

**South Bay Progressive Alliance
Candidate Questionnaire
For School District**



Please download and complete the questionnaire and email the completed document to info@SouthBayPA.org. By submitting your responses to this questionnaire to the South Bay Progressive Alliance (SBPA), you agree that your responses are public and that we may share your responses with others.

Name: Ketzal Gomez

School District Name: Santa Clara County Board of Education

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Line of Work: Public Employee County of Santa Clara

Candidate Pledge:

If you cannot make the following 4 affirmative pledges, the SBPA cannot endorse you at this time.

CORPORATE-FREE. As a corporate-free candidate I commit to refuse donations from corporations, industry lobbyists, corporate representatives, political bundlers, and Political Action Committees, Charter Schools Associations (except for union PACs and PACs that refuse corporate donations), and publicize that “I am a corporate free candidate” in my campaign literature. YES NO

PLEDGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY. I commit to publicize and hold regular listening sessions with my constituents, to stay in touch with their needs and concerns. YES NO

PROGRESSIVE POLICIES. I commit to author, co-author, support, promote and defend people-focused progressive policies and practices that incorporate SBPA core values to improve communities and the quality of life for my constituents. YES NO

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION. I commit to help level the playing field for ALL people and prioritize the development of leadership among under-represented communities. YES NO

General Questions:

1. Endorsements—

1. Who are you endorsing, from national races, all the way down from ballot to local races?

I have not endorsed any candidates for the 2020 general election.

2. Are you endorsing anyone else in your own race?

No.

3. Who has endorsed you?

Community Organizations:

- South Bay Labor Council
- California Teachers Association
- SEIU 521
- San Jose Teachers Association
- Palo Alto Educators Association
- United Teachers of Santa Clara
- Silicon Valley Young Democrats
- Santa Clara County Stonewall Democrats

State Leaders:

- Ash Kalra, CA State Assemblymember
- Jim Beall, CA State Senator
- Betty Yee, CA State Controller

Education Leaders:

- Claudia Rossi, SCCBOE President
- Brian Wheatley, SJUSD Vice President
- Teresa Castellanos, SJUSD President
- Carla Collins, SJUSD Trustee
- Richard Garcia, Former SJUSD Trustee

4. Whose endorsements are you seeking or expect to receive?

Democratic Clubs

Labor Affiliates

2. **Campaign Funding** — a. How much money have you raised so far? \$11k

b. How much do you plan to raise for your campaign? \$40k

c. Where will the money come from? Individuals and union contributions

d. Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any). Charter organizations / organizations moving toward privatizing education. Chamber of commerce affiliated PACs

Office-Specific Questions:

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

I'm a proud product of the public education system, both neighborhood and charter; a former special ed student; an advocate and supporter of our County's system-involved youth; and an active member of our shared community. I believe strongly in the very unique perspective I would bring to the Board, and equally strongly that this is my moment to join it.

2. Program and Priorities—**a.** What do you believe are the main priorities for the School Board?

The main priorities of the SCC Board of Education is providing alternative education, special needs education and approving/monitoring schools financial and legal compliance with all regulations.

Elected office provides the opportunity to proactively lead by placing new ideas on the agenda for consideration and development.

b. What are some specific ideas you intend to pursue if elected?

I will work to eliminate institutional barriers that create more system involved youth. I will leverage my current work in the community to build stronger coalitions with key stakeholders.

I will work to invest in youth engagement and leadership development. I'll leverage my current work in the community to create more opportunities for youth to access leadership and engagement opportunities.

I will initiate a participatory budget process to involve students and parents (including undocumented parents), this will be tool of engagement and empowerment for both students and parents. It will allow disenfranchised community members like undocumented parents who can not vote for their representatives to have a voice in the budgetary processes.

3. Qualifications—**a.** Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of School Board. **b.** If you are an incumbent, what issues have you worked on that have made a positive impact? As an incumbent tell us about your service on the school board, and share with us the decisions you have led, which have impacted the school district?

In work with the Santa Clara County Office of Women's Policy, where I work on policy that affects women and girls in leadership and also women and girls in the justice system, I will bring that policy expertise to the board.

4. School Climate, Engagement—

a. What is your understanding of the kinds of changes that most schools are making to improve school climate and school discipline policies? My understanding of policies that schools are putting in place to improve school climate are specific to school disciplinary policies. We have seen many local school boards discuss the possibility of removing police officers from their campuses. Nationally, studies have shown that having police on campus does not actually make campuses safer (example from school shootings) but there is a direct correlation between students of color and lgbtq students being more system involved when there are police on campus.

b. What are your views on school suspensions? I believe that school suspensions should only be used as a very last option. School suspensions disproportionately affect students of color and lgbtq students, causing them to fall behind in their academic year and increasing the achievement gap.

c. What are your suggestions to support students who are chronically absent, students who have dropped out or left school, or are on the verge of leaving or dropping out? When a student is chronically absent/ dropping out/ left school there is typically an underlying need that the child needs support in. I believe that it is the responsibility of the school community to figure out why the child is chronically absent and try to support this child. Punishment for being chronically absent will only further push away the student and will so the opposite effect of helping the child.

d. Where do you stand on police presence in schools? I believe that there is no place for law enforcement on school campuses.

5. Equity & Access - The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the severe equity issues in education in communities of color. **a.** As a board member, what ideas and strategies will you bring forward to close the equity gap for students facing challenges of digital access and facing difficulties with remote learning.

As someone who has been active in the Santa Clara County community, I have developed many strong relationships within different sectors of the community and I will leverage these relationships to better serve and provide opportunity for all students. One of the biggest issues that we are currently seeing with the COVID-19 pandemic is the lack of equity in resources, for example tech and internet access. There is no reason why, in Silicon Valley, a child should not have access to tech and internet, and I will leverage my relationships to find creative solutions for issues like this that only widen the achievement and opportunity gap.

6. Inclusion— a. What are your views on special education? As a former special education student, I personally know the struggles students and families, especially of color, face. One of my goals as a trustee on the board of education is to make special ed. more accessible to

all families. **b.** What changes, if any, need to be implemented? I believe there needs to be an educational campaign to inform families and students of the resources that are available. Navigating the system to get the support special ed. students need is daunting and inaccessible by many of our community members. I believe that the SCOE should have culturally competent navigators available to guide families through the bureaucracy.

c. Should special education students be included in general education classes? Why, or why not? No. Education should not be a one size fits all system. Every child has different needs and our education system should reflect them.

7. Charter Schools—**a.** Beginning July 2020, districts have begun considering the fiscal impacts a charter will have on programs and students in any given district. As a board member, what will be your position when considering a new charter school petition or request to expand (either by a countywide charter, or on appeal) that will have negative fiscal or community impacts on one or more districts in the county?

Strong denial of any new or expanded charter petition that has a negative fiscal and community impact on the district or neighborhood schools.

b. What level of oversight and accountability do you believe the Board of Education must provide \after approving a charter school application? In your opinion, has the County Board done an adequate job providing such oversight and accountability? If not, what do you think should be done?

I believe that it is time that the County Board of Education begin to do independent data collection on the charter schools that are in the county and especially follow outcomes of students who get pushed out of the charter system, to truly see the impacts of charters in our communities.

c. Do you support the right of charter educators to unionize? Yes, not only them but all so the support staff that is employed by charter schools(janitors,lunch providers, counselors and school organizers)

How will you enforce that right? By being a vocal advocate for every employee's right to collective bargain.

d. Do you support appointing community members to the boards of charter schools that are authorized by the county? Yes, community members should always be involved in things that affect them directly, and since charters do not respond directly to the local school board, having community present can help keep charter schools more accountable.

8. Testing and Teacher Evaluations—**a.** What should policy be around student testing, and teacher evaluation?

There should be no correlation between student testing and teacher evaluation.

b. Do you see alternatives to the use of mandated standardized tests in meeting local, state and national education goals? Unfortunately, I do not know of any alternatives but I am open to ideas.

c. How much are we teaching to the test now, and what should we be doing differently, if you feel it should be different? I only have anecdotal information from teachers and parents about the frustration of teaching to test. I would involve teachers and parents in the evaluation of how much we are teaching to test and see what their recommendations are. I personally believe that we should be teaching students critical things and analytical skills over memorization for a test.

9. **Common Core**—What are your views on the use of the proposed Common Core curriculum? Common Core Curriculum is already in place, I support it.

10. **Budgetary Priorities**—Imagine in the year after your election to the school board, due to a shortfall your annual budget is reduced by 10%. a. Where would you make cuts? I would make cuts to the budget that pays police officers and security on campus. b. What would you try to shield from cuts? I would shield cuts that directly impact classified staff, teachers and students.

11. **Governance**—a. What concerns, if any, do you have relative to the current School Board? Having a current board member who has been censured by the board for his behavior as a misogynist and a bully.

b. What policy changes would you make? I would advocate for policies that hold charter schools more accountable.

c. What solutions would you propose to address and prevent conflicts of interest and misuse of public funds? There should be campaign finance reform that makes it harder for private corporations who have donated to an elected officials campaigns to benefit from an elected official's votes.

Accountability—a. Concretely and specifically, how will you make yourself accountable to the voters who elect you? I will host office hours to be accessible to the community.

b. How can the voters participate in holding you accountable if you are elected? As an individual trustee, I will always have an open door policy.

12. **Environment**: a. What policies would you put in place to protect our environment? Advocate for policies that implement environmental protection education at all grade levels. b. What would you do to reduce your district's carbon footprint? I would advocate for the County Board of Education to take a pledge that any facilities they manage is powered by renewable energy. Once in place we would be able to lead by example and advocate that all 30+ school districts also take the pledge to be powered by renewable energy.

13. **Anything Else?** — Is there anything else you would like to share?

Positions on Issues

Please answer YES or NO for each statement.

Do you support Proposition 15 Schools and Communities First? YES NO

Do you support a living wage for all district employees? YES NO

Do you support participatory budgeting (citizen involvement in school board budgeting)?
YES NO

Do you support free public education from preschool through graduate studies?
YES NO

Would you support allowing undocumented immigrants to vote in school board elections?
(While I am in support of this, I would want to make sure that there are no negative immigration consequences for undocumented people that vote in local school board elections.)

YES NO

Do you support the right of transgendered individuals to use the restroom of their choice?
YES NO

Do you support the use of city funds to develop worker-owned co-operatives?
YES NO

Do you support a policy to place school board funds in a public bank? YES NO

Do you support Medicare for all? YES NO

Do you support building or subsidizing affordable housing for faculty and staff?
YES NO