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Candidate's Name: Jason Andrean

Ward: One

1. Why are you running for this office?

The reason I'm running for Ward One SBOE Rep is simple - as a product of traditional public schools, I want our kids to have the same opportunities I had. As the son of Jamaican immigrants and a first-generation college grad, I owe whatever success I have to quality public schools, supportive communities and dedicated teachers. I'm running to make sure that kids from across this diverse District, not just the most affluent neighborhoods, have those same opportunities. I'm running to ensure that the more than 85% of our population that is comprised of students of color are treated equitably when it's time to commit resources. The District's positive budget position allows us to provide equitable funding for all children. We must allocate and use those resources to ensure that all children receive the opportunities to be successful in school and ultimately in life.

I am also running for SBOE to ensure we are establishing policies that aggressively address the achievement gap and give all of our children the tools necessary to achieve their highest potential. Finally, I'm running because I want to be a voice for all families especially those who feel marginalized and left out of the discussion on our public education system and the ways it serves (or underserves) their children.

2. How will you engage your constituents, parents, teachers, students and the community?

One of the primary reasons I'm running for the Ward One seat is to ensure that all families have a seat at the table and a voice in the room-- especially families of color, parents of children with disabilities and special needs, and immigrant families. Ward One is the most diverse ward in the District and as such, our LSATs and PTAs should reflect that diversity. As the Ward 1 SBOE representative, I will work to ensure that all communities across the Ward are engaged and have their voices heard. From door-to-door canvassing to community meetings and events, I will proactively meet and engage with constituents, teachers, and families where they are -- not the other way around. I will visit each school in the ward throughout the year, routinely attend ANC meetings, and develop and distribute out a quarterly newsletter.

3. What qualifications do you bring to the office of State Board of Education, including your professional or personal experience with public education in our city?

Over the past ten years, I have been actively involved in youth development and education in the District. I led the board of the DC region Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, have uncovered corruption at the DC Trust, raised money for N Street Village, served on the board of Sitar Arts Center and I currently chair a public charter school in Ward 8 that focuses on providing an exceptional public education experience for kids from traditionally underserved populations. I'm also a product of a traditional public education system and have made it an integral part of my campaign commitment to meet with residents and families across all of the neighborhoods of our Ward. I've heard their stories of feeling marginalized and shut out of a system that continues to fall short in educating their kids. I've witnessed the disparity in the education delivered in the Ward's most affluent neighborhoods versus in its most socioeconomically challenged. This insight is crucial to effectively serving and I believe I'm the only candidate who has aggressively sought that perspective.

4. Under Mayoral Control of education, in effect since 2007, the State Board of Education has very limited authority over policy. Do you believe their authority should be expanded? Yes ___ No X
If Yes, in what areas?

The State Board plays an important role in setting policies that govern academic standards, graduation requirements and teacher certifications. Our goal must be to keep politics out of education, to the greatest degree possible. Simply giving SBOE more authority will only further politicize education policymaking. Instead of giving SBOE more authority, Council should allocate more resources so that SBOE can more effectively do the job with which it is currently tasked, including its role as a primary conduit for serving as a voice for the residents of our respective Wards.

5. Should charter schools be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the open meetings laws for boards of directors? Yes ___ No X Please explain your answer.

Currently, DCPS is subject to FOIA at the school district level. Assigning staff to respond to and administer FOIA requests at a single site facility adds an additional layer of bureaucracy and diverts resources and personnel from their primary function of educating our kids. It's unreasonable and counterproductive for a single site charter school to have dedicated staff to meet FOIA requirements. We should continue to look for other ways to create a more transparent charter sector in the District. The Public Charter School Board already requires charter schools to hold board meetings that are open to the public.

6. In 2016 the State Board of Education made important recommendations for how schools in the District of Columbia should be judged as succeeding or not, consistent with the Federal ESSA (Every Child Succeeds Act). They included putting in place a star rating for each school - 1 to 5 stars. Do you believe the metrics proposed for that rating system capture school quality? Yes ___ No X
Please explain your answer.

While the STAR ratings system is not perfect, we should view it as a legitimate starting point in the process toward ensuring uniformity and greater transparency across both sectors. The goal is to hold schools accountable and provide parents with the information necessary for them to compare and determine which schools are best for their children. The majority of the information that the STAR framework incorporates is public information, but it is not easily accessible and requires parents to compile the information to do their own comparative analysis. As part of the accountability system, parents will have a standardized, reasonably objective way to know how well their schools are serving their children, equity advocates will have a way of determining whether students are getting the necessary learning opportunities and resources, and our District leaders will have a roadmap for identifying schools that need additional support for improving and set them on a course to do so. The STAR rating systems provides our communities with an important foundation that is worth building upon.

As with any new system the goal should be to routinely assess what elements need to be adjusted. I would suggest giving additional weight to whether schools effectively educate students from low-income families, students with special needs and English-language learners.

7. Last year, DCPS was embroiled in a series of scandals around graduation rates, leading to calls for an independent research entity to provide better analysis of how our schools are doing. Do you agree that such an entity, outside of the control of the Mayor, is needed? Yes X or No _____
If yes, what do you think would be the most sensible model?

I support the development of an independent research collaborative for our school system, and when elected to the State Board of Education (SBOE) I will advocate for its establishment. I believe the independent research collaborative should be housed outside of the District government, similar to Chicago's national model — depoliticizing the entity. This model allows for data and findings to be brought forth in a manner that sidesteps typical political and bureaucratic entanglement.

An independent research collaborative would be a welcomed addition to our education ecosystem to help drive innovation and uncover which techniques and models work best. This is also an important step in ensuring data integrity and findings that aren't influenced by political interests — giving DC Council more confidence in information used to support the oversight process.

8 The State Board of Education voted on and approved the use in DC of the PARCC test to satisfy federal testing requirements under ESSA. Only 3 states and DC are now committed to using PARCC. Some states have advocated de-emphasizing standardized testing as the measure of success in education. How do you view the role of standardized testing in DC schools?

The purpose of standardized testing is to provide a snapshot of a student's proficiency. The results can provide us with information on where students need additional support or more challenging work. Test scores give education systems and governments data that can be used to make the case for additional support for subgroups that are struggling.

However, over reliance on standardized testing to determine the performance of a school or the effectiveness of a teacher is problematic. Standardized tests cannot capture the many qualitative attributes that make for great schools and educators. Additionally, the over emphasis on standardized tests can lead to school leaders and teachers teaching to the test as opposed to ensuring our children receive a rigorous and enriching learning experience that prepares them for life. Some degree of standardized testing should be retained as a tool and PART of the measurement and evaluation process, but it must be viewed as a part of a broader process.

9. Almost half of DC students now attend public charter, not neighborhood schools in the District of Columbia. We have over 200 publicly funded schools and 66 separate school systems (65 charter school systems and DCPS). Up to 20 new charter schools can open each year.

Should the Council and/or Mayor have the authority to limit the expansion of charter schools?

Yes No Please explain your answer.

I have never advocated solely for the establishment and expansion of the charter system. We must prioritize and advocate for a public education system that leverages every opportunity and resource to provide quality, equitable educational opportunities for our children. I believe there is a continuing role for both traditional and charter schools, and given the growth of both sectors it's clear many families share that belief.

Since our system is under Mayoral control, our Mayor should have the authority to determine the expansion of charter schools. Given the growing need for quality seats across the District, I would not propose randomly limiting charter schools at this time. This must be a broader, more thoughtful conversation which incorporates the views of families, elected stakeholders, teachers and others with a vested interest in the success of our students.

Should the Council and/or Mayor have authority over charter school siting (where they are located)?

Yes No Please explain your answer.

There should be a mechanism for both sectors (DCPS and PCSB) to coordinate school openings, closings and general facilities planning with the overall goal of providing students with access to quality schools in every neighborhood and community. Charter schools open their doors where they can find available buildings. Making more buildings available across the city in neighborhoods with demand would help to more strategically locate new charter schools.

11. The following issues are of great concern in our city. Which of these issues do you think is most important and why?

Funding equity

School diversity/ integration

Giving disadvantaged student subgroups priority access to schools if they serve less than the district average

Expanding the number and support for educators of color

All of these issues are of great concern in our city, and the solutions are inextricably tied together. We must prioritize equitable funding for our public schools so that children who are disadvantaged, special needs, at-risk and English language learners get the resources they need to be successful and close the achievement gap. The District's current budget surplus positions us to provide equitable funding for all children without having to take away services and programs from affluent families. We need to act aggressively to ensure that we are giving all children opportunities to be successful in school and ultimately in life.

But the focus on equitable funding must be accompanied by a broader, wholistic approach to ensuring that a fundamental focus on and commitment to equity is pervasive in every aspect of our education system. That means embracing all of our students and their families, valuing and leveraging the differences and diversity that exist within the district, ensuring that our teachers and administrators reflect that diversity and creating a safe space for the discussion and expression of our differences.

12. The DC State Board of Education had a representative on the Mayor's Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force. Earlier this year, the task force put forward draft recommendations related to improving outcomes for at-risk students and creating a framework for coordinating planning decisions between DCPS and charter schools. Which recommendation do you think is the most important and why?

From my perspective, the recommendation that calls for exploring the development of “policies and programs designed to increase socioeconomic diversity in schools,” should be a major priority.

The importance of classroom diversity is widely known and broadly accepted. More diverse schools help to reduce concentrated poverty and better prepare our children to collaborate with and learn from other students of diverse backgrounds. Success in today’s world increasingly hinges on the ability to collaborate and engage with an increasingly diverse world. Having exposure to more diverse networks and individuals can open doors for many of our students. It is not just low income students who benefit from diverse schools but also middle and upper class students alike. Diverse schools have been linked to improved cognitive skills and problem solving abilities. In the long term, diverse schools can help create a more cohesive society where individuals can see past longstanding historical biases, feel a sense of empathy for others who don’t live or look like them, and see the connectivity of our individual struggles.

13. How should the SBOE hold the Office of the State Superintendent of Education accountable?

SBOE can hold OSSE accountable by meeting regularly with the Superintendent and continuing to forge a better working relationship. In recent years, OSSE and SBOE have improved their working relationship and now collaborate earlier and often regarding the approval of new regulations.