

## King County Democrats 2025 Endorsement Questionnaire

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Julissa Sanchez
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<b>Candidate pronouns</b>
she/her
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<b>What type of position are you running for?</b>
School District
<b>Which position are you running for?</b>
Seattle SD Director District No. 5
<b>Are you a Democrat?</b>
Yes
<b>Have you ever been a member of another political party?</b>
No
<b>Does your campaign have a code of conduct for staff and volunteers?</b>

No

### **What are your views on charter schools and voucher systems?**

I oppose school voucher systems and remain cautious about charter schools that lack public accountability. Vouchers drain public funds from neighborhood schools into private institutions that can exclude students with disabilities, English learners, and students from Black, Brown, and low-income communities—deepening inequities in education.

While charter schools have often reinforced segregation elsewhere, Washington's State Charter School Commission offers a unique opportunity to ensure any charter model in our state is equity-driven, transparent, and community-led. I support rigorous oversight that holds all schools—district and charter—accountable for serving every student with dignity.

I remain committed to molding a pathway forward that truly centers students with the greatest needs by investing in inclusive, well-resourced public schools that reflect and uplift the communities they serve.

### **What are your top three priorities for allocating limited dollars in your district?**

#### **1. Invest in Student Wellbeing and Inclusive Learning Environments**

Prioritize funding for mental health supports, restorative justice programs, and culturally responsive curricula that reflect the identities and histories of our students. Every child deserves to feel safe, seen, and supported in school.

#### **2. Support and Retain Educators, Especially Those from Underrepresented Backgrounds**

Allocate resources to increase educator compensation, provide mentorship and professional development, and ensure schools have the staff they need to succeed—particularly bilingual and BIPOC educators who reflect the diversity of our communities.

#### **3. Equitably Resource High-Need Schools**

Direct funds where they are needed most—toward schools serving students facing systemic barriers such as poverty, language access, and disability. Equity means prioritizing those who have been historically underfunded, not treating all schools the same.

### **What are the major barriers to effective learning in the classroom in your district?**

The major barriers to effective learning in our district include systemic inequities, under-resourced classrooms, and environments that don't always affirm or reflect the identities of our students. Too often, Black, Brown, multilingual, and neurodiverse students face classrooms where they aren't fully seen, supported, or understood. That disconnect can deeply impact a student's confidence, engagement, and sense of belonging.

As a former ESL student and a lifelong advocate for equity, I believe every child deserves a school environment where they are safe to be themselves, challenged to grow, and supported—emotionally, academically, and culturally. But we can't expect students to thrive if our educators are overworked, under-supported, and leaving the profession. Teacher burnout and a lack of diverse representation in the classroom are also critical barriers we must address.

This work cannot be done alone. I am committed to partnering with families, educators, community members, and fellow board members to dismantle barriers and create school communities grounded in dignity, excellence, and opportunity. Our students deserve nothing less.

### **What is the role of religion in public schools?**

Public schools must remain inclusive spaces where students of all backgrounds and beliefs feel safe, respected, and free to be themselves. That means upholding the constitutional separation of church and state, while also recognizing and honoring the diverse religious and cultural identities present in our classrooms.

The role of public schools is not to promote any one religion, but to create an environment where all students—religious, secular, or spiritual—are treated with dignity. Students should be free to express their faith individually, so long as it doesn't infringe on the rights of others. Likewise, schools have a responsibility to educate students about different cultures and belief systems in age-appropriate, inclusive ways, fostering understanding and reducing bias.

As a school board member, I would work to ensure that policies reflect both legal protections and a deep respect for diversity, and that no student ever feels excluded or marginalized because of their faith—or lack thereof. Creating schools where all students feel a sense of belonging includes honoring the full range of their identities, including religious and cultural backgrounds.

**What are the primary issues with school capacity in your district and how would you like to see them addressed?**

Seattle Public Schools faces significant challenges with declining enrollment, under-enrolled schools, and budget deficits. Enrollment has dropped from over 53,000 students in 2019 to just over 50,000 today, impacting funding and leading to financial shortfalls projected at \$100 million. Many elementary schools serve fewer than 300 students, making it difficult to provide comprehensive services and stable staffing. To address these issues, I support thoughtful school consolidations that create well-resourced schools capable of meeting diverse student needs. It's essential that this process centers equity and minimizes disruption to families and communities. I also advocate for transparent, inclusive community engagement to ensure families' voices are heard in decision-making. Finally, improving enrollment practices can help families access quality schools that fit their needs. By balancing fiscal responsibility with a deep commitment to equity and community stability, we can build a stronger, more sustainable school system that serves all students well.

**Describe a time—professionally or personally—when you've led through conflict or controversy. How did you reach a conclusion and how did it advance the issue being addressed?**

As a first-generation Mexican American and former ESL student in Seattle, I grew up feeling like an outsider. At Bryant Elementary, a mostly white school, I was often isolated—teachers weren't trained to support students like me, and I was even questioned about being born in the U.S. These early experiences of invisibility shaped my passion for equity. In my housing justice work, I noticed a similar disconnect—though interpretation was available, few Latine tenants used it due to mistrust and lack of representation. I advocated for change and led the creation of the first bilingual tenant rights clinic in Burien, where 23% of residents are Latine. The clinic prioritized Spanish speakers but served all tenants, offering case management, paperwork help, and landlord mediation in a culturally responsive setting. This experience taught me how to lead through conflict by centering community voices and building trust—values I would bring to the school board.

**Certification**

- The candidate hereby certifies that, to the best of their knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.