

General Information

Candidate Name: Laurie Lieberman

Email Address: laurie.lieberman1@gmail.com

Phone Number: (310) 387-5846

Candidate's Current Occupation: School Board member/Attorney (inactive)

Candidate's Employer: Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): Laurie Lieberman

What qualifications do you bring to this office? I have served on the School Board for almost 12 years and therefore have unique institutional knowledge of our schools and the workings of the district itself that are critical as we navigate these challenging times. I am an attorney by background and worked for the City of Santa Monica for 13 years, first for the Rent Control Board and then in the City Attorney's Office which has given me a great deal of insight and understanding about the role of a government official and about public policymaking. I then had children who attended SMMUSD schools from K-12 and I became active in school issues, PTA, and school funding campaigns. I have an educational background in law and public policy, my mother was a lifelong and nationally renowned educator, and my daughter became a teacher as well. During my tenure on the Board, I have demonstrated that I am an effective, transparent and collaborative leader.

Why are you running? I am running for re-election to continue to provide leadership as we move into the next phase of pandemic recovery and forward with implementation of the critical programs and initiatives that I have so dearly championed in my years of service on the School Board. I am running for re-election because I've come to appreciate how much my professional experience, life experience, values and integrity enable me to contribute to our district. These qualities allow me to play a key role in moving our District towards ever greater equity, excellence, and engagement.

What are the top issues of your campaign? How do you plan to address those issues once elected? My number one priority is doing what is best for our students – keeping them safe, healthy and engaged in a nurturing environment where they can explore their potential and their dreams. I will do everything in my power to make sure no child is fearful when they go to school. I will do everything I can to ensure that all children receive the support they need. I will continue to lead the nuanced and difficult discussions that need to take place among parents, students, teachers and other stakeholders in the Santa Monica and Malibu communities. I will continue to put forward thoughtful, innovative ideas to ensure that students and families who come from different backgrounds and income levels appreciate and support each other in a harmonious, authentic and inclusive setting. And I will continue to listen to the research — both academic and scientific — when it comes to making the tough decisions.

My top priorities include:

1. Continuously and vigilantly assessing and implementing District health and safety protocols to ensure our students are safe and healthy as the pandemic continues to challenge schools.
2. Continuing to focus urgently on closing the achievement/opportunity gap by expanding programs and initiatives that engage all students. This includes promoting culturally relevant and inquiry-based curriculum, implementing the social justice standards that our district has adopted along with the American cultures/ethnic studies requirement that we have adopted as well. Our goal is to ensure equity and excellence for ALL students which involves finding ways to promote a love of learning. SMMUSD is a highly successful district but one of the most important challenges continues to be closing the achievement/opportunity gap and it remains a top priority for me.
3. Creating cross-curricular opportunities to help students explore career paths and better prepare them either for college or jobs right after graduation, ensuring that they graduate with academic skills and the ability to think critically, collaborate and contribute positively to an increasingly complex world.
4. Continuing to expand and improve preschools so that students are kindergarten-ready.
5. Modernizing school facilities to ensure student safety and access to state-of-the-art programming and technology.

Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements.

Community for Excellent Public Schools (the only local organization that has endorsed thus far). I am seeking the endorsement of Santa Monicans for Renters Rights, the Los Angeles County Democratic Party, Santa Monica Forward, the Santa Monica Black Agenda, SEIU, SMMCTA, and other groups. I am also seeking support of other labor unions. I have been supported in the past by all groups whose endorsement I have sought.

I have the support of the following elected leaders and many more members of our community:

Ted Lieu, U.S. Congress
Julia Brownley, U.S. Congress
Ben Allen, State Senate
Richard Bloom, State Assembly
Sheila Kuehl, L.A. County Board of Supervisors
Kristin McCowan, Mayor pro tem, SM City Council
Gleam Davis, Santa Monica City Council
Lana Negrete, Santa Monica City Council

Former Santa Monica Mayor Judy Abdo
Former Santa Monica Mayor Rev. Jim Conn
Former Santa Monica Mayor Kevin McKeown
Former Santa Monica Mayor Pam O'Connor
Former Santa Monica Mayor Paul Rosenstein
Former Santa Monica Mayor Nat Trives
Former Santa Monica Mayor Ted Winterer
Former Santa Monica Mayor Pro Tem Terry O'Day
Former Santa Monica Councilmember Ana M. Jara
Former Santa Monica Councilmember Greg Morena
Lindsey Horvath, West Hollywood City Council
Louise Jaffe, Chair, SMC Board of Trustees
Barry Snell, SMC Vice-Chair, Board of Trustees
Susan Aminoff, SMC Board of Trustees
Nancy Greenstein, SMC Board of Trustees
Margaret Quinones-Perez, SMC Board of Trustees
Rob Rader, SMC Board of Trustees
Sion Roy, SMC Board of Trustees
Maria Leon-Vazquez, President, Santa Monica-Malibu School Board
Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein, Vice President, Santa Monica-Malibu School Board
Keith Coleman, Santa Monica-Malibu School Board
Jon Kean, Santa Monica-Malibu School Board
Jennifer Smith, Santa Monica-Malibu School Board
Anastasia Foster, Santa Monica Rent Control Board
Caroline Torosis, Santa Monica Rent Control

How long have you lived in Santa Monica? Where else have you lived, and why did you live there? I grew up in the San Fernando Valley for the most part, but for several years in New York and a few other places. I have lived in Santa Monica for approximately 45 years with brief periods when I lived in West LA or Mar Vista.

Will you pledge to serve on City Council for your entire four year term? N/A

Party / Activism

How long have you been a registered Democrat? I have been a registered Democrat since I was first able to register to vote when I turned 18.

Have you ever been registered as a member of another political party, or as Decline To State? No. If so, which party and why? N/A

What is your experience with political activism? I grew up in a family of political progressives who were activists in a variety of ways. My parents believed in living their values and were fortunate to be able to work at jobs that aligned with their values. My father was a folk singer who came of age himself working in support of unions, civil rights, and against the

Vietnam War. My mother was an education professor who shared the same progressive views and was widely renowned for her work with teachers and schools promoting teacher voice, professional learning communities and continuous change and improvement before those became buzzwords. I have been politically active since the time I started protesting against the Vietnam War. I was active during law school in various issues including affirmative action, opposition to the death penalty and prison reform.

Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign other than your own, and if so, in what capacity were you involved? The first campaign I ever worked on was the McGovern campaign against Richard Nixon. I have worked on other Democratic presidential campaigns (most recently, President Obama's campaign and Hillary Clinton's) and on local campaigns throughout the years for progressive candidates I supported.

Which political candidates have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible. There are far too many to name. I have worked to support many candidates – national, statewide and local – beginning with my support for George McGovern in 1972. I have supported numerous candidates for Santa Monica City Council over the years including Glean Davis, Ted Winterer, Terry O'Day and Ana M. Jara in the most recent 2020 election. I have largely (if not entirely) supported political candidates who have been supported by the Democratic Club and Santa Monicans for Renters Rights for many years. I have supported Ben Allen (my former colleague), Richard Bloom, and Sheila Kuehl in every one of their campaigns and have worked with all of them for years.

Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office? NO!

If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled. N/A

Please list any organizations with which you are a member, including any leadership position you have held in each organization. I have been a member of the Santa Monica Democratic Club, Santa Monicans for Renters Rights, Santa Monica Forward, Community for Excellent Public Schools, and the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica for many years. I have not served in leadership as I have been elected official for 12 years and am not eligible to do so.

Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found here:

<https://cadem.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CDP-Platform-2022-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree. (This is in no way a litmus test for our endorsement; however, because the party delegates have worked so hard on every word of this platform document, we believe it will be a helpful guide to comprehend the policy differences between each candidate.)

There are no items in the CDP Platform with which I disagree although I might word certain things differently here and there. I am a Democrat because my values are in alignment with those

of the Democratic Party. I believe that public schools are vital to democracy which is why I have chosen to spend my time as a School Board member. I believe in equity and opportunity for all. I believe in economic and social justice. I support inclusion and diversity and believe that public schools are one of the places where those values must be lived and upheld. I believe that climate change is an existential threat to our children and to the planet and that we must find ways to preserve the planet through converting to renewable energy and ensuring jobs for those who will be uprooted. I support workers and unions; I support a woman's right to choose. I support building more housing, with an emphasis on housing affordability. I support free speech but strive for ways to build a more civil dialogue and society. I support the strongest gun control possible. I could go on and on but hopefully this illustrates my commitment to Democratic Party values.

Campaign Finance

Please indicate Yes or No to the following statements:

1. I pledge not to take contributions from oil, gas, and coal industry executives, lobbyists, and PACs. Yes.

2. I pledge not to take contributions from police or law enforcement unions, lobbyists, and PACs. I do not believe that any of these groups endorse in School Board races so this is likely not applicable. I am not actively seeking contributions from any of these groups and do not expect to get any contributions from these groups or individuals, however SMMUSD works closely with the SM Police Department to keep our school campuses safe and to provide help with students who are in trouble. I believe it is important for the district to maintain collaborative relationships with the SMPD.

3. I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs. No.

If you answered No to any of the above contribution questions, please explain here: I am not sure what the above list includes so I don't want to mislead anyone. I have and will accept contributions from individuals who happen to be developers or who might do legal or other work on behalf of developers. I believe that lawyers who represent developers in Santa Monica are registered lobbyists and I have and will ask for their support. Any contributions I receive reflect individual support for me because I have lived, worked and been of service in this community for many years. In no case would I ever take any contribution as a quid pro quo for any reason. The school district does not hire or contract with developers, lobbyists or PACS so in many ways, this question is not terribly relevant.

Unfortunately, it takes a significant amount of money to run a campaign and I must pursue contributions that do not offend my sensibilities and do not depend on quid pro quos. My

opponents will be running a campaign attacking my integrity and my work and I must be able to fund a serious campaign on my own behalf.

SMMUSD

What kind of approach should SMMUSD be taking in regard to COVID safety at this point in the pandemic?

My colleagues and I have done our best to follow the science regarding Covid 19 and to adhere to the requirements and recommendations of the LA County Department of Public Health and the State Department of Public Health. Our district has also done its best to take the pulse of our community, with an awareness that those do not always align. For the most part, our district has gone above and beyond requirements and has implemented recommended practices that have been overwhelmingly supported by the majority of the school community. In brief, we currently strongly recommend vaccinations, indoor masking and voluntary testing. Fortunately for students and staff, the air filtration in our school buildings has been upgraded substantially, which is also key.

Vaccines remain the best defense against Covid and the SMMUSD continues to promote vaccines for both adults and students although student vaccines are not mandatory. Masking is currently strongly recommended indoors and whether students and teachers wear masks is currently a choice. Given the voluntary nature of most current approaches, I proposed an approach to testing that represented a compromise among those in SMMUSD who wanted us to continue requiring and offering mandatory Covid testing and those who prefer voluntary or no more testing, the administration chose to offer “voluntary” testing instead.

Generally speaking, our community tends to prefer erring on the side of more protective protocols than not and I would put myself on that side as well. However, I am guided by the advice of experts (which has unfortunately become highly politicized) and also the desires of the majority of the community.

What are your top priorities for SMMUSD which you plan to address in this four year term?

I plan to continue to address the priorities listed in my answer above re top issues. I would also include the following:

1. Paying close attention to the social-emotional and mental health needs of children as we move forward after two years of grappling with the pandemic. All indications point to the unfortunate fact that the toll on students’ mental health and well being has been substantial and it must be addressed.
2. Ensuring that our district pays close attention to civics education. Given the toxic political climate in our city, in parts of our district, and in our country, I believe that creating and promoting an environment that is a counter to this and equipping students

with the tools to differentiate “alternative facts” and opinion from fact is crucial. Ensuring that our students graduate with the ability to become full participants in a democratic society is important to me.

3. Implementation of second language opportunities throughout the district has been slow though discussed off and on for years. I hope we can act on this in a concerted way during my next term.

Given the district’s Basic Aid status, what are the biggest impacts to the district as a result? How does this affect your funding priorities? Basic Aid status means that our district has a higher funding base than many districts. However, along with holding that status comes the responsibility and necessity of maintaining a higher financial reserve because there is no state backstop in the event that calamities occur or unexpected increases in expenses arise. Since having basic aid status means that the district no longer receives funding based on “average daily attendance,” other districts that have achieved basic aid status have chosen to stop accepting permit students because they consider it a drain on their resources. Accepting permit students allows us to offer a perk to our employees and to those who work in our cities or have long-term connections to our district, thus we have so far chosen to continue to accept permit students though we must keep an eye on potential financial impacts in the future. In the long term, the district’s basic aid status should mean that we are able to support more programming and initiatives than non-basic aid districts as our district will likely continue to generate greater revenues in the future, provided property values continue to grow.

Do you support the petition to transition the SMMUSD Board into districted elections, or do you believe the Board should continue in its current form of seven at-large seats? I do not support the petition to transition the SMMUSD into district elections. I also believe that the application of SB 442 to our district is unconstitutional. In our district, I believe it would lead to less equity, cohesion and coherence and would unnecessarily balkanize the school district and decision-making in ways that would not be in the interest of students. It would divide our district according to income levels and ethnicity in a way that conflicts with our commitment to equity and inclusion. Our district has adopted a districtwide fundraising approach which is a model and metaphor for what we promote in our district. This policy change from a school-by-school fundraising approach occurred early on when I joined the School Board and has changed the culture of the district into one where people support all kids throughout the district and the district is able to provide equitable curricular and other opportunities throughout the district, regardless of the income levels or residence of families.

District elections make a lot of sense in a variety of districts where ethnic and racial minorities are not represented and the at-large election system works against that. However, that has not been the case in our district; the facts in Santa Monica-Malibu demonstrate that at-large elections have in fact achieved a healthy racial and ethnic makeup on the School Board over many years.

What can SMMUSD do to further reduce the achievement gap? Several years ago, we were fortunate to employ Dr. Pedro Noguera to conduct an equity audit and we are continuing to implement many of his recommendations, which are aimed at increasing engagement and closing the achievement/opportunity gap. We have initiated and are in the midst of substantial improvements to our preschools. We are in the process of adding more inquiry-based/project-based/student-centered learning into our curriculum along with opening a project-based learning high school. We have adopted social justice standards and an American cultures and ethnic studies high school graduation requirement. Teachers are more and more involved and engaged in concrete ways to support students and are actively engaged in developing projects and ways of involving their students. Teacher involvement and buy-in is key since they are the ones who obviously have the greatest ability to excite students to learn and succeed. The district also has created greater supports for students to prepare for college, including the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program and Young Collegians (a local partnership between SMMUSD and SMC) and a new program being supported through Latino and African-American/Black organizations in our high school. Some of the changes we have implemented are clearly bearing fruit. As an example, the number of English Learners who were “reclassified” this past year far exceeded the numbers of students who did so in previous years.

The district needs to continue to meet students where they are, to use culturally relevant materials and curriculum, and to ensure that adult connections are made with each and every child in our district. Our counseling programs need to be evaluated to ensure that they serve the needs of ALL students. And our district needs to continue to affirmatively pursue hiring of staff who are ethnically and racially representative of our student population.

What can SMMUSD do to better implement social justice instruction and otherwise address equity issues? Our district has adopted social justice standards and the more deeply these standards are embedded in curriculum and classrooms, the more the values and goals of social equity will be realized. The district also needs to continue to promote a climate at every school that welcomes ALL children and families. As already mentioned, many SMMUSD teachers are embracing the social justice standards and Board policy requiring that both social justice standards and inquiry-based and relevant curriculum become more deeply embedded in classrooms.

The School Board’s role is to hire the superintendent and set policy. We have hired a superintendent who shares the goals of ensuring equity, closing the achievement gap, ensuring an engaging curriculum that prepares students to thrive in the world they will be entering. The School Board has set the tone for our district and hired a superintendent who appreciates the importance of social justice instruction.

SMMUSD is fortunate to have a fine superintendent, administration and wonderful teachers during a time when the teaching profession is unfortunately not thriving. The district needs to continue to foster collaboration between the superintendent, administration and teachers to achieve implementation of social justice standards and create the climate to which we aspire.

What do you believe is the role of the District in providing high quality early childhood education and how will you fund expansion and quality improvement while maintaining accessibility and affordability? I have long been involved in this issue and believe the district has made great strides in improving the quality of early childhood education our district offers. Ensuring that children are kindergarten-ready has been a goal of the district along with the City. Cradle to Career, a creation of the City, has brought together non-profits, SMMUSD and the City in a partnership whose concerns include advocating for high quality early childhood experiences. The School Board and our community has committed to funding pre-school improvement and expansion thanks in part to the passage by voters of school funding measures that specify early childhood education as a preferred expenditure. The School Board has changed from relying on Head Start funding to other funding sources in an effort to meet the financial and other needs of the residents of this city who make too much money to qualify for Head Start funds but too little to be able to afford full-tuition pre-school. In addition, the state of California has now mandated “transitional kindergarten” and there will presumably be some funding for programming for four-year olds despite the fact that there is no capital funding for the facilities to house these mandated programs. As part of the school district’s bond program, pre-school facilities are being improved and or constructed at every campus with the goal of creating collaboration between pre-school and K-5 teachers and staff.

How do you see your role on the School Board in relationship to different stakeholders: parents, students, credentialed teachers, classified staff, CTA, LACOE, Sacramento, the City of SM, etc? At the highest level, I see my role as having one foot fully inside the district and one foot out. This enables me to explain/represent the district to the community while also representing the community’s interests to the district. What we do is all about creating the most welcoming and successful experience for students and we can best fulfill that role by having strong partnerships with all stakeholders. I am always open to hearing from parents and students, from teachers and staff individually or through their union leadership. I am fortunate to have strong relationships with our current state senator, state assembly person, and county supervisor and with those who are incoming as well. I have always viewed the district’s partnerships with both the City of Santa Monica and SMC as very important to the district’s mission. I have been fortunate to have many strong relationships within the City and SMC, especially with elected officials. Unfortunately, it has been much more challenging to build relationships in the City of Malibu, which leads right into the next question, although I do have a few.

What is your plan to deal with Malibu’s petition to unify (i.e., separate from) the school district, and what would an equitable solution look like? The district is currently in mediation to try to obtain an agreement on an equitable solution. I am on the Board subcommittee that is involved in the mediation. At the highest level, an equitable and fair agreement would be one which ensures that the remaining portion of the district – SMUSD – would be no worse off financially than it would be if the district remained SMMUSD. If we cannot reach a mediated agreement, I will continue to oppose the City of Malibu’s petition as it would leave 85 +% of the district without the resources it needs and currently has to serve its

students. As all of this continues plays out, and it could still take years, my role as a School Board member will always be to ensure that all students – whether they live in Malibu or Santa Monica – are well-served by the district and all receive a stellar education.

Student Concerns

What is your idea of the perfect learning environment? The perfect learning environment engages students, welcomes students, and finds ways to connect with each of them. It recognizes the value in ensuring that students contribute or have a voice in creating that environment. To paraphrase a recent article the purpose of education is to cultivate healthy, growing and engaged children who are ready to learn, love, work and serve the common good. The perfect environment facilitates the development of a democratic citizenry who are lifelong learners. That is best accomplished by ensuring that learning is joyful, relevant and promotes their participation in their own learning.

What can SMMUSD do to better address student mental health needs? As students head back to school, families across the state are in the midst of an exciting time, but the anxiety, stress and depression that were already on the rise pre-pandemic have worsened and youth mental health struggles have reached crisis levels. Fortunately, there finally seems to be attention focused on this at the state level so there will likely be more funding for mental health services, according to Governor Newsom. It will be important to focus on early intervention and on identifying and offering mental health services and referrals early on as well as continuing to provide crisis care.

Students have raised concerns about these issues in the last several months. The district needs to continue working to make access to mental health resources easier. This involves greater promotion and “advertising” so that students are aware of the resources available to them. Samohi, for instance, has a wellness service center which all students should know about. The wellness center and what it offers should be prominently featured on the Samohi website and information should be shared with students via email and regularly in the Blue Bulletin. needs to be as obvious to access as possible. The Venice Family Clinic currently offers a Teen Clinic on the Samohi campus four days a week from 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM and all students need to be aware of it. As more funding is provided, there is no doubt that our district and others are in need of more professionals, whether clinical social workers or others, who can help students and also help prevent mental health issues early on. SMMUSD employs a wonderful mental health coordinator who is a strong advocate for greater resources for mental health. I am hopeful that the State will finally be providing more resources to districts as the mental health issues facing so many students is very real. This is an issue that is definitely on my radar.

How do you feel about campus surveillance? I am not a fan of campus surveillance. However, in light of the horrific recent school shootings as well as drug incidents involving students, many district families are understandably concerned about campus security along with the proliferation of drugs on campus. While I do not support surveillance inside campus, I support them on the perimeters outside our campuses. Schools must look for ways to ensure and reduce the incidence of drugs on campus, which is in many ways a bigger issue for parents than weapons. This involves education and openness to a variety of mechanisms. Students and their families need to be involved along with school administrators and teachers in the discussions about both drugs and weapons. PTA is another willing partner in this discussion.

What is your position on gun safety at school? What steps can the School Board take to prevent violent shootings? I believe that guns do not belong on school campuses. The only true solution to gun violence is to have serious gun control. Absent that, to reduce the possibility of gun or other violence, school districts such as ours must do everything we can to have safe entries and exits to schools including perimeter cameras in appropriate places, safety protocols for allowing visitors –volunteers, parents or others -- onto campuses. We must continue to re-visit our safety protocols, as we have done once again this summer, so that while not turning our campuses into armed fortresses or scary places, we make our campuses safe. In the wake of the most recent episode of gun violence, our district has partnered once again with the SMPD to review protocols and safety measures on our campuses. Those protocols do not include having guns on school campuses. There is currently a discussion taking place in Malibu about how to work with either private security or the County Sheriff to provide the kind of security that we are fortunate to have in Santa Monica. I stand behind the overwhelming majority of teachers who are opposed to having guns on campus.

Do you support SMPD officers in the schools? I do not support having armed police on school campuses; I believe this is counter-productive and dangerous. However, SMMUSD works with School Resource Officers (employees of the SMPD) who are on school campuses from time to time, though not on a full-time basis. This is one of the preventive tools available and we are fortunate to have it. As already mentioned, SMMUSD has a good working relationship with the SMPD to address incidents of school violence or drugs or other issues that involve public safety. I believe it is important for our district to cultivate a collaborative relationship with SMPD but that does not include having officers posted at our schools.

Do you support legislative efforts to limit unnecessary police involvement in schools? I am not familiar with what those efforts are, so I can't definitively answer this question. I do think there is a need for school districts to have good relationships with local police departments; hopefully those relationships do not have to be called upon often. However, in no way do I think it is appropriate for police to dictate policy on school campuses nor is there a need for them to be a constant presence on school campuses.

How will you support our students to be critical thinkers, leaders, and activists, starting in elementary school? Would you support student activism such as the student walkouts in support of gun control, racial justice, climate strike, etc.? How can these ideals be

incorporated into the curriculum? I believe that good teaching combined with social justice standards and a well-developed curriculum must support students in becoming critical thinkers, leaders and activists. From time to time, there have been topics of local interest that have presented opportunities/teachable moments where teachers have been able to spark the interest of students in researching and sharing their views in various ways with governmental bodies. When we talk about the importance of “relevant” curriculum, inquiry-based, student-centered or project-based learning, critical thinking, hands-on learning, all of these align with activism in areas chosen by students who rightfully are concerned with gun control, racial justice, climate change and other urgent issues that affect their futures. I have supported student activism in the past and as the issues continue to develop in our country and worldwide, there will undoubtedly be opportunities that necessitate student activism. I support student activism in general (and I was a student activist myself); whether to support a walkout that interferes with the school day has to be considered on a case-by-case basis along with school administrators.

Social Justice

In what ways can SMMUSD ensure that, in a real, practical sense, Black Lives Matter in our school community? SMMUSD’s Black community is small but vital. I am deeply committed to listening to the voices of our Black students, of the organizations in our community who represent the interests of our Black students and families. I am committed to our American Cultures and ethnic studies program, to focusing resources on those who need it, and focusing attention on combatting racism and elevating the approach articulated by Heather McGhee in her wonderful book, The Sum of Us. Our district has a week dedicated to Black Lives Matter and we recognize Black History Month. Those are largely symbolic but symbols are not unimportant; they just aren’t enough. I am truly committed to finding ways for Black students to thrive in our schools. That means celebrating diversity, nurturing it, cultivating an environment that is anti-racist and accepting. I believe in an environment that celebrates our different identities while also bringing us all together in pursuit of our common humanity and goals, most of which we share regardless of our race, ethnicity or sexual identity.

In addition, while this issue is a sensitive one, our Black population continues to be the lowest performing subgroup in our district. That does not mean that all Black students are low performing, however it is important to recognize this and to put resources into these students who are not as successful as we would like. I have addressed general approaches to the issue in response to earlier questions but I am open to and supportive of focusing particular attention on this group of students to help them succeed. We are not doing our job unless we recognize the need for this. In this regard, the Black/African American Parent Advisory Council made a very thoughtful presentation to the School Board last year. Our district needs to re-visit that presentation and collaborate with the parent group and others to ensure that most or all of the suggestions are implemented.

In what ways can SMMUSD best protect the undocumented residents of Santa Monica?

SMMUSD has always protected the status of undocumented residents and will continue to do so as long as I serve on the School Board. SMMUSD views undocumented students and their families who are our students as our students, like all other students. We support them; they are part of the SMMUSD family and do whatever we are able to protect them from harassment. SMMUSD does not work with the INS.

How would you use your position on the School Board to assist BIPOC and other disadvantaged residents of Santa Monica? As one who believes deeply that strong public schools are vital to strengthening our fragile democracy and advancing the cause of those who are often marginalized, I want SMMUSD to continue striving toward excellence through equity. This commitment, of course, is intended to include our BIPOC and other sometimes marginalized or disadvantaged members of our community.

Our district must provide meaningful educational opportunities for ALL students in an environment that reflects the kind of world we want to live in, where students and families who come from a range of backgrounds and income levels appreciate and support each other in a harmonious, authentic and inclusive setting. I hope that our district can continue to engage students and adjust curriculum as the world changes to help our students become critical thinkers with the academic and life skills to be positive, productive citizens in the world they enter after 12th grade.

Our district's racial, ethnic and income diversity is a treasure we need to nurture and build on; our BIPOC students are valued members of the SMMUSD family as are all marginalized or "disadvantaged" residents. We must confront the challenges that arise as a result of our diversity openly, positively, and honestly. I will continue to advance project-based learning, social justice standards, American cultures and ethnic studies, improved pre-K programs, arts programs and so much else that deliver the most equitable, deep and expansive school experience we can, while promoting a climate that welcomes, supports and brings all students together.

How do you plan to (in the moment) counteract any and all observed possible acts of microaggressions towards Women, African Americans, Hispanics, LGBTQ and others of marginalized communities from your fellow Boardmembers or members of the public? What is your experience in dealing with these situations?

When possible, if I observe something that I see as a microaggression, I do what I can to address it. As a woman, I have a lifetime of experience with microaggressions, so I am sensitive to the issues faced by others. There is no one-size-fits-all for addressing microaggressions. What I might do depends on the particulars of a given situation. I have confronted situations openly where I felt the possibility for growth and understanding actually existed and sometimes even if it wasn't present but I simply felt I had to say something. Some microaggressions are better addressed privately and sensitively; others are better addressed in a more public manner.

Ballot Measures

Do you support California Proposition 1? Yes

Do you support the citizens initiative ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue for affordable housing, rent subsidy, and SMMUSD? Why/why not? Please see response to the two competing ballot measures below.

Do you support the competing council-approved ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue into the general fund? Why/why not?

Please see response to the two competing ballot measures below.

I want to address both transfer tax measures together. I lean toward taking no position on either and leaving the matter to the voters (who will decide their fate, no matter what).

As an individual, I support the underlying concerns that have led to both of these measures – the need for more affordable housing, the need for rent subsidies for those in need, the need to open libraries, to provide after-school programs, school crossing guards, as well as programs to address homelessness and public safety. And I support progressive taxation as a general proposition without going into the details of how each of these measures works. Wearing my School Board member hat, which I believe I wear when asked to weigh in on something like this as long as I am serving as an elected official, I am not comfortable signing on to either of these measures for the following reasons primarily. Along with my colleagues, we have worked hard to align our budget and be wise about our expenditures. Thanks to the good will of local voters, our district receives millions of dollars every year that other districts do not receive. Despite non-meritorious attacks on us, my colleagues and I have responsibly managed the district's enhanced revenues and the district's budget is in a good place. We were not consulted with respect to the ballot measure that would guarantee an additional \$10 million/year and potentially more to the district annually. While I am certain that like any other California district, we could make good use of that money, we did not in any way ask for additional operating monies and I do not want to give voters the impression that the district is seeking more money because we have not been responsible stewards of the district's revenues. In other words, I think my support of this measure would convey the wrong impression about the district's finances. With respect to the alternative measure, six Council members with varying political perspectives voted to put the measure on the ballot. The measure includes funding for afterschool programs, opening up libraries, and safety measures applicable to schools, all of which support students and are needed as well. My good friend and City Council member Gleam Davis supported this measure in good faith because the City has not fully recovered from the huge financial losses it sustained due to Covid and it continues to have serious financial needs. Certain youth and family-serving services are among those for which City funding is not currently available and this measure would provide much-needed funding.

Since neither of these measures originated within the district or in collaboration with the district, unlike certain measures in the past, I do not feel that I can speak for the district. I believe that the decision between these measures must be left to the voters and hopefully there will be an honest debate about the pros and cons of both measures going forward that is not based on personalities but rather on the merits of the measures.

Do you support the rent control ballot measure which would permanently lower the rent control General Adjustment cap from 6% down to 3%? Yes

Do you support the SMC bond measure? Yes

Do you support the 1% transient occupancy tax ballot measure? Yes

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure? Yes

Additional Questions

What role do you believe the Santa Monica Democratic Club should have in our City? I believe the SMDC can play a significant role in what is a heavily Democratic city. I believe that it can serve as an umbrella organization in which the many “progressive” organizations can co-exist and work together. I also believe it should consider ways in which it could be more inclusive of more mainstream/middle-of-the-road Democrats. This would provide room for healthy discussion and debate on such issues as housing policy or approaches to helping homeless people that could help lead to greater consensus among thoughtful Democrats on the concerns that affect us all. It could also build a more robust support network on issues like climate change, public education, and gun control, issues which are of concern to most Democrats.

If elected, how would you attempt to interact with the Santa Monica Democratic Club and other political organizations to ensure community buy-in on new proposals? As a member of the SMDC and other local political organizations, I welcome the opportunity to develop community buy-in on new proposals and to elicit thoughts and feedback on new initiatives within the school district or in the larger world of public education. When issues such as the City of Malibu’s desire to “unify” (separate) from the SMMUSD arise, interaction with the SMDC and other political organizations is very important. There are other issues of great importance as well and community discussion and buy-in will be important going forward.