1. Californians face looming cuts and in some cases the current elimination of federal funds to California social safety nets, such as after-school programs, teen pregnancy prevention programs, and HIV/AIDS education. How will you ensure that adequate state funding for sexual and reproductive health is secured and maintained for this district?

As far as reproductive health, a leading feature of my candidacy is a commitment to universal healthcare access, so I see passage of such legislation, along with my view that reproductive care is simply part of care, as one sweeping solution to this problem. On the campaign trail I sometimes ask, "Who in the audience would like to thwart the vicious sexism in Washington and fund Planned Parenthood in California once and for all?" Most hands go up. "Well then join me in giving every woman in the state guaranteed healthcare via single payer, and we will have solved that problem too."

Now, I realize that there is no guarantee that this or any other state, or the nation, will achieve this goal, so I want to assure readers of this questionnaire that I am committed to fighting the sweeping battles and the incremental battles and see no conflict in that.

I went to medical school in San Francisco at UCSF between 1993-1999. These were extraordinary years in the HIV-AIDS epidemic and an enormous formative experience for me. Early on at school I was exposed to the teeth of the disease experience before the onset of meaningful anti-retroviral therapy. At the same time I was seeing the incredible activism that the epidemic had generated, including the courageous work of ACT-UP and others. I had the searing experience of the deadly consequences of what
can happen when a marginalized group is forgotten or denied its just and equal place in society by its government. I had my first exposure to heath care disparities in general (worked for single payer first in SF with issue 186). I had many of my formative experiences at San Francisco General with Ward 86 and the 5th floor of the hospital. This gave me profound insight into an area of medicine that is still deeply important to my work to this day: the appreciation of social and disease-related stigma as a profound form of human suffering. I will fight to maintain the education programs surrounding HIV/AIDS, as well as programs in place to continue to fight and keep at bay this horrible disease.

2. In a multicultural state, the conversations about race, white supremacy and bias are real. There have been recent attacks on communities that make up the fabric and strength of Los Angeles- Muslims, immigrants, refugees, communities of color, and transgender people.

a) What is a concrete policy or campaign that you will commit to championing that affirms the humanity of transgender people? (e.g. SB 396 and Transform CA)

I absolutely support SB 396 and Transform CA

I support both counseling programs and age-appropriate curriculum in public schools that promote self-esteem and self-acceptance for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and “questioning” students and that treat all sexual orientations as normal and healthy. It is my plan to take a leadership role on this in the California assembly to ensure out LGBTQIA students do not continue to be at greater risk of isolation, bullying, depression, drug use and suicide than their straight peers.

I support age-appropriate public school curricula that acknowledge the contributions by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people to history, politics, and culture.

I support students being allowed to participate in school-based activities and services based on their gender identity. I believe public schools should allow students the freedom to participate in school-based activities according to their gender identity when programs are segregated by sex.

In all contexts and jurisdictions, I support adding sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression to the categories covered by all civil rights laws, including at the federal level.

I support expanding existing law to include LGBTQ-owned and veteran-owned businesses on the list of diverse product and service suppliers for insurers. I also
support expanding government procurement programs that increase diversity to include LGBTQ-owned businesses. And I absolutely support H.R. 2282, the Equality Act, which would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes to protect LGBTQ individuals nationwide from discrimination in credit, education, employment, housing federal assistance, jury service and public accommodations to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

b) What is a concrete policy or campaign that you would support that dismantles white supremacy, empowers communities of color, and addresses safety in our communities? The biggest force supporting white supremacy right now is President Trump. It is part of the reason I am running for this seat to protect the rights of California’s citizens and to act as an example to rest of the country. As delegate for the state Democratic State Central Committee I sponsored a bill that asked all District Attorneys and Attorneys General to go after the president based on the Emoluments Clause of the constitution. Following his trail of money and gifts would be the best way to dismantle white supremacy. I would also support SB21 to stop the discriminatory use of secret surveillance in our communities. Community leaders and elected officials must be at the center of the decision to use or not to use these surveillance methods. That would be a great step towards empowering our communities.

3. California is among the most secretive states in the nation when it comes to information about police shootings and officer misconduct. California law gives police officers secrecy around their records far beyond that given to any other public employee: all information about discipline and investigations into misconduct is confidential, even that related to shootings and instances where the officer’s own department has found they engaged in misconduct.

Should California allow public access to records of investigations, findings, and discipline in police shootings, and other serious uses of force, so long as releasing the information does not interfere with an ongoing investigation? Should California allow public access to records of findings and discipline imposed in any case where a department has, after an appeal, found an officer engaged in misconduct involving a civilian, such as racial profiling, excessive force, unlawful search, or falsifying evidence? I do believe in public access to this information. I support community policing and will work to end the institutional racism built into our system of mass incarceration.

California must spend less on jails and more on schools and mental health services. I believe criminal justice reform is crucial to enabling all Californians to lead productive lives and build a more prosperous future together.
Too many grave inequities are ingrained in our criminal justice system. I mourn with the broken families and communities impacted by mass incarceration. It won’t be easy, but we have to fight together to end this.

Law enforcement is not easy work. We need to support people who dedicate themselves to public service in this way but at the same time hold them to highest account for the just use of the power and authority we grant them.

4. Over the past several years, public concern has grown over the high number of police shootings of civilians, especially in light of disproportionate number of African Americans and individuals who suffer from mental illness. Last year, California saw more police killings than any other state, and the Los Angeles Police Department fatally shot more people than any other police department — including the Chicago PD and NYPD, which are significantly larger. Nothing in state law requires police to engage in best practices to reduce fatal shootings and other excessive force, such as employing de-escalation techniques, requiring officers to intervene when other officers are using excessive force, and requiring prompt provision of medical aid to civilians they injure. Only one officer in Southern California has been criminally charged in a shooting since 2000, and no officer has been convicted.

Should California require de-escalation training for police officers at all departments? In deciding whether an officer’s use of force was legal, should California require that departments and courts consider whether the officer used de-escalation techniques and exhausted alternatives to force? Should California change state law regarding officers’ use of deadly force — from authorizing officers to use any “reasonable” force, to authorizing police to use deadly force only when reasonably necessary?

I believe wholeheartedly in community policing and in any and all training which assists police officers in de-escalation techniques, recognition of bias, and identifying and assisting citizens with mental illnesses. And I do believe that deadly force is absolutely a last resort and should be trained towards and classified as such.

5. We believe true freedom and equality includes the right to healthcare, housing and access to all basic human needs services so our communities can thrive. That's why we advocate in support of single-payer healthcare, ending the criminalization of poverty (i.e. laws that target people experiencing homelessness) and expanding access to affordable housing and supportive services.

a) The Healthy California Act, SB 562 (Lara & Atkins), would guarantee healthcare for all California residents through a single-payer model. SB 562 would provide medical, dental,
vision, mental health, chiropractic and many other services while eliminating premiums, co-pays and deductibles. Will you publicly support and if elected co-author SB 562?

I am not only in favor of Single Payer; it is the defining issue of my campaign. It is a main reason, I believe, that the California Nurses Association endorsed me for this race. Simply put it would be my intent to be the principle sponsor of SB-562 in the Assembly. If it does not pass I would work to introduce it again in a future year (in cooperation and solidarity with the strategy of the Healthy California Campaign and CNA). If it does pass I would make it my central subsequent mission to be the leader (or a leader) of its expeditious and effective implementation, which will be a considerable undertaking. I very much support a California First approach on Single Payer because I think right policy must be coupled with timing and strategy in politics, and I see those elements aligned right now here in California. I would of course support HR 676 if I were in Congress, but right now think the road to a national program runs through California. Let me also add that I will not be the only candidate in this race who supports Single Payer or cares about the health and wellbeing of all Californians. I do believe that based on my experience as a physician who has devoted himself to the underserved in Los Angeles and to access to care and system redesign in the social safety net, that I will be the strongest proponent for Single Payer of anyone running and perhaps anyone in the current constituted California Assembly. I will:

• Support single-payer healthcare for California and SB 562.
• Continue this district’s progressive legacy by spearheading passage of the Healthy California Act which will lead the nation by bringing universal healthcare to our state.
• Fight for a healthcare plan that is cost effective and saves employers money better spent on wages and jobs.
• Use my knowledge of the medical insurance and health care delivery systems to get California the best coverage in the world.
• End medical bankruptcies and the gut-wrenching anxiety people feel about health care costs once and for all.
• Guarantee funding for Planned Parenthood by passing the Healthy California Act.

b) Do you believe California – as a state and its municipalities – should change laws that target and criminalize people experiencing homelessness and will you support changing these laws and championing legislation that invests in a well-funded statewide housing trust fund and permanent supportive services?

Absolutely, I would support these efforts.

• I support community policing and will work to end the institutional racism built into our system of mass incarceration.
• California must spend less on jails and more on schools and mental health services. I believe criminal justice reform is crucial to enabling all Californians to lead productive lives and build a more prosperous future together.

• We waste time, effort, money, and years of people’s lives jailing people because they possess drugs. Some need treatment. None need incarceration.

• I will be a strong advocate for renters’ rights and affordable housing in the legislature – one key way we need to fight economic inequality and imbalance. Too many of our neighbors in this district are being priced out of the neighborhoods they grew up in and love.

• I will fight to repeal the Costa Hawkins Act, which prevents local governments from imposing rent control and stabilization ordinances on apartments built after 1995. I will reform the Ellis Act, which is subject to frequent abuses and allows owners to evict renters under false pretenses.

6. It has been widely acknowledged that California's court system is underfunded. In recent years, defendants in criminal court and traffic court have been charged higher fines and fees in order to fund the courts. This has led to a cycle of debt and incarceration for some of the poorest and most vulnerable Californians. The ACLU of Southern California believes that administering a court system is a core function of government and that the costs of administering courts should not be shifted to defendants, the vast majority of whom are low-income.

Who should bear the costs of administering California's justice system? If you believe that criminal and traffic court defendants are partly responsible for funding this system, what measures would you take to address California’s high fees and fines and their disproportionate impact on low-income communities and communities of color? I believe that we must find a way to introduce a system of progressive fines. Especially for those tickets and fines that disproportionately affect lower income residents. If, for example, one lives in a low income, high-density neighborhood with little parking they are more likely to get a parking ticket. And this housing with no parking becomes a vicious cycle. Those tickets should not be the same cost for people who live in their own home with a driveway. I understand that this is complicated but we must find a way to stop the continuation of this debtor’s prison that this country has created.

7. Proposition 13 was passed by voters to provide important protections for homeowners and renters, but it also included a property tax loophole for many corporations and
wealthy commercial property owners. This loophole allows some big corporations and wealthy investors to avoid paying their fair share in property taxes. We can no longer afford to keep giving billions of dollars in tax breaks to millionaires, billionaires and big corporations. Closing California’s commercial property tax loopholes restores $9 Billion for schools, community colleges and other vital community services, including health clinics, emergency rooms, affordable housing, parks, libraries and public safety. Do you support closing the commercial property tax loophole in Proposition 13 by taxing commercial and industrial property at its fair market value while preserving the important protections for homeowners and renters so we can invest in strengthening our schools and important local priorities?

I absolutely do support this. And let me be clear, that the second tenant of my campaign, after healthcare, is to clean up money in politics in general to ensure that not only the wealthy are having their needs catered to by their representatives. I will:

- Lead by example in this campaign so I won’t be beholden to lobbyists and corporations. I have not, and will not, accept a dime from corporations
- Fight to pass the DISCLOSE Act, to begin to end the corporate hold on our politics by showing voters who is trying to buy their elections.
- Support Clean Money Campaign Finance Reform and the overturn of Citizens United.
- Revolutionize access to the ballot box in California by continuing to make registration and voting easier for everyone. As a Navy veteran, I take it personally whenever a citizen encounters a barrier to voting or is denied the right to vote.

California’s bail system needs to change. On any given day roughly 60% of people in California jails are being detained before trial or sentencing simply because they cannot afford to post bail. California keeps far more people in jail awaiting trial compared to the rest of the country, but has lower court appearance rates than other states. Further, bail amounts are assigned with staggering racial bias. Research shows that Black people are assigned higher bail amounts than white people accused of similar offenses. Bail bond amounts for Black men are 35% higher than for white men; for Latino men, they’re 19% higher than for white men. As a result of not having the money to pay bail amounts, people often pay nonrefundable fees to bail bond agents and never see that money again even if their case is dismissed, they make every court date, or they are found innocent. People who can’t raise money for a bail bond (1) more readily decide to accept plea bargains as a means of getting out of jail quicker because even just a few days in jail can cost people their cars, jobs, housing, or child custody, and (2) are much more likely to be sentenced & to receive longer sentences. SB 10 (The California Money Bail Reform Act) aims to restructure the current bail system and significantly reduce and constrain the use of money bail and prioritize services to help people make their court
appearances while their cases move forward. Last Friday the Governor and the Chief Justice publicly announced their support for bail reform and their commitment to work together with the legislature through the fall to pass SB 10. Would you support SB 10? I have been outspoken in my belief in bail bond reform. I support money bail reform and oppose private prisons, and would support SB 10.

9. Current sentences are racially disproportionate and ineffective from a public safety standpoint. The incarceration rate for Black and Latinx people is now more than 6 times higher than for whites; 60% of those incarcerated are Black or Latinx. Eight percent of Black men of working age are now behind bars, and 21% of those between the ages of 25 and 44 have served a sentence at some point in their lives. To serve overly long sentences, people serve time in jails and prisons with horrifying conditions and rampant inmate abuse, where they’re separated from their communities and support systems, and where people with mental health and substance use conditions leave with worse prognoses. People are then released on probation or parole to face years-long waiting lists for reentry services. They’re overly surveilled, face numerous of obstacles to reentry, and receive little to no support to ease their transitions. Nearly two thirds of the reentry population technically violate probation or parole in some way and become incarcerated again. Experts say (1) that we are not going to have a sustainable reduction in our prison population if we continue to limit the discussion to those who are sentenced for non-serious or non-violent crimes and (2) that jurisdictions that divert resources away from incarceration and towards investments in communities are safer and healthier. Would you support reducing sentences, including for people convicted of serious/violent crimes?

This is a difficult question that I believe has some of its roots in the bail reform question. We know that the bail system forces people to take pleas that then give them convictions on their record. If after this initial conviction they are arrested again say, for getting into a fight, the sentence becomes longer and they are deemed repeat and/or serious criminals. We must not simply look to first time offenders to help reduce our prison population, but to those inmates who have received prolonged sentences due to prior records, many of which were borne from the current bail system. When a state as rich as California builds only three universities in the last nearly thirty years, something is wrong. Couple that with the fact that we built seven times that many prisons, and one can see that we have our priorities upside down. We MUST do more to invest in our communities and our citizens, including programs that support the transition from prison back into those communities.

10. The California Department of Education (CDE) reported that 243,603 students were suspended once or more in the 2014-15 academic year. The vague and all-encompassing
terms "willful defiance" and "disruption of school activities" were by far the primary reason school administrators suspended students, accounting for 129,835 suspensions statewide. In California, African American students make up 6% of total statewide enrollment, but made up 18-20% of the total number of suspensions for willful defiance-related offenses in both 2013-14 and 2014-15. With respect to the age of students suspended or expelled for willful defiance offenses in 2014-15, the majority were high school students in grades nine through twelve (52%), followed by middle school students in grades six through eight (35%), and elementary school students in Kindergarten through fifth grade (13%). Would you support a bill that prohibits California schools from suspending students on the basis of "willful defiance" and "disruption of school activities" in grades kindergarten to 12? If so, what alternatives to such suspensions would you recommend?

I would support a bill prohibiting students for such a vague and capricious idea. Making California’s schools a national leader is one of my top priorities. One way to achieve that is to provide in-school alternatives to students who may be having trouble. Instead of sending them out on their own, I would like to provide counseling programs in the school as an alternative to suspension.

11. In 2013-14, 24% of elementary schools and 42% of all high schools in the U.S. had a full-time assigned police officer. In 2015-16, 19 school districts throughout California operated their own police departments. The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights’ 2013-14 statistics show that, in California, the average arrest rate in schools where more than 80% of students are low-income is seven times higher than the average arrest rate in schools where fewer than 20% of students are low-income. Department of Education statistics also show that although students with disabilities made up only 12% of student enrollment nationwide, they comprised 23% of police referrals, 23% of arrests, and 67% of students placed in physical restraint, seclusion, and confinement.

Further, school officials are more likely to refer incidents involving students of color to the police than those involving white students: Native American students are 3.4 times more likely, Black students are 2.7 times more likely, and Hawaiians/Pacific Islander students are 1.4 times more likely to be referred to police. Do you support prohibiting law enforcement officers from being permanently stationed on school campuses? If not, what limits would you place on law enforcement officers being present at school sites? What practices would you recommend as alternatives to arresting or citing students for misbehavior?

These are alarming statistics and, sadly, seem to be reflective of similar statistics on a national level. I will say that I believe there are good reasons for police to be stationed at schools, but we must have a more holistic approach to the entire situation. We must be vigilant of the fact that officers placed at a school have the potential to encourage abuse in several ways: Poorly trained officers, or officers in schools with poorly defined protocols, can lead to arrests or tickets in situations
that might be more properly dealt with by using disciplinary action. Likewise, teachers can take advantage of a police presence by referring all disciplinary actions to the police instead of dealing with it themselves. At minimum, this can lead to a school that is not perceived as safe or trusting of the student body, and limit a school's effective to teach the students and prepare them for adult life. At worst, it is a piece of the student-to-prison pipeline. We must ensure that all parties- police, teachers, and administrators have proper training and knowledge necessary to make student well being the primary goal. 

Police at schools should be limited to protecting students and teachers from physical harm, and all alternatives should be exhausted before getting police involved except when a weapon is involved. Vandalism, fistfights and even low-level drug and alcohol use should be the purview of trained school councilors and not the police. The police should take maximal care not to disrupt school proceedings. 

If we give resources necessary to properly train police and teachers and foster a robust working relationship with all three actors- police, educators, and students- I believe we'll see these statistics drop precipitously. 

12. Under U.S. and California law, all students, regardless of their nationality or immigration status have a right to public education. Across California parents and guardians have reported being afraid of sending their children to school for fear that students or their family members would be arrested by immigration enforcement. Indeed, in one prominent case, a parent was detained by immigration enforcement while dropping his student off at school. Would you support litigation that (1) bars immigration authorities from school campuses and (2) prohibits school districts from sharing immigration-related information with immigration authorities? How would you protect California immigrant students and families and ensure that they feel safe to attend school? 

1.) After dropping my daughters off at school earlier this year I attended a rally for Romulo Avelica-Gonzalez, the man you reference. I encountered the daughters of Mr. Avelica-Gonzalez and that memory is seared into my consciousness. I have long been a proponent of Los Angeles remaining a sanctuary city and California remaining a sanctuary state, and I would absolutely support litigation that bars immigration authorities from school campuses. 2.) I also support the prohibition of school districts from sharing immigration related information with immigration authorities. Students and their families must know that their information won’t be shared. But how do we communicate that without doing it in a potentially harmful public way? In my two plus decades of experience in community health clinics, I would listen to people and try to identify the key community members that would visit. Through them I was able to pass on messages that I thought pertinent to the community; or to let the community
know that their information was never going to be shred by me. Finally, they should pass the DREAM Act. It is time to put this matter to rest on a national level so that our children here can go to school and focus on just that - the experience of school and all the joys and challenges it brings.

13. Since 1980, California has built 22 prisons and only three (3) new universities. Decades of disinvestment have resulted in making college less affordable and less attainable for all California students, especially low income students of color. In 2016, SB 1050 (de Leon) was enacted through the state budget, allocating $240 million to level the playing field and “expand the pie” of educational opportunity for low income and underrepresented students. Would you support continuing SB 1050’s pipeline approach with future budget funding to increase college readiness and eligibility, expand University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) enrollment slots, and support retention and college graduation for low income and underrepresented students of color? What would you do to increase college access and success for low income students and underrepresented students of color?

Having served as dermatology residency program director at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, I aware of important data that students and trainees from underserved communities are more likely to return to those communities to serve. Diversity itself is a virtue in an academic setting, so I generally see measures aimed at achieving that as supportable and wise. Better mentorship in underserved communities (including school guidance counseling) is important to keeping the pathways to higher education front and center in kids’ minds. I will also work to fully fund higher education in California. I believe community colleges should be free. Public universities should be affordable – which also means free for many if not most students and their families.

14. The Trump Administration has promoted anti-immigrant rhetoric and aggressive immigration enforcement tactics that threaten millions of immigrants, and their families, in California. As part of its stepped-up enforcement campaign, the Administration is seeking to broaden collaboration and cooperation with local law enforcement agencies. This collaboration undermines immigrant community members’ trust in the police and public safety for all Californians. Do you support policies that prohibit local law enforcement agencies from engaging in any cooperation with federal immigration authorities, including by detaining individuals for, or providing release notifications to, immigration agents?

I have often said that while Democrats have to play defense in Washington, we MUST be on offense in California. I believe that California must lead by example. We must lead the principled resistance to deportation forces. I strongly support the California Values Act, SB 54, to make California a “sanctuary state.” My mom
and dad are immigrants and I will not support any cooperation with ICE on deporting law-abiding people in this state. I will push for due process rights for those in deportation proceedings, including a statewide guarantee of legal representation. I know that ultimately, the answer lies in comprehensive immigration reform on the federal level, and will push for this as a long-term solution.

15. Because there is no right to appointed counsel in removal proceedings, most noncitizens are forced to fight their deportation cases without the assistance of a lawyer. Do you support state funding for counsel for indigent California residents in removal proceedings? Do you believe that funding for this critical due process protection should be available without any exceptions or carve-outs?

I unequivocally support state funding for counsel and I believe there should be no exceptions or carve-outs. I further believe there should be a State Justice Fund analogous to the LA City Justice Fund and I have been the only one in this race talking about this specific issue. I am not afraid to be out in front of issues. Mine is a campaign of values, and I will lead the charge any time I believe justice is not being met for all.