

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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COUNTIES REPRESENTED: Los Angeles County

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1. What actions will you take to support an increase of access to child care and early learning for children beginning at birth for working families?

Healthy development for children begins at birth; thus, a plan to support the quality of life of increase access to childcare and early learning for children begins with universal healthcare, including for reproductive health, and the continued expansion of paid family leave. On the latter policy, I support extending paid family leave to 12 weeks for every employee without fear of retaliation or demotion, with employees earning at or below minimum wage earning 100% take-home pay to ensure the stability and wellbeing of their family. Those first three months establish parental relationships and attachments that are the foundation for a lifetime, and every family ought to have that, without the worry of losing employment status.

Then, we need to work toward universal childcare and early learning that allows parents and guardians to support the development of their child while being able to attend to the financial and personal health needs of their family. We're certainly not doing that yet for all families, but we're not even doing that for our most vulnerable families. Although 39% of all children in California (more than 2 million!) are eligible for subsidized care due to their parents' income and employment status, only a *sliver* of those kids (fewer than ½ a million) receive some sort of state-subsidized support.

As a first step, we must prioritize creating a funding structure to cover all eligible families through a combination of CalWorks childcare, alternative payment and general child care, and state preschool (for ages 3-4). I'd like to work with policy and advocacy groups like CAPP who have been plugged into this work to identify recommendations for sourcing and distribution of those funds. Simultaneously, it's imperative that we also begin to work with workforce development groups and institutions of higher education to grow our workforce of child care workers, which may include expanding loan forgiveness opportunities and working with unions like UDWA and SEIU 99 to ensure quality training and secure wages and benefits for even the newest childcare workers.

2. What actions will you take to reduce multigenerational poverty and support greater success outcomes for children?

Multigenerational poverty must be addressed on many different policy fronts simultaneously, and taken together, the eight issue areas I have plans for on [our website's policy page](#) cumulatively work toward a world in which we reverse conditions that perpetuate poverty and thereby support success outcomes for kids. A few highlights (though I'd encourage going to the website):

- As I shared above, if we're going to stop generational poverty, we must start with the very beginning of a new generation's birth, and that means attending to healthcare access (including reproductive healthcare) for mothers and their children, and providing for paid family leave up to 12 weeks, followed by childcare that is subsidized by the state for *all* – not some – of those who are eligible.
- Clearly, all of this can only be meaningful if other stressors in a family's life – like their ability to keep a roof over their head – are provided for, and that's why a key component of our campaign is to ensure protections for renters, individually against exploitation from corporate landlords, and also collectively against speculative real estate looking to re-develop lots for above-market prices, leading to the gentrification and displacement of our communities. A large part of California's population is made up of renters; in our state, it is more often a lifestyle than a step to an American dream of owning property. If elected, I'd be the only renter in the entire 80-person assembly, at a time where this crisis of housing and tenancy is one of the top issues in the state. So much of what's multi-generational about poverty starts with where we live and the choices for where we live, and I'd like to explore opportunities to reevaluate what creates equity in our society, particularly as we have hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of residents who will *never* own property (and therefore never create equity for their family) because of the cost of living in California, and the need for more – not less – density as we try to close our state's gap of 1.4 million affordable housing units.
- One last piece I'd like to highlight here (although there is much more at our policy website) is the need for a fully-funded public education system, without which we will not be able to support our youngest generations in their development toward adulthood. As a former public middle school teacher who had a class of 49 students, I know too well the inequities (that start with funding and resources) that force some kids to have a substandard education while others thrive. We need to revise budget allocations to use cumulative enrollment rather than average daily attendance to provide additional funds for districts with larger, more diverse student bodies that may experience higher rates of absenteeism due to systemic barriers such as healthcare, housing, immigration status, and more; expand the state's block grant allocation for special education funding, alongside advocacy for full federal contributions (currently promised but unfulfilled); and re-work funding sources for pension payouts to relieve school districts as a primary source for pensions while ensuring that employees receive their pensions.

3. Do you support parents having the choice to choose the best family child care provider or center that best meets their needs?

I do believe that parents should have choices for the ultimate provider or center that best meets the needs of their kids. That said, having choices doesn't mean that the choices you

would make are available and accessible to you, and these inequities often persist or are perpetuated because of some aspect of social identities like race, income, and/or background. Ultimately, I support ensuring that parents don't have bad choices: that a white, wealthier family wouldn't have higher quality choices that would advantage the development outcomes of their child, over the choices that a non-English-speaking first-time parent of color in a lower-income community might make.

4. Do you view child care and early learning the same way as you view K-12?

Childcare and early learning have some overlap with, and some distinctions from, K-12.

On one hand, childcare and early learning exist on a development and learning continuum alongside K-12. There are skills and orientations -- social-emotional, motor, oral, and auditory competencies among them -- that would lead kids to get the most out of their school experiences from kindergarten onward, and those must be developed starting at an early age; that development -- like other learning that happens in K-12 -- can be intentional, as opposed to by virtue of happenstance and time. Everything for kids from K-12 is a mixture of socialization, direct instruction, and practice, and childcare and early learning should be thought of as spaces that contribute to a child's growth the same way.

Moreover, this continuum -- childcare and early learning through K-12 -- is riddled with inequities in outcomes; there are still gaps in development, growth, and opportunity based on race, ethnicity class, and gender. Therefore, another overlapping characteristic is the need for our government to ensure equity for all historically and currently marginalized communities through the entire continuum of services.

One way in which child care and early learning are different from K-12 is the diversity of environments in which families might prefer their child to experience each particular program, and these various environments change the types of policies, laws, and funding structures that govern each of these areas. For example, we know that child care might be done in centers or in the care of someone's home; those options are both common preferences for parents, and therefore, policies, laws, and funding structures must accommodate for those very different contexts. Meanwhile, the default conception of K-12 education is one provided on school campuses, and most often, via our public education system. Again, the scale of that particular service -- even the scale of centers vs. campuses -- matters in terms of the policies, laws, and funding structures we must consider as we legislate for childcare and early learning vs. K-12.

5. What actions will you take to reduce racial disparities and ensure strong health, education, and economic outcomes for all?

To ensure strong health, education, and economic outcomes for all, we have to have policy that makes those characteristics the literal foundation of our society: a guarantee of quality healthcare for all, strong public education for all, and economic justice that ensures fair wages and benefits for all, a roof over everyone's head despite our state's high cost of living, and the redistribution of excessive wealth to help fund communities most in need of services and

supports.

I've already shared my thoughts above re: a strong public education for all, and the first steps I'd take in ensuring fully-funded schools, particularly in a public education system that continues to be asked to do more with less.

In terms of healthcare and housing, I do believe in universal healthcare, a plan in which equalizing access to healthcare aims to close disparities in health outcomes, including for those who are currently undocumented. As the world's fifth largest economy, we cannot morally deprive human beings of their dignity and humanity, which includes their physical wellbeing when we have systems to be able to help maintain general wellness. This expands to housing as well. Currently, California is home to 150,000 unhoused people – with our Black community members disproportionately represented in that number -- yet we have vacancies in buildings, lots, vacation homes, and continue to develop land for prices that the average Californian cannot afford. We must aim to have housing be a human right, just as much as health care must be available for all, and action in housing policy includes tenant protections like tenants right to counsel, the end of the Ellis Act (which would then slow the speculative real estate market, particularly in our densest communities), and the centering of 1.4 million affordable housing units in any development – not luxury apartments that regular, everyday people cannot afford and lead to the gentrification of our communities, particularly communities of color.

Lastly, as we grow toward a minimum wage for all at \$15/hour, our cost of living is outpacing the viability of \$15 an hour as a living wage. It is not. In Los Angeles, someone would need to make more than \$40 an hour to keep up with the average cost of renting an apartment. We must support workers' rights to a fair wage and benefits for their context, which may mean considering a universal basic income to ensure that people are able to pay their basic costs of living (housing, food) while we evolve wage structures and the cost of fundamental needs of survival to be viable on worker wages. The cost of fundamental needs of survival might also be something that the ultra-wealthy can help cover. I propose a 5.5 percent tax increase from its current rate on every dollar a Californian hoards amasses over \$50 million in net worth, and a 6.5 percent tax increase from its current rate on every dollar a Californian amasses over \$1 billion in net worth – increases that would help fund supports and services in our communities that need the funding the most.

6. Do you have any thoughts on how to build up the childcare and early learning workforce with meaningful compensation and value for their contributions?

Yes, but I'd love to work with other organizations who are already experts in childcare and early learning workforce development to learn what they've proposed or would like to propose. From my view, alongside workforce development – which may include working with unions like UWDA and SEIU 99 (as many unions or trade associations have been able to build apprenticeship programs to grow a pipeline of new workers into a field) – I'd also like to work with institutions of higher education to understand the current landscape of degree-granting programs that support the child care workers and early education. This may include expanding loan forgiveness opportunities or finding other alternative pathways to ensure

quality training and secure wages and benefits for even the newest childcare workers.

7. Do you believe that meeting the childcare needs of California is dependent solely on the state, the private sector or a combination of both?

The state will always have a role in meeting childcare needs, so long as:

- a) parents and guardians must maintain one or more jobs that take their focus away from their child/children to fulfill their family's economic needs for survival.
- b) some communities experience systemic and disproportionate barriers to accessing quality and affordable childcare, particularly given their race, income or class background, language, migration status, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and other lines of difference.
- c) Additionally, the presence of a private sector of childcare might meet the needs of some Californians, but market-driven competition in childcare can contribute to the persistence of inequities among families (all families deserve quality childcare, regardless of their ability to pay) and child development outcomes (all children deserve strong development opportunities academically, social-emotionally, artistically, and physically). My priority is to ensure all families have quality childcare that supports their child's/children's development toward all of the ends I mentioned above, so if a private sector of childcare can exist *without* contributing to inequities across lines of race, income or class background, language, migration status, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and other lines of difference, then I'd open to that.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE:

If elected, I'd be the only renter in our 80-person assembly, and one of less than a handful of legislators with experience in public education. These are incredibly important perspectives to bring into conversations about childcare and early learning – from an economic standpoint and a pedagogical/academic standpoint. As an uncle to a 3 year old nephew and 1 year old niece – both the first in our family to be born in the United states -- I'd love to provide that perspective on behalf of our communities and toward this particular issue, which I see impacting my sister and her children every single day.