

2022 Primary Endorsement Questionnaire

DEADLINE: Submit by 12:00 Noon, Monday, April 18, 2022

Email *

contact@alysse.net



Thank you for your interest in being considered for an endorsement by the Asian Pacific American Democratic Caucus of Alameda County. Please answer each question in 250 words or less. Be honest and direct. Please submit your responses by 12 Noon, Monday, Apr. 18. All questionnaire responses will be posted on our website for Caucus members to review.

Personal Information

Candidate Name *

Alysse Castro

City and zip code of residence.

Alameda 94501

What is your campaign website address?

www.alyse.net

What is your campaign email address?

contact@alyse.net

Are you a registered Democrat? The APA Democratic Caucus can only endorse registered Democrats *

Yes

No

Are you an APA Democratic Caucus member? *

Yes

No

How long have you lived in the district which you are seeking to represent?

20 years

What are the names of any community or nonprofit organizations with which you have been an active volunteer in the past 3-5 years.

President of the Board, Alameda Family Services (Board President)
CDE Alternative Education Task Force Member
Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform Member
Juvenile Justice Realignment Subcommittee Member
Alameda Measure B Homeless Center Volunteer
Alameda County Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission Participant
Solidarity Sundays Women's Political Action Network

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. What actions have you taken to address anti-Asian discrimination/bullying/harassment?

Please explain in what capacity you have acted and whether any of these actions were prior to 2020. (i.e., as an elected representative, member of commission/board/organization, and as an individual.

As a 20 year leader in public education for youth at risk, I am constantly working to foster school environments free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying. This includes explicitly teaching tolerance, acceptable and unacceptable patterns of speech, and developing students to be upstanders not bystanders. All of my schools teach a rich curriculum of ethnic studies to help young people situate themselves in the evolving story of race in America, unpacking the immigrant experience, othering, language dominance, and intersectionality. All of this means we spend a good bit of time on current events, so tracking and responding to anti-Asian hate has been much discussed both before and after 2020. My own work includes recruiting and retaining diverse staff that mirror our student body, supporting the creation of a variety of Asian and Pacific Islander affinity groups across campuses, and connecting young people with culturally responsive community-based resources.

2. One out of every 3 Alameda County residents is of Asian ancestry but are underrepresented in elected office. What have you done and will you do to elevate their issues of concern?

As an Emerge CA graduate, one of my key strategies for elevating the concerns of the diverse Asian communities in Alameda County is to support local candidates running for office. I am also a huge believer in home language support and providing spaces where folks who are not comfortable in English can participate in deep dialog in their language of comfort. In public and private parent meetings I provide translation support so parents can elevate their own issues of concern. My career has also been marked by fore-fronting issues that are predictably of concern to residents of Asian ancestry, including racism, discrimination, and second language learning.

3. One-third of Alameda County residents were born in another country. Do you believe that the needs of immigrants have been adequately addressed by the office you are seeking to represent? What changes are needed to better center their needs?

No, the needs of immigrant learners and their families have absolutely not been adequately addressed by the current Alameda County Superintendent of Schools. We badly need to rebuild the English Language Learning network which once flourished at the Alameda County Office of Education. Other areas that are profoundly underserved are multilingual and dual immersion pathways, hybrid and independent learning, and culturally and linguistically responsive services. In my own time as a school administrator in Alameda I created the first High School Newcomer program to provide full day language development for recently arrived immigrant students who had not studied English before and later successfully argued against the district's plans to close the adult school and eliminate the adult ESL program serving several thousand residents born abroad. I took on the adult school in addition to my other principal job duties to keep it from closing. While principal of the adult school we added literacy courses and a college pathway. Since the start of the pandemic I have opened two schools targeted to immigrant youth with barriers to attending traditional school: one targets teenage immigrants unable to attend traditional school because they are working full time and the other serves 1000 mostly Asian elementary students whose families felt safer learning from home this year.

4. What have you learned about Asian Americans in the past year that you were previously unaware of and how has that impacted you?

I have served 20 years as a school administrator for struggling middle and high school students attending alternative schools and programs. Because I am San Francisco's only expert on the laws governing independent study, I started this school year helping to open an online school for elementary students, which turned out to be almost 90% Asian, mostly Chinese - which is radically disproportionate to the number of Asian students in the district as a whole. From many parent meetings, I learned that the Asian families choosing remote learning had both a high level of concern about potential anti-Asian violence and potential viral exposure at school and an equally high level of confidence that the family could handle both child care and remote learning. These families seemed to feel a great control over what happened in their own households and corresponding lack of confidence in navigating challenges outside of them. Of course, this is a self-selected population of mostly Chinese families requesting home learning, but compared to other families I spoke with these families seemed to feel a comparatively higher sense of efficacy within the home and a comparatively lower sense of efficacy in navigating both school and medical systems outside of the home. One way this has impacted me is giving me evidence to lobby our school system to accept that home learning is a fully legitimate choice that some families may prefer and there is no reason to treat something that is working as a second class option.

5. What is the difference between supporting Asian American/Pacific Islander issues and being an Ally?

In essence, support is a passive action that costs me nothing while being an ally is an action that requires expending energy, capital, and relationship. For example, when my grad school colleague Verna Castro moved to Alameda and wanted to add her unique Pacific Islander voice to the Alameda Unified School Board, I immediately endorsed her knowing that my voice as a former Alameda principal would make it easier for many Alamedas to consider a newcomer. My phone sure did ring, giving me an opportunity to be an advocate and a champion - and also to get hollered at by folks who thought I should be supporting familiar names. A supporter quietly casts a vote. An ally puts something, even if it is only the privilege of silence, in the game.

6. What resources (people/organizations) will you tap to increase your knowledge and understanding of the on-going needs of the Asian and Pacific Americans living in your district?

In addition to the Asian Pacific American Caucus, I have trust developed from prior work with East Bay Asian Youth Center and Asian Health Services. I also turn to student and parent groups and my own personal network of Asian and Pacific American friends and colleagues.

7. Please identify any Asian Pacific American candidates whom you have publicly endorsed/supported over the past 5 years including this election cycle. If there are none, please explain.

Verna Casto, Malia Vella, Janani Ramachandran, Phong La,

Thank you for completing our questionnaire.

Only candidates who submit questionnaires by noon Monday, April 18 will be considered for endorsement.

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