and the 'equity pledge'?

Based on information from the recent Grand Jury report on charter schools and my own experience as an elected representative, I believe that it's time to call for a moratorium on new charters in Oakland however, state law has not been reviewed or revamped in the 20 years since it was passed. While it was initially for creating community charters to incubate innovation and then return to the district, this has been thwarted by corporate charters which are top down and not community based, therefore not adequately serving our students well. The reality is that many charters are underperforming and not delivering the quality education that any student in OUSD should receive. It's my opinion that our charter system within OUSD grew too quickly and without the proper infrastructure to be a success. It's time to take a step back, evaluate and re-evaluate best practices, and make decisions for renewals based on student achievement results.

Yes, I would support putting charter schools under a union contract.

I don't believe that common enrollment is a well thought out plan and I don't believe that we fully understand how it will affect student outcomes nor placement in that in other cities it has had mixed results and ultimately caused the closure of traditional public schools yet the alternatives were not better performing schools which is my greatest concern, the loss of jobs to our staff and teachers thereby disrupting our workforce.

The Equity Pledge is an idea that I am still debating will work since it does not require all charters to work with the district and it remains to be seen how the work actually helps OUSD. Overall, we need to ensure that the voices of students, parents, teachers from district and charter schools are heard and given a platform. That is the only way a pledge like this can succeed.

11. Testing and Teacher Evaluations -- What should our policy be around Student Testing and Teacher Evaluation? Do you see alternatives to the use of mandated standardized tests in meeting local, state and national education goals? How much are we teaching to the test now, and what should we be doing different if you feel it should be different?

Teachers need to be trusted and over dependence on testing as a measurement is unfair and leads to the loss of joy for students which is a great concern for me, as that can also reduce truancy and drop out rates. Teachers need to be given the tools and resources necessary to create and manage a robust and creative curriculum while ensuring that standards are met and growth is real. I feel that we must not move toward more "teaching to the test" which avoids addressing the specific needs of specific communities within our school system. Across the country standardized testing isn't working, it's not prevent drop-out rates from climbing and it's not ensuring that our students are getting the education they deserve. There are several alternatives that can measure teacher efficacy

and student knowledge/retention such as online coursework that measures correct answers each time that a student completes an assignment, increased mentoring of teachers ensures that newer teachers have someone to reach out to for assistance.

12. Common Core -- What are your views on the use of the proposed Common Core curriculum?

I think that not enough has been done to really test the efficacy of Common Core curriculum. In states where Common Core was fully implemented there has been as much as a 30% decline in test scores. The idea that standardizing a curriculum that "teaches to the test" is going to solve low performance in school is just wrong. During the creation of Common Core I don't feel that enough input from veteran teachers was incorporated and that too many private interests were involved that didn't have the best interests in the education of our children in mind. The ability of our teachers to think creatively and build a curriculum that enriches and educates our children is what is needed.

13. Small Schools -- What are your ideas on the experience in the OUSD with 'small schools' ad/or 'academies'?

There is no argument that smaller schools mean smaller class size which in turn mean more one-on-one time between teacher and students. I think that Oakland has several great examples of successful small schools including Met West, ASCEND, and ACORN Woodland. Community-based organizations were key in bringing together parents, teachers, and community leaders to ensure the success of those schools. And the schools continue to innovate and create robust opportunities for students. However, other small schools haven't been as successful. What I feel though is that overall there needs to be more standards set by the OUSD Board and accountability measures that ensure underperforming schools, or at-risk of underperforming, are caught quickly so not to potentially damage the education of our students.

14. Central Resources -- How do you think the allocations of central resources should work and how should that relate to local school funding? How can there be greater balance in different socio-economic' communities in the city?

I think that we need to take a closer look at the services that we have in our central office and the services that we are contracting out. I really believe that resources should be fairly distributed with the most at-need schools getting focused attention while they solve whatever issues they may be having. If schools in lower-income areas need greater resources then we need to ensure that they are receiving those resources in order to ensure successful student outcomes.

15. City/Government Relations -- How should the City of Oakland support the OUSD, and education in general?

I think that the role of the City of Oakland is to ensure that residents know about the opportunities available in OUSD and help champion the importance and value of our education system. Our schools should be centers within the community where information about city services and programs should be available to students and parents. In general, the City of Oakland should continue to support measures and grant programs that fund quality public-education. During my first term I built positive relationships with City officials and departments to bring resources into our schools.

16. Police -- What is your position on Campus police? How would you create an environment where police are not needed?

This is a complex and multi-faceted issue. We need to create an environment that reduces the need for campus police. We need to make sure that our students don't have a reason to bring weapons or other contraband to school. We need to work with the City of Oakland

17. Unions -- What do you think of the relationship between the OUSD and the unions? What would you propose it should be and how would you act on that?

The relationship with OUSD and the teachers' unions can always be improved. I think that through open communication and transparency that the relationship can be further improved. Overall, I have worked to bring our teachers' union more into the fold and ensure that they are heard as a stakeholder. Furthermore, I have built solid relationships between OUSD and many of the affiliates of the Building and Construction Trades Council, such as the Carpenters and Laborers unions. These partnerships benefit our students directly through training and apprenticeships.

18. Adult Education -- What is your position on Adult Education?

Adult education is needed and valuable to our community. The ability for a student who just didn't quite graduate or for a returning student getting their GED to be able to access classes and resource to do so is tantamount to a fully-funded robust education system.

19. Vocational Education -- What is your position Vocational Education?

Vocational training is a great alternative to college. Many training programs provide a stipend or wage for program participants and critical skills are acquired. I've worked closely with many labor unions within the Building and Construction Trades to ensure that our training programs also include a pathway to good paying jobs.

20. 'Academics vs. Electives' -- What is the proper balance between academics and sports, arts and other electives? Do you support using organizations such as Play Works to provide sports, arts and other electives formally provided by staff before the series of cutbacks?

A school curriculum that includes robust academic standards, sports for physical health and enrichment, and arts or other electives that channel creativity are an essential component to student success. The reality is that our students need to enrich their minds with creativity. I would like to return to a time in OUSD where these classes and activities are offered by full-time, OUSD teachers and staff. Although, I do believe that there is a place for outside partnerships in afterschool programs.

21. The School Day -- What is your opinion on the length of the school day and the role of before school and after school programs?

I am open to discussing the options for shortening the school day, I've heard arguments on both sides of the table. I think, however, our before and after school programs are invaluable to the success of our students and families who rely on the extra help. I would continue to look for creative ways to support after school programs both as a component of OUSD and through partner organizations.

22. Accountability/ responsibility -- How do you propose making yourself accountable and accessible to the citizens of Oakland? How might this relate to policies advocated for by the superintendent?

Since being elected in 2012 I have worked hard to make myself accessible to all citizens of Oakland. I have held several forums and townhalls, attend school sites regularly, meet with parents, teachers,

and administrators, and try to attend as many school events as I can. Every parent, student, teacher, and stakeholder in our public schools should know that they can reach out at any time.

23. Money in Politics -- Do you support amending the Constitution to end corporate Constitutional rights and getting money out of politics? Have you [Taken the Pledge to Amend?](https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend) (<https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend> )

Yes I support this and I have taken the pledge.

24. Endorsements -- Who has endorsed you so far? By whom do you expect to be endorsed? Who are you endorsing, from President all the way down ballot to local races?

#### Organizations

Alameda Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
Building and Construction Trades of Alameda County  
Northern California Regional Carpenters Regional Council  
Laborers International Union of North America, Local Union#304  
East Bay Young Democrats  
Hispanic Engineers, Builders, and Contractors (HEBCo)

#### Elected Officials

Hon. Tony Thurmond, California State Assemblymember AD-15  
Hon. Richard Valle, Supervisor County of Alameda  
Hon. Joe Coto, Former California State Assemblymember AD-23  
Hon. Jean Quan, Former Mayor of Oakland  
Hon. Julina Bonilla, Vice-President Peralta Community Colleges Board  
Hon. Abel Guillen, Oakland City Councilmember, District 2  
Hon. Noel Gallo, Oakland City Councilmember, District 5  
Hon. Shanthi Gonzalez, OUSD School Board Member  
Hon. Matt Haney, President SFUSD Board of Education  
Hon. De'Shawn Woolridge, Teacher, Vice-President Pittsburg Unified School District  
Hon. David Vela, Former Montebello Unified School District Board Trustee; Honor PAC Founding Member  
Hon. Oscar De La Torre, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board  
Hon. Barbara Flores, President-Latino School Board Assoc of CA. San Bernardino Board Member  
Hon. Fred Tovar, Gilroy School Board Member

#### Community Leaders

Aimee Allison, Senior Vice President of PowerPAC+  
Holly Alonso, Executive Director, Peralta Hacienda Historical Park  
Robert Apodaca, Housing Advocate  
Alicia Contreras, Executive Director, Spanish Speaking Citizens' Foundation  
Jose Dorado, Fruitvale Small Business Owner  
Romeo Garcia, Dean of Special Programs, Merritt College  
Diego Gonzalez Latinx Young Democrats East Bay  
Dr. Floyd Huen, Physician, Activist  
Chris Iglesias, Executive Director, The Unity Council  
Genice Jacobs, anti-trafficking activist (Abolitionist Mom)  
Benjamin Leon, Teacher, Hayward Unified School District  
Monica Montenegro, Executive Director, East Bay Consortium of Educational Institutions

Krystell Guzman, Director/Owner, La Plazita Preschool  
Emiliano Sanchez, Administrator, OUSD

I have not made many endorsements in races at this time.

25. 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 currently have raised nearly \$20,000 and plan to raise another \$40,000 for this race. My money comes from my extensive network of family, friends, and supporters.

26. Anything Else? -- Is there anything else you would like us to know about you? As the only candidate that is a parent, with a 12<sup>th</sup> grade student at Oakland Tech, I have the experience for 13 years of volunteering and being a part of the school communities knowing that there are many frustrations but I place trust on the system to do its best for my child, and she has succeeded with the fact that she is on her way to an Ivy League education. I have diligently served District 5 while running my own law firm, which is in Oakland since 2004 while mentoring students of color interested in a career as a lawyer for the past 10 years.