

PA PAC Questionnaire for Durham Board of Education - 2022

Please return the completed form along with your resume or biographical statement describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience, as well as a high-resolution headshot of yourself as soon as possible, but by Sat Mar 19 at 5pm, at the latest.

Please e-mail your responses to PAC Coordinators at papacboard@googlegroups.com by Saturday, March 19 at 5pm.

Please note that following the Saturday, March 19 at 5pm deadline, the People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.

When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with each question numbered and organized as it appears here. Type your responses in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Do not use colors or shading.

Please try to confine your responses to no more than 300 words unless another word limit is indicated. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question.

If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.

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1. What are the three most important issues facing Durham Public Schools? What are your top priorities in addressing these issues?

Excellent Schools - Excellent schools require partnership with excellent educators and staff. That staff must be led by an equity-focused, experienced Principal who inspires adults everyday in their service to the children of Durham. They must care about students and build trusted relationships. I would continue to focus district work on recruitment of Black and Hispanic/Latinx educators to ensure students see themselves in our diverse staff. Educators and staff need professional respect and compensation. I will advocate for local, state and federal funding to ensure that DPS has the highest salary supplements for educators in NC and all staff are paid at least \$17/hr to increase staff retention. They need time to collaborate with each other and training opportunities that they select to develop professionally. The pandemic has further widened opportunity gaps for students of color and the labor and housing markets have shifted dramatically. It will require creative solutions and transformative local investments to bolster our students and staff in the coming years, especially as federal COVID funds are depleted.

Equitable Schools - Two years ago the World Health Organization declared that COVID-19 was a global pandemic. COVID disrupted every system and relationship across the earth and in our country, the pandemic further exposed deep inequities within all systems; healthcare, justice, housing, education and more. Black and Hispanic/Latinx students face inequitable outcomes in academics and discipline. These students need urgent support and care. Before the pandemic, our district was making significant progress towards highlighting and addressing these inequities. DPS staff need to look like our students and also be trained in equitable practices. Along with our Board Chair, I advocated for the creation of a districtwide Equity Policy. Our District Equity Policy will serve as my guidepost as I evaluate budgets, programs, grievances, student hearings and district policies. Educators need to be given the culturally relevant resources and dedicated time needed to support all students and staff. Students need relationships with trusted adults and mentors as they strive towards their future goals. Schools need to be joyous, just and safe spaces. We will partner with families. In DPS we will always teach history accurately and from primary sources. We will not ban books.

Innovative Schools - Our school facilities are aging and it is essential that we fully fund the DPS capital improvement plan with a robust 2022 bond referendum that covers at least half of the district's 10 year capital needs. Other facility needs fall outside the scope of this work and will require the continuation of at least \$6 million annually in maintenance funding for Durham Public Schools from Durham County. This amount will probably need to increase due to rising supply and labor costs. I will also advocate for renewable energy investments in Durham's schools and libraries. We need to teach students more about sustainable practices and healthy foods. A bright spot from the pandemic will be a renewed focus on outdoor learning, hands-on instruction and return to in person field trips. We are a 1:1 district and must maintain excellent technology and broadband access to bridge the digital divide. In coordination with educators and families, we need to have critical conversations about child development and the appropriate use of technology, especially for our youngest learners.

2. Durham Public Schools has a commitment to and focus on equity. Name one systemic racial equity issue that impacts students of color in Durham Public Schools. How will you use your seat on the board to rectify this issue?

Opportunities to services like AIG identification, honors classes, advanced academics and extracurricular opportunities must be equitably available to all yet we know in our district, black and brown students are often underrepresented. Changes to entrenched bureaucratic systems take time and children can not wait. I continuously ask tough questions focusing on the needs of marginalized students and families. In order to address these disparities, we need to start with regular, transparent disaggregated reporting of the student data. The public needs reports on the specific course availability at each middle and high school as well as class size, achievement data and enrollment data. We need to recruit and strategically place educators of color to lead these courses and identification efforts. We can explore the use of technology to bridge school communities together for hard to staff courses.

Language barriers exist and must be fully supported with high quality interpretation and cultural competency as we share the importance and availability of rigorous coursework with every student and family. Often older students, recent graduates and their families can be our best ambassadors for reaching younger peers. They can communicate why it is valuable to take more challenging courses. In my conversations with Durham's Academic Success Alliance, we discuss barriers and ways our community can create shared goals towards addressing these inequities. Students need to understand early in their academic journey how their transcripts and coursework connect to their future college and career goals. We need to celebrate academic and artistic achievement like we celebrate our athletes. We need to ensure that qualified educators and counselors are trained in equitable practices that nurture and include all students. Portfolios of student work are more reflective measures of student achievement than any data from standardized testing.

3. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Social Studies requires teachers to facilitate conversations about race and racism in the United States. How would you respond to parents and other community members who want to see this history removed from what is taught in the classroom?

I helped co-author a resolution for our Board opposing NC's nonsensical anti-Critical Race Theory Bill (HB 324). Our Board passed the resolution and Governor Cooper eventually vetoed the bill. Durham's delegation was united in support for the Governor's veto. These bills are political stunts trying to drum up conservative voters by stirring opposition to teaching America's shameful history. In truth, Critical Race Theory is not taught in K-12 schools but started in law school curriculum. In Durham, and across the country, students need to be taught accurate history from primary sources. They need to understand that American systems including healthcare, education, justice, housing and more are deeply inequitable. They need to know that racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, islamophobia, etc. are being used to divide communities today. I believe that when people know better they do better. Students are capable of dealing with complex issues. They understand that there are intersectionalities that further marginalize people. Parents are their children's first teachers and powerful partners when we build bridges. In Durham, we have deep and complex local history. We have living civil rights icons whose stories need to be shared. I would love our community to offer family courses through the DPS Family Academy so that students and their families could learn together about and from our painful past. In Durham we will not remove difficult history but will pledge to teach the truth in order to build a more just future for all.

4. What is your take on how restorative justice programs (as an alternative to punitive disciplinary measures) are being implemented in DPS? What successes and challenges have you seen so far?

I appreciate the advocacy of Durham leaders who uplifted the disparities with discipline practices, including in school suspension. These courageous conversations highlighted ongoing systemic concerns. Our district strives to be transparent with discipline data and a Task Force helped us revise the Student Code of Conduct with months of community input. One of the most significant advances from this work was the conversion of In School Suspension in DPS middle and high schools into Restorative Practice Centers. This transition happened quickly over the summer and in some cases there was inadequate training for staff during the transition. Like many things in education, having the right staffer can make or break an initiative. When implemented with fidelity, restorative practices can change a school culture but it takes training, retraining, support and time. Our district staff have made this a priority. The pandemic interrupted in person learning and discipline data was recently shared which only represented a fraction of students. Student survey data indicated a need for students to build more deeply connected school relationships. This further affirmed my commitment to increasing tutoring and mentoring supports while we continue to strengthen bonds between students and schools. I would support a formal project evaluation by a national external equity leader to assess areas of strength and for improvement within our restorative practice centers.

5. What is the role of the BOE? What kind of leadership style do you prefer for the board?

1. *Select and evaluate the Superintendent, who leads a team of professional educators and support staff throughout the district in the shared vision of the DPS board and community.*
2. *Set visionary policies that center the work of the district and the budget on equity, excellence and innovation in keeping with the shared values of our beloved Durham community and in partnership with educators, students, families, community and staff. Be a policy wonk who reads and evaluates everything to bring national best practices to support the students, families and staff in Durham.*
3. *Be present in our schools and greater community while listening and responding thoughtfully to feedback. Represent community needs as an empowered advocate with district, local, state and national leaders as we work towards more just and innovative schools in keeping with every child's constitutional right.*

The Superintendent is charged with listening to seven different perspectives, seeking consensus on priorities and vision, and recruiting and retaining excellent staff to implement this shared vision. Durham Public Schools is also the third largest employer in the county so leadership of such a large organization must be empowered and equity-focused. Durham is a beloved community, like no other. We want excellence and equity for every child, we have a lot of stakeholders, and we want strategic changes quickly. I have worked with multiple Superintendents and value the ability of a strong leader to advocate for what students need, to have a background as a classroom educator, to be responsive to stakeholder concerns, and to be able to stand up to Board members when our good intentions pull us

from the core, focused work of the district.

In Board leadership, representation matters. Our district is 82% students of color and our Board leadership should be representative. While I am the most veteran board member, I have always encouraged and supported others into leadership that is representative of our student body and have been enthusiastic to support Chair Umstead leading our Board alongside other Black female elected leaders in Durham. Board work is strongest when we listen and learn from our varied perspectives. Board members should be prepared, be responsive, be respectful, be ethical, be advocates, and be representative of constituent concerns. Board members need to be in schools and visible in the community.

6. What is your view of how DPS Central Office should work with school administrators and staff? How will you encourage the superintendent to train and support building leaders to be responsive to students, parents, and staff?

Whether they are officially community schools or not, our schools belong to the greater community. DPS Central Office staff should support the unique needs of each school community. The Central Office should supply excellent resources and every school must be empowered to support their students and families in creative and thoughtful ways. Durham is not a cookie cutter community and every school is unique. I support 360 evaluations for school principals and central office staff. I believe in continuous improvement and know that balanced feedback will improve support for students and staff. The pandemic has made it difficult to build strong relationships between school and home. While we welcomed individual volunteers back this year, large in school gatherings have been limited. The community school model is the best local model for building responsive leadership. Leadership is distributive rather than hierarchical and relationships are deep. I am delighted to hear that DPS may expand support for a total of 6 community schools in the near future. I will advocate for full support and sharing of best practices from these initiatives with our remaining schools.

7. Charter schools are controversial. What role do you think they should play in our community?

I worked with a former colleague and charter school representatives to draft “Our Vision of Public Education in Durham: Quality Schools for All Children”. This vision statement was approved by the Durham Board of Education but never by the Boards of any charter schools in Durham. It was reported that charter schools did not agree with the sentences “We envision a community that will equitably confront, together, our fundamental challenge of weakening the powerful link between socioeconomic disadvantage and student learning. All of our public schools will share equally in this challenge to educate our impoverished children, with no barriers to admission, retention, and success.” Our goal in drafting this document was to ensure that all charter schools in Durham reflect the diversity of our Durham community and truly are open and welcoming to all. Too often charter schools limit transportation and free meals or do not translate their applications into Spanish. Some require families to pick students up for early release one day per week. These policy choices tend to result in student populations which do not reflect the socioeconomic, racial, AIG or EC diversity within Durham as a whole.

Durham County currently has over 15 charter schools including two virtual charter schools and in addition, Durham students attend nearly 20 charter schools in counties outside of Durham. Charter schools are publicly funded but privately managed. Dr. Helen Ladd's research has shown that charter schools in NC tend to be racially isolated and some charter schools exacerbate racial isolation by policies that create barriers to students like lack of transportation or healthy school meals. Most Durham charter schools do not have applications in Spanish, so Hispanic/Latinx students are significantly underrepresented in Durham charter schools.

In most states, charter schools are actually authorized by local elected boards of education and operate like magnet schools. NC could strengthen charter school legislation by allowing local boards of education to govern charter schools in their local education agency. I hope that DPS could find an existing local charter school that would be willing to be governed by the local board of education. It would be better for the students and community. We could work with our legislative delegation to get a local bill passed that would enable this pilot. In this work Durham could lead the state in innovating while increasing charter school accountability and transparency. In the meantime, DPS will continue to co-exist with local charter schools and encourage better state and local oversight for students and taxpayers. The County Commissioners should also resume an annual meeting with charter school principals so they can bring more transparency and accountability for local taxpayers.

8. What is your goal and plan for sustaining and increasing the level of support staff (nurses, counselors, psychologists, social workers) in our schools?

First and foremost, it is the responsibility of the North Carolina General Assembly to provide local districts with a sound basic education. This is guaranteed in our state constitution and has been repeatedly confirmed by the decades long Leandro case. We can not let another generation of students suffer from underfunded and under resourced schools. It is imperative for voters across the state to elect a majority to the NCGA who will support and fully fund North Carolina's public schools. North Carolina's state allotment formulas have never even met the national ratios recommended by the professional associations. The NCGA must fully fund Leandro. I am a volunteer board member for Public Schools First NC and our staff has been showing the documentary film "Resilience" around the state in an effort to raise awareness of the need for more school support staff. We need awareness and advocacy across the state, especially in rural areas.

During our last budget cycle as Durham Public Schools returned to in person learning, it became clear how instrumental our school nurses have always been especially in dealing with the pandemic. North Carolina's funding has always been inadequate for school support staff, especially nurses and social workers. I led advocacy with our board to include additional nurses in our budget request to the county. Partners with the Durham Association of Educators rallied to bring forth the need for additional school social workers to support students. In our final budget meeting, I repeatedly pushed my colleagues to add funding for additional school nurses and social workers to our local budget. To maximize the impact of local funding some nursing positions were added as employees of the health

department. It has been frustrating to push for progress, and to have nursing positions go unfilled due to a national nursing shortage. I have advocated for higher starting salaries to be market competitive and well as flexibility in hiring such as job sharing to fill these positions. Students need the services from these additional support personnel, especially as we health from the trauma of the pandemic. It is ultimately the responsibility of the state to fund them but when the state falls short, the County must step up to support our students.

9. Choose one of the following topics and address it through an equity lens:

Redistricting

People sometimes move to Durham and don't always learn the difficult history of our past and how it informs our present. One of the most contentious aspects of our history was the existence of two separate but unequal school systems. In 1951, there was a lawsuit, Blue vs. Durham Public School District, highlighting these inequities. After the landmark victory of the Brown vs. Board Supreme Court ruling in 1954, southern school systems were deliberately slow to integrate. In 1972, Durham began to discuss merging Durham City schools and Durham County Schools. After multiple failed attempts, and extensive community feedback, the school merger finally occurred in 1992. One tool used to create diverse school communities was the development of themed magnet schools. Furthermore, in 1992 Durham's school district boundaries were created. These boundaries were based on five comprehensive high schools and roughly divided Durham into five pie shaped wedges originating from the central downtown. District policies tried to cluster middle schools to feed into specific high schools and elementary schools to feed into specific middle schools. Those boundaries were created, largely without the technological and GIS tools of today, to represent balanced diversity. Since merger the student composition of the district has changed. While the percentage of Black students has remained fairly stable (currently 40%), the district is now 34% Hispanic/Latinx, 19% white, and 5% multiracial. As time has passed, our staff has been able to open new schools like W.G. Pearson, Sandy Ridge, Spring Valley, and Lucas Middle with strategies to build a student body reflective of the diversity of our community. Sandy Ridge became a magnet school to promote diversity and I was a vocal proponent of creating a boundary for Lucas that dipped south in order to maximize diversity.

In 2017 Durham Public Schools contracted with the Institute for Transportation Research and Education at NC State in order to begin redistricting work. In order to plan with the best data, I asked the consultants to map where every Durham charter school student resides. Our consultant had never been asked that before but the data was illuminating and essential to this redistricting effort. Our Operations Director realized the complexity of this work and hired the consultant as a full-time DPS employee. Our board has had numerous board retreats and public meetings to begin this complex work. Many have been in public with great community feedback. Some of the first minor redistricting changes were made to reduce overcrowding at Githens Middle School. Our staff planned several in person meetings to share these proposals with community members at the impacted schools. One equity consideration that we struggle with is low turnout for events where we want more engagement. We are trying to always provide childcare and interpretation for these events. We are utilizing social media and robocall/text messaging more. When voices are missing, our Board and our staff must remain vigilant

about equity concerns for all. The pandemic disrupted a lot of the redistricting work as operations staff turned their attention to PPE, cleaning, food distribution, technology support, and COVID testing.

During the pandemic our staff has continued to engage virtually with community meetings. DPS named this initiative “Growing Together” and is explicit about our goals of increasing equity and access. We are re-evaluating all magnet programs with an equity lens. Staff are recommending a regional approach to ensure geographic access and improved transportation efficiency. Our Board has set guidelines for staff to address boundary adjustments with a focus on school communities that mirror our district. We have compared the socioeconomic and racial diversity of every school community and wrestled with efforts to recruit more families and serve the students we have. The reality is that we must do both simultaneously. Public schools exist in an era of consumerism and parental choice. The reality is that families are “shopping” more than ever and our district needs to message the importance of growing together for the individual and the community. We are trying to balance the socioeconomic status of students within our schools as much as possible. With the growing affordable housing crisis and gentrification in our community, we will need to make equitable plans with benchmarks for regular evaluations. This work is ongoing as we examine best practices from other districts across the country. I look forward to opportunities to host in person meetings with our community to discuss these proposals together in the near future. The feedback from our residents is necessary and informative.

10. List two skills and one life experience that you feel you bring to the board.

Ability to advocate effectively/build consensus

As the most veteran school board member, I have long standing relationships and history with other elected officials and local leaders to support my advocacy for policies and budgets that sustain Durham students. I am known for listening thoughtfully and asking detailed questions to bring consensus on equity issues. I’m running because our students and educators have been denied adequate state funding for generations. As we continue the decades-long Leandro fight and work to bring balanced leadership back to the North Carolina General Assembly, our schools can not wait. Since I took office, Durham Public Schools has achieved stronger local funding for operations and capital needs. School boards in NC have no taxing authority so we are reliant on this partnership and shared commitment for children. Even with Durham’s progressive Commissioners these budget and school bond conversations have been difficult. In 2016 our staff detailed over \$450 million in capital needs but the County only funded \$90 million for Durham Public Schools. It took over five years to finally get Durham Public Schools staff up to \$15/hour. In hindsight, local elected leaders could have made this investment at the same time we raised starting pay for City and County employees. My friend and former board colleague, Minnie Forte Brown, once called me a “pitbull” because she knows I am a tireless advocate for students. This work is not complete. I look forward to continuing to advocate for the needs of our students, educators and staff as we lead the nation.

Rooted in Durham but grounded in visionary, equitable policy best practices I have always been a person to ask “why not?”, bring people together and just get stuff done. When the Department of

Transportation widened I-85, taking land from my children's elementary school playground, I joined with other parent advocates and we got the NC DOT to construct the first sound wall on a bridge in North Carolina. When I learned about national efforts to privatize our public schools, I connected with parent activists across the country and co-founded Parents Across America. When the NC General Assembly was taken over and vouchers and charter schools were expanded, I joined with leaders across the state and founded Public Schools First NC, a non-profit focused on advocacy for strong public schools. When I got a call about expanding teacher diversity in DPS, I convened meetings with key stakeholders which resulted in the multi-million dollar UNC DREAM (Diverse and Resilient Educators Aligned THrough Mentorship) federal grant at UNC Chapel Hill. 1:1 Technology. Hotspots to address the digital divide. COVID surveillance testing. Suing the state for weakening teacher tenure protections. Banning hate speech and white supremacy. I am a policy wonk and drive transformative systems change. I read and analyze everything. In DPS that looks like constantly challenging the status quo and being the voice for every child.

Institutional memory and experience as parent/volunteer/guardian ad litem - I have been honored to serve on the Durham School Board for three terms. My children all attended Durham Public Schools since kindergarten. I really value the perspective of board members whose children are current DPS students. I am able to stay connected through constituent feedback, regular school visits and through my nephew who is now a DPS kindergartener. As a parent of DPS graduates, I have lived the entire trajectory as a K-12 parent. I am knowledgeable about transitions between schools, helping children apply to college, high school athletics and so many milestones. As the most veteran Board Member, I have institutional memory that our Board and staff rely on as we make decisions. It is helpful to know what programs and strategies we have tried in the past. Board duties involve a lot of work that occurs out of the public eye. These include student discipline hearings, employee grievance hearings, student transfer hearings, and complex closed session personnel deliberations. My institutional memory brings a depth of experience that informs our Board deliberations. I seek out opportunities to support our community and learn about local resources. For the last three years I have volunteered as a court appointed guardian ad litem for children involved in Abuse, Neglect and Dependency Court in Durham. I have built relationships with children during stressful times and been their voice in conveying their expectations to the presiding judge. I'm continuously learning how we can strengthen supports for all children in our community, especially those living with trauma.

I'm running for re-election to Durham's Board of Education because everywhere I go, community members keep asking me to continue serving. During the pandemic, engagement in Durham School Board meetings was higher than usual. Folks always tell me I ask great questions; often exactly the questions they want answered. I spent time carefully considering whether to run, because I know that representation matters. In Durham we are passionate about our local races and I am concerned about the possibility of negative attacks and identity politics as I have observed in past races. But the stakes are too high. There is a coordinated effort by Republicans to take over Durham's progressive Board. I stand by my voting record, advocacy and platform. Our schools and our schools are worth fighting for and my institutional memory, equity focus, dedicated advocacy and ability to bring consensus make me the most progressive candidate in this race.

11. If you have children, where did they attend K-12 school?

I have three children who all attended Durham Public Schools since kindergarten. My children attended Club Boulevard Humanities Magnet School, WG Pearson Magnet Middle School, Lakewood Montessori Middle School, Riverside High School, Durham School of the Arts, and the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. My oldest son is currently a law student at Duke University and President of the 501(c)(4) affiliate of the People's Alliance. The c4 focuses on the policy advocacy work of the PA action teams and has no role in the candidate endorsement process. I am proud of his civic engagement and we maintain all appropriate boundaries regarding his role within PA and my role on the Board of Education.

12. How should we leverage public resources to promote carbon neutrality? For example, what can practically be done with aging bus fleets, school buildings, and so on to move toward this goal? How do we turn our schools green?

I have been a leading advocate for renewable energy. WIth grassroots organizing from the People's Alliance in April of 2015 our Board passed a resolution committing to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel sources. After this, the district created a new position and hired our first district wide Sustainability Director. With this new role, DPS made significant strides in improving LED lighting, recycling initiatives, solar demonstration projects and environmental education. At our June 10, 2021 meeting, our board approved an energy conservation program management service agreement with SiteLogIQ. In November of 2021, I worked with community members and my board colleague, Alexandra Valladares, to introduce and pass a resolution entitled "Resolution of the Durham Public Schools Board of Education Supporting a Transition to Renewable Energy in Durham Public Schools." Most recently I worked towards consensus with Commissioners and Board colleagues to ensure that the three schools under construction will have solar ready roofs. Our staff is currently seeking requests for proposals. At our Board meeting this week we have a presentation from our staff on a partnership with Durham County and the City of Durham to participate in Duke Energy's Green Source Advantage Program. I appreciate all of the work our staff are doing to actualize the Board's vision on renewable energy.

We are making strides in collaboration with City and County leaders. In October the City adopted their Carbon Neutrality and Renewable Energy Plan. In February of 2022, the County adopted their Renewable Energy Plan. These partnerships are critical because our school district uses significantly more energy and maintains significantly more square footage than the City or County. Because we are dependent on County funding to jumpstart these local initiatives, I worked with my colleague, Alexandra Valladares, and community members to advocate for a \$40 million renewable energy bond in the fall of 2022. I hope that working with the new manager we can come together as a community and dedicate this significant local investment in renewable energy and green projects.

I was optimistic that DPS would qualify for electric school bus funding through the recent federal infrastructure bill. When I asked recently, our Transportation Director said that DPS does not qualify but they are monitoring that technology with an eye towards rapid deployment in Durham. The electric buses are significantly more expensive and the state funding formula does not encourage their use. It will be imperative to work with our local delegation in the North Carolina General Assembly to address this barrier.

13. Would you support a renewable energy bond that trained and hired Durham residents to develop infrastructure for renewable energy on all DPS properties?

Yes. With support from local community members, I have advocated for a bond for renewable energy for Durham schools and libraries for the fall of 2022. We need to be aspirational as a community and dedicate significant public dollars to sustainability work, much like the Affordable Housing bond. I would need to consult with County budget staff to learn if bond funds could be used for training purposes but the County could fund training in DPS and Durham Tech through other financial means if necessary.

14. What is your stance on the minimum wage, including what you consider to be a livable wage? What will you do to make this a reality for all DPS employees? After recent progress on increased wages for DPS employees, including janitors, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers, what more do you think should be done?

The majority of public school employees in North Carolina are underpaid. North Carolina has dropped to 37th in the nation in educator pay. Beginning teacher pay starts at \$37,500 in North Carolina. Public Schools have not kept pace with any other professions, especially those that require a college degree. School districts are dependent on the NC General Assembly to budget adequate funding and resources for our students. Because schools have been underfunded, Durham funds a local teacher supplement to make our district more competitive.

Durham Public Schools has a long history of supporting living wages for all staff. In 2015/2016 the City and County raised starting employee pay to \$15/hr. I started advocating for a similar increase for our employees in Durham Public Schools at the same time. Unfortunately despite years of advocacy, it took until 2021 to get a progressive board of county commissioners to fund this step for DPS employees. It is imperative that in the future we maintain progressive leadership so that there is parity between all local governmental bodies. The state of NC finally raised starting pay for all school employees to \$15/hr in this upcoming budget year. While \$15/hr meets some definitions of a living wage, I know how quickly inflation and rising costs of housing and gas have whittled away at any gains our employees have made. I am currently advocating for adding an additional \$4 million to our local budget request this year to raise starting salaries to \$17/hr. This is essential as we work to retain staff in this challenging labor market. I look forward to working with our Board and Commissioners to raise starting pay and work towards a multi-year plan for regular increases that outpace inflation. All DPS staff need to be valued as professionals and only work one job.

15. What will you do to support more technical and career development?

Durham Public Schools has had visionary CTE leadership from Rick Sheldahl to Dr. Julie Pack. These leaders have been creatively growing our district career and technical education offerings in scope and magnitude while working within federal spending guidelines. Prior to the pandemic our students who are CTE completers (4 or more courses in a specific sequence) had graduation rates exceeding 96%. With all of the acronyms in public schools, we need to make sure students and families are aware of all of the available CTE pathways.

https://www.dpsnc.net/cms/lib/NC01911152/Centricity/Domain/293/DPS%20CTE%20Program%20Areas%20Pathways%20and%20Clusters_21_22.pdf

Our staff has also expanded CTE course offerings downstream into middle schools in order to engage younger students with hands-on learning. Prior to the pandemic, DPS held several CTE events in order to build awareness. It is critical to ensure that students are truly connected in pathways that connect with their future goals rather than merely accessing pathways to avoid enrolling at their base school. CTE pathway courses often crowd a student's schedule, especially when they are also pursuing arts, foreign languages and AP coursework. I am enthusiastic about new leadership at Durham Tech and some recent conversations about expanding CTE offerings in partnership with pathways that would continue there. Our students need to understand what a fantastic resource the programs at Durham Tech are and we need to better communicate the availability of scholarship funding to all DPS graduates.

In addition our staff is connected with Made in Durham, the Chamber of Commerce and other local employers to plan pathways for emerging industries. We also must acknowledge equity concerns and continue to address them as we plan future programs. The Engineering pathway at Riverside earns national awards and the program at Southern has struggled. We need to constantly evaluate data and focus on equitable programing.

I would advocate for Computer Science and Information Technology Education to be offered at more comprehensive high schools and the expansion of pathways to support careers in renewable energy technology. I am in early conversations about the possibility of creating a new pathway in Outdoor Education and Entrepreneurship. I am enthusiastic about the plans to renovate the current Northern High School campus into a state of the art CTE speciality campus. The school's proximity to the DPS Hub Farm will further support the expansion of the Agricultural Education and Culinary pathways in coordination with Durham's robust farm-to-table movement.

16. Do you support the expansion of the BETC (Bonomic Educational Training Center) program? If so, how will you work to expand it? If not, why?

I support the expansion of the BETC program and have always been an advocate of this incredible work. In the program students learn about sustainable stormwater solutions as part of their hands-on learning curriculum. I will request that staff provide a public board presentation on the status of the program and best next steps in supporting expansion. Teacher and student feedback will be

instrumental. Many community partners joined together to found the BETC program and those people deserve a full program evaluation. There is an innovative rainwater irrigation system for watering athletic fields that needs to be brought back online to teach and model sustainable practices.

17. Please list what you feel are your relevant prior employment and/or volunteer experiences.

I have a Master's Degree in Healthcare Administration with double concentrations in Financial Management and International Health from the UNC Chapel Hill School of Public Health. I previously worked with Glaxo, Duke University Medical Center and Vanderbilt University Healthcare System. I have been blessed to raise my children and contribute significantly through school and community volunteer service. I served as PTA President at two different DPS schools, served as church children's ministry coordinator, taught at a local preschool, worked at Durham 911, worked for a commercial real estate appraiser. I volunteer as a court-appointed guardian ad litem for Durham County. I serve on several local task forces including the COVID Food Security Task Force, the Homeless Services Advisory Committee, the Board of Project Graduation, the Academic Success Alliance, the Student Health Advisory Council and I Chair the Ministry Coordinating Committee at our church.

18. Does your campaign have specific policies regarding from whom it accepts donations? Please specifically detail any contributions from corporations to your current and prior campaigns. How do you see the influence of donors on policy, both for yourself and for others?

My campaign does not accept donations from corporations, only small donations from individual donors. My votes are 100% my own. United States campaign finance laws need substantial reform to preserve the democratic process.

19. For whom did you vote in the 2020 United States Senate and presidential elections?

US Senate - Cal Cunningham

US President/Vice President - Joe Biden/Kamala Harris