

King County Democrats 2023 Endorsement Questionnaire

Name

Jorge L. Barón

Email address

jorge@electjorgebaron.com

Phone number

(206) 412-7110

Candidate name

Jorge L. Barón

Candidate pronouns

(he/him)

Candidate name pronunciation

HOR-heh

Campaign Filer_Name

Together for Jorge

Campaign email

info@electjorgebaron.com

Campaign phone

(206) 412-7110

Campaign website

<https://electjorgebaron.com>

Link to candidate headshot

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EhCtTiWYjDMYWkBT6e5_zi4gEYDKACt/view?usp=sharing

Campaign manager name

Tyler Crone (interim while hiring)

Campaign manager email

tyler.crone@gmail.com

Campaign manager phone

(206) 697-4789

Treasurer name

Janet Miller

Treasurer email

janetmiller98115@gmail.com

Treasurer phone

(206) 669-4924

Consultant name

Michael Charles

Consultant email

michael@ulstrategies.com

Other paid staff or full-time volunteers

Seferiana Day, Michael Fertakis - Upper Left Strategies; full team being hired and constituted

What type of position are you running for?

County

What position are you running for?

Metropolitan King County Council

Are you a Democrat?

Yes

Have you ever been a member of another political party?

No

Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission, or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?

No

Do you have a code of conduct for campaign staff and volunteers?

Yes

If you have campaign staff, do you support them joining a labor union?

Yes

Do you support employees of your jurisdiction (e.g. your city's employees, the Port's employees, etc.) exercising their collective bargaining rights without fear of retaliation, including the right to bargain and strike for better working conditions and pay?

Yes

Are you willing to have yourself, your staff, and your peers undergo training to understand and combat institutional racism, implicit bias, and sexual harassment?

Yes

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate fossil fuel PACs?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate pharmaceutical PACs or corporate health insurance PACs?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate building industry PACs, including the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW) and the National Association of Home Builders?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from law enforcement or sheriffs' organizations?

No

Will you return contributions from companies or PACs who are aligned with the organizations listed above and others that conflict with Democratic Party values?

Yes

Have you made any donations to Republican candidates or Republican Party organizations in the last 5 years?

No

Have you previously participated, or will you be participating, in a candidate training program like Institute for a Democratic Future or Emerge?

Yes

Please describe your background (education, employment, community and civic activity, union affiliation, and political activity).

I have spent most of my legal career advocating to advance and defend the rights of marginalized communities. For the past 15 years, I have served as executive director of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP), a nationally recognized legal services organization. In that role, I led responses to attacks on immigrant communities under the Trump Administration, helped build coalitions that resulted in significant policy changes at the state and local level, and significantly expanded the capacity of NWIRP to provide services to thousands of low-income community members. Prior to my role as executive director, I was a staff attorney at NWIRP and served as a member of the union bargaining committee (NWIRP was then represented by AFSCME). My work on behalf of immigrant rights has been rooted in my own immigrant experience, as I came to the United States from Colombia when I was thirteen and did not speak English then.

I have had the privilege of serving on state-wide task forces, served on the transition committee for Attorney General Bob Ferguson, and received numerous civic recognitions, including the King County Council's MLK Medal of Distinguished Service. I am a graduate of Duke University and Yale Law School.

What motivated you to run for this position and how would you evaluate your success?

I am motivated to run for King County Council because I believe that, together, we can build a stronger, more just future for all in King County.

Throughout my legal career, I've dedicated myself to supporting marginalized communities. For 15 years, I led the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, providing legal assistance to immigrants. I've fought against egregious policies like the Muslim Ban and family separation, and worked to disentangle local law enforcement from immigration enforcement.

I have a proven track record of building coalitions and achieving policy change. I've helped generate hundreds of millions of dollars in funding for immigrant communities, doubled investments in immigration assistance, and advocated for reforms of the criminal legal system.

As an outsider to government, I bring fresh perspectives to county policy-making. I'm supported by leaders like Rep. Pramila Jayapal and Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda, who have driven positive change.

I will evaluate my success by how much we reduce disparities in outcomes across King County, by how much we increase affordable housing, by how much we reduce the number of our neighbors who are unsheltered, by how much we reduce carbon emissions, and by how much we increase safety for all residents.

What are the top three issues of urgency that you will address if elected?

The top three issues are progressive revenue, racial justice, and community well-being.

First, we must bring renewed urgency to generating new progressive revenue options for the county to be able to make the necessary investments to make progress in a range of policy issues, from homelessness to climate justice. I reject the notion that a place with as much wealth as King County should simply accept the current limitations on revenue imposed by state law. I will use my experience building coalitions at the state level to work in partnership with state legislators on making the changes necessary to ensure the county has the capacity to make investments in its workforce, its services, and its people.

Second, I recognize that so many of the challenges we face as a county—and as a society—are driven by the ongoing impact of systemic racism. I believe it is essential to use a racial justice lens when evaluating policies in all issue areas.

Third, my vision for King County is grounded on the value that our success as a community depends on the well-being of every one of our neighbors. This means ensuring that all residents of the county have access to affordable housing, a healthy environment, a fair criminal legal system, and reliable transportation options.

How will you involve all residents and engage all communities in the decision-making process?

I will first work to elevate the understanding of what county government does through channels that can meaningfully reach, engage, and educate a broad range of community members - especially young people - as too many don't fully grasp the vital role of the County in their lives. Through connection via social media as well as physical and virtual spaces, I will (as I have done throughout my career) center the voices of people most directly impacted to inform and influence my decision-making as well as to hold me accountable. I will especially work to create spaces that will allow young people to make their voices heard and engage with policymakers. And I will seek to use my platform as an elected official to uplift youth activism, to inspire even more young people to become involved in the political process. Lastly, representation matters. I hope that—through being a visible, accessible, and responsive public servant—will inspire others like me who may have been bullied for not speaking English, or who have been treated as the "other" because of the color of their skin or where they were born, to see that they too can be part of the decision making process.

How have you promoted an enduring environment of inclusivity, diversity, and equity?

As I noted earlier, I have spent most of my career advocating on behalf of marginalized immigrant and refugee communities. Through this work, I have sought to mitigate the impact of immigration policies that are rooted in racism and xenophobia. I was on the front-lines of efforts to confront Islamophobic policies like the Trump Administration's Muslim Ban, and fought against policies driven by racism like family separation.

In my work as a nonprofit leader, I promoted inclusive practices within my organization. When I began as executive director of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, I was the only person of color in the leadership team. As I leave the organization, our leadership team is majority people of color, as is the staff, and our board of directors. I have also mentored new professionals from marginalized communities and served as a presenter for programs that seek to increase diversity within the legal profession.

I have also recognized that I need to do personal work to identify and mitigate the biases I have. I have done this internal work through trainings, including participating in the Undoing Racism Workshop of the People's Institute, and through other trainings focused on equity and inclusion.

If elected, how will you address inequalities experienced among BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, or other marginalized communities and advance an agenda of equality?

As someone who has a proven track record of working to address inequality through my immigrant rights' work, I will use a racial equity lens to inform every decision I make as an elected official. I will particularly prioritize addressing racial disproportionalities in the criminal legal system, such as the fact that nearly 40% of the people in "secure detention" in the King County jail system are Black, even though Black people only make up about 7% of the county's population. And I will work to address disparities in other policy areas.

And protecting the rights of LGBTQIA+ community members is a deeply personal issue to me, as the proud parent of a trans daughter (who has been on her journey since the age of 2) and brother to a gay man. I am devastated to witness the attacks on trans people occurring across the country, including efforts that would criminalize parents like me for supporting my child's access to gender-affirming (and life-saving) care. As an elected official, I will promote policies that will ensure that county residents are not only protected from discrimination on the basis of their identity but also have unfettered access to gender-affirming care.

Do you support the Growth Management Act's goals of focusing development and population growth in existing urban centers to protect rural land use in rural King County?

Yes

Do you support increased funding for the King County District Court Regional Mental Health Court?

Yes

Do you support shifting law enforcement budgets in support of social and behavioral health services?

Yes

Will you advocate for the use of harm reduction models in the county's legal system?

Yes

Will you support allocating public safety budget dollars to the LEAD and CoLEAD programs of community-based intervention and diversion?

Yes

King County's 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) lays out a path to 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050. How will you use new funding and incentives from the federal 2022 Inflation Reduction Act to improve results, and how will you update the SCAP in 2025?

As a councilmember, I will champion efforts to add even more urgency to the County's current work to address the climate crisis. I will work with the rest of the Council and the Executive to leverage the opportunities created by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to help meet and ideally exceed the goals of greenhouse gas emission reductions set out in the SCAP. I will push for the county to take advantage of federal resources and incentives to complete the transition of the County's fleet (including Metro's bus fleet) to electric vehicles, ideally ahead of Metro's current target date of 2035. I will also promote policies that incentivize homeowners and businesses to take advantage of tax credits and other opportunities through the IRA to reduce emissions.

I also recognize that the climate crisis disproportionately impacts communities of color and other frontline communities. I will build on the work undertaken by the County's Climate Equity Community Task Force and the strategies it identified in the SCAP.

As we work to update the SCAP in 2025, I will ensure that communities most impacted by the climate crisis have meaningful opportunities to be part of the decision-making process.

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated and highlighted the economic and mental health disparities across our communities. How will you expand access to services to reduce these disparities and what is your plan for funding?

In my role at Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, I witnessed the disproportionate impact that the pandemic had on immigrant and other marginalized communities. I saw how many of these communities did not have access to some of the federally-funded programs that many others were able to rely on. As an advocate, I worked to ensure these disparities were mitigated and successfully advocated for programs at the state and local level, including the Washington Immigrant Relief Fund, a program that provided hundreds of millions of dollars in support to immigrant communities across the state. As a councilmember, I will bring this track record of success to promote equitable access to economic and health supports.

In order to ensure this equitable access, we will need to work urgently on reforming the restrictions imposed by state law on the ability of the county to fund its operations. We must be able to develop progressive revenue options to fund county government and allow it to make the investments necessary to address the disparities the pandemic exacerbated. I plan

to use my experience in successfully building coalitions and working with a broad range of stakeholders to drive policy change in Olympia toward this necessary goal.

King County has committed to pro-equity contracting with minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBs) and reported that 7% of total 2021 contracting dollars went to MWBs. What actions will you take to reduce systemic discrimination against MWBs and expand the participation of MWBs in county contracts of all sizes and across our communities?

As the leader of a nonprofit organization that has long contracted with the county to provide services to the community, I have seen first-hand the barriers that often make it difficult for small businesses and organizations to contract with the county and other local governments. I will use this experience to promote policies and practices that remove obstacles MWBs face in contracting for county services, including through the streamlining of procurement and reporting processes. I will also promote proactive engagement with MWBs and seek to create spaces for owners of these businesses (including those not currently doing business with the county) to identify ways in which the county can improve its current practices.

I am particularly interested in working with the growing number of businesses owned and operated by immigrant and refugee community members that often face specific barriers, including language access obstacles and unfamiliarity with U.S. business requirements. Given that 25% of King County's population was born outside the United States, I see particular opportunities to promote equity in contracting with these entities.

CERTIFICATION: I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

Yes

Created on: May 16th, 2023

Changed on: May 16th, 2023