

# LPoV Candidate Questionnaire Nov 2022

## D6 Supervisor Candidate Honey Mahogany

### General Questions

Why are you running for *this* office?

I am running for this position because I believe that qualifications and experience matter. I am the only candidate in this race who has 4 years of experience working within the District Office, something that has afforded me the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of the job. I have built deep connections with all of the diverse communities in District 6, I understand the many major and complex issues faced by our constituents, and I have a track record of working on and implementing practical solutions to address these issues, especially around housing and public safety. I bring with me the experience of 20 years working as a social worker in a broken system on the issues that matter most: homelessness, mental health, and addiction, as well as my experience as a small business owner in the District with the Stud. As Chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party, I also bring political experience and relationships to the role that will help me get the work done.

If elected, do you commit to completing your entire term?

Yes.

What are your values, and how did you get them?

I was born and raised in San Francisco. I grew up in the Outer Sunset at 43rd and Taraval. My family came here as refugees after fleeing political persecution in their home country of Ethiopia. My father, who was previously studying to be a med school student, wasn't able to transfer his credits. He ended up supporting his family as a taxi driver for Yellow Cab Coop for 30 years. My mother went to City College and worked at Sumitomo Bank. They both sacrificed a lot to give their kids the best possible opportunities. They believed in the American dream and believed that education was the route to success. As a result, I attended St. Gabriel Elementary in the Sunset and then St. Ignatius. After attending college in LA, I came back to the Bay for grad school and got my MSW from UC Berkeley. I came back to

SF and stayed here because I love this city. It is my home, the place where my family sought refuge following the trauma of war, and where I have found myself time and again. I am passionate about San Francisco and believe it is the center of progress, innovation, and culture - and that it has been, and must continue to be, a sanctuary city.

A key value of mine does stem from my early Catholic education: being a person of service - a person for others. I believe we all have been given skills, opportunities, gifts, privileges, etc that we can use for the greater good - I also believe this looks different for everyone, but I take it as a personal responsibility to do what I can to help. That's why I became a social worker and worked for 20 years helping people - from my time working with the children of incarcerated parents, to being a homeless outreach worker, to working with youth, seniors, and people with disabilities, becoming a mental health director, saving the Stud from closure, founding the Transgender Cultural District, all of this work was my way of living my values and doing my best to be a part of the change I want to see in the world.

### **What communities do you represent, and how do they hold you accountable?**

I'm a black, transgender woman who is a first generation Ethiopian immigrant and a small business owner. I have worked in the District 6 Office in City hall legislating, meditating, and leading the district on many of our city's most important issues including housing, homelessness, and public safety - issues that disproportionately affect minorities and the communities. I was accountable to these and many other communities the District 6 Office represented, working every day to connect our city's most vulnerable communities to the services they need. District 6 is one of the densest—and most economically and demographically diverse—districts in San Francisco.

I have worked for 20 years as a social worker on issues of homelessness, mental health, and addiction. I was a part of the effort to save the Stud from closure, becoming a member of the Stud Collective and keeping the Stud, San Francisco's oldest LGBTQ nightlife venue, alive (we are still actively looking for spaces since closing during the pandemic). I threw parties in the city like Mahogany Mondays and Black Fridays that regularly centered trans people, queer women, and people of color in my shows at a time when no one else was really doing that in the Castro or SOMA. I founded the Transgender District and co-wrote the Cultural District legislation. I worked on ballot initiatives like Our City Our Home and Arts for Everyone. I worked to get progressive candidates elected to office in San Francisco.

As a candidate, I am proud to represent a spread of diverse and underrepresented communities, and yet I know identity alone does not make for a good candidate. However, I pair that identity with experience in doing the work, and a long history of community organizing and collaboration with a

broad range of groups. I commit to continuing to stay true to my grassroots organizing background and continue to work with the communities I have been organizing with over the years, making sure their voices and experiences are uplifted and valued.

### **What three endorsements are you most proud of?**

I am proud to be endorsed by United Educators of SF (UESF), representing our district's hard working and diverse teaching staff and paraprofessionals. I strongly believe that we need to invest in education opportunities and access for our SF youth to have brighter futures, and UESF is at the forefront of this work. I am honored to have the endorsement of Local 21, my own union, and I have received other labor endorsements and am building momentum and on track to earn endorsements from other unions as well. Additionally, I am proud to have the endorsement of the San Francisco Democratic Party.

### **What are the top three issues you will work on, and how will you implement solutions in a timely manner?**

I will prioritize addressing our homelessness crisis by prioritizing development of new housing. My decades as a social worker and organizer and deep roots in the community have given me the opportunity and the experience to engage in collaborative processes with the community, labor, and developers. I led Land Use in the District 6 Office - effectively building thousands of units of housing, 400 units of affordable housing every year. More than all other districts combined. As Supervisor, I will continue to push for housing with a focus on social housing.

Public safety is also a priority. I've had friends in SROs, LGBTQ+ community members, and family members who've faced violence in District 6. We need to take our community's safety seriously. I will champion holistic approaches to public safety - everything from community patrols to community policing. I believe that public safety is about accountability, and that includes the city departments that should be providing services.

Lastly, we must address our climate crisis. As Chief of Staff in District 6, I helped increase \$1 million in funding to the DoE, and helped restore public transit - the 27-Bryant and 31-Balbo lines - so District 6 communities could access the rest of the city. Going forward, I will advocate for a San Francisco Green New Deal - investing in Muni reliability, increasing subsidies for e-bikes, and rebates for building decarb.

Having worked in City Hall, built relationships in both the City and the District, I plan to pick up where I left off, continue the work I started, leverage my existing knowledge of the legislative process and immediately get to work.

**What for-profit or non-profit boards do you serve on, including political organizations?**

Chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party

California Democratic Party Executive Board Member

Board Member of Alice B Toklas LGBTQ Democratic Club

Co-owner of the Stud Bar, and member of the Stud Collective

Drag Queen Story Hour Queen

**What local and state commissions or policy bodies do you serve on?**

Your answer

**Please describe specific accomplishments in your activism. What did you get done, and what was your role?**

While I was in college in Los Angeles where I worked as a counselor with the youth of incarcerated parents. My first full-time job was working as an outreach counselor at Larkin Street Youth Services, working in harm-reduction, doing residential counseling, and more. I also worked as a residential counselor with children in the system, and I worked with HIV+ youth in a residential setting.

Working in the East Bay as a social worker, I became the first full-time employee of the Rainbow Community Center - the LGBT Center for all of Contra Costa County. I worked to turn a once primarily

volunteer run group into a full blown community center with mental health services and counseling, a satellite office in the city of Richmond, a robust youth mentorship program that included facilitating GSA's in public high schools across the county, and more.

When the Stud was threatened with closure, I organized with a group of my friends to buy the business. We formed the first cooperative to ever operate an LGBTQ club, and kept the Stud alive for 5 years, diversifying its programming and focusing on the most underserved parts of our community, specifically women, BIPOC, and trans folks. Though we shut down during COVID, the Collective is still alive and actively looking at new spaces so that San Francisco's oldest LGBTQ bar can live on for another 50 years and more.

I co-founded the Transgender District and worked alongside SOMA Pilipinas & Callé 24 to pass cultural district legislation. I served as the Transgender District's first Executive Director and was able to establish permanent ongoing funding for the District and all Cultural Districts. I also worked with a broad cohort of community organizations to advocate for community benefits through the city's budget process, through development negotiations, and more. These benefits included grants for social services and cultural events, community space for nonprofits, and more.

In the District 6 Office, I worked hard to ensure that we did everything we could to get folks off the streets and into care. That meant advocating for the Embarcadero SAFE center, which provided up to 200 individuals with shelter and services. It also meant supporting the Tenderloin Linkage Center and the work we were able to do there to care for folks, working with organizations like GLIDE, the Healing Well, Faithful Fools, the Coalition on Homelessness, Hospitality House, and many more to have conversations with residents both housed and unhoused around how we can get folks the care and services they need.

During my tenure in former Supervisor Haney's Office spearheading Land Use for D6, I led the building of nearly 9,000 new housing units. Every year, we were able to approve 2,255 units of housing in District 6, with almost 400 affordable units every year. I fought for - and successfully won - restoring the 27-Bryant during the pandemic as well as the 31-Balboa line as Chief of Staff in Supervisor Haney's Office. I supported AB629 to consolidate our 27 different transit agencies and ensure consistent fares across a single regional transit map. I also championed the largest expansion of protected bike lanes in San Francisco's history and reduced speed limits to make it safer to walk and bike. I also worked with the community, SFMTA, and DPW to implement pedestrian scrambles, bulb-outs, slow streets, and more throughout the Tenderloin and parts of SOMA.

Please list specific ways you have shown up for immigrants at risk of deportation.

As the child of refugees with many family members who have varying immigration status, I have personally worked with my family members in a myriad of ways. I have shown up to protests against ICE. As Chair of the democratic party have sponsored many resolutions in support of undocumented people from the extension of DACA, to condemning the wildly inhumane treatment of undocumented people especially during the Trump Administration, and advocating for increased services and recognition of rights. I have also personally worked to help DACA recipients get work permits (EAD) and also helped them find employment.

**Please list specific ways you have fought against racism and white supremacy.**

As a Black, born-and-raised San Franciscan, one of the few Black leaders running for office in San Francisco, and the first Black person to be Chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party, I take issues of racism and white supremacy very seriously. As a black trans person running for office in San Francisco, I would say that this in and of itself is an act of defiance against racism, sexism, homo/transphobia, inequality, and discrimination. I have been doing this work in a tangible way my entire adult life. I worked as a counselor in the East Bay in public schools in Pittsburg and Antioch. This is where I really had to push back against the narratives around what black and brown children were able to achieve and worked to set new standards and expectations not just with the students themselves but also their teachers. I also engaged in equity work as a cultural competency trainer.

**Please give us some examples of situations you've encountered where gender and LGBTQ inequity was evident and what you did or would do to address it.**

I'm a proud Black transgender person raised here in San Francisco. My personal experience has exposed me to many of the hard realities that LGBTQ people are facing across our city. On a federal level, we are seeing anti-trans legislation and the upcoming attacks on gay marriage and other reproductive rights that the Supreme Court is leading are the worst threats to our freedom that we've seen in generations. My entire life's work has been about addressing LGBTQ inequity and uplifting the voices of the LGBTQ community.

I have a Masters in Social Work and have spent my entire adult life working with and advocating for the LGBTQ community. In college, I was on the Executive Board of our campus' LGBTQ group (the GLBTA), worked in the LGBTQ Office as an aide, and was the Resident Advisor for the LGBTQ Dorm - the Rainbow Floor, one of the first such floors in the country. At that time, I also worked on the Virtual

Sex Project, a research study aimed at increasing adherence to safer-sex guidelines in the MSM community in a pre-PreP world. In grad school, I was the Themed Program Advisor for Unity House, another LGBTQ Dorm. I taught a related class on LGBTQ history and activism and organized a campus drag show, "Berkeley's Next Top Drag Performer," which the university still produces today.

Outside of school, I continued my work with the LGBTQ community as a homeless outreach worker with LGBTQ youth at Larkin Street Youth Services in San Francisco; I also worked in the Assisted Care After Care program with HIV+ youth at Larkin. While in grad school, I worked with LGBTQ seniors as an intern at Lavender Seniors of the East Bay and received the award for Excellence in Field Work from UC Berkeley upon graduation for my work with the organization. Upon graduation, my first job was at the Rainbow Community Center, the LGBTQ Center for Contra Costa County, where I became their Mental Health Director and collaborated with the Pacific Center to create a Mental Health Program in Concord and later expanding to work with school districts across the county to provide on site counseling to youth struggling with their sexual orientation and gender identity. I also created and implemented a cultural competency training program for County employees.

I've been a visible leader in LGBTQ+ culture and nightlife, working as a performer and policy maker to protect LGBTQ+ businesses, events, and traditions. I've hosted the San Francisco Pride's Main Stage event for the last five years.

I also am a founding member of the Stud Collective. The country's first co-operatively owned gay venue. We formed the co-operative to save the oldest gay bar in San Francisco from closure. Nightlife in SF hasn't always been as welcoming to queer women or queer BIPOC communities. That is why I threw parties in the city like Mahogany Mondays and Black Fridays that regularly centered trans people, queer women, and people of color in my shows at a time when no one else was really doing that in the Castro or SOMA. Legislatively, I led efforts in the District 6 Office to protect nightlife in San Francisco. My work includes the establishment of the Music and Entertainment Venues Fund during the COVID-19 pandemic to financially aid venues including LGBTQ venues, that serve as important gathering spaces for our community and many were in danger of closing.

I'm a co-founder of San Francisco's Transgender District, the nation's first legally recognized district of its kind. I led the organization as its first Executive Director, and I'm proud to have laid the groundwork for an organization that has become one of the leading nonprofits serving transgender and non-binary people in the country. I wrote the legislation that established the Leather & LGBTQ Cultural District in SOMA, the legislation that began the landmarking of the San Francisco Eagle bar, and the legislation that started the process to establish the intersection of Turk and Taylor as a National Historic Landmark.

Amid a homelessness crisis, how can the City and County of San Francisco improve the effectiveness of our city's homelessness and supportive housing services?

We need to audit the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) to understand why we continue to have close to 14,000 unhoused individuals when we have invested millions of dollars on this specific department. They are not accountable for their policies and prioritization process. They also say that they are only responsible for the unhoused population and that individuals with mental health or addiction challenges are under the purview of the Department of Public Health (DPH). This unrealistic separation creates a huge gap in services.

I also want to recognize that homelessness disproportionately affects POC & LGBTQ+ communities, especially in SF. Accordingly we must make sure our programs, shelters, and efforts are personalized and tailored to these communities to address their unique needs.

What is your favorite park, and why?

Victoria Manalo Draves Park - a park named after a Filipina Olympic Champion in the heart of SOMA Pilipinas. It is a beautiful green oasis in the middle of a densely populated urban area that doesn't have a lot of green space. It is a place where everyone can come relax, chill, catch up, and have some peace in the heart of SOMA.

Why do you want the League of Pissed Off Voters' endorsement?

Over the years, I've actively campaigned for fellow Progressive candidates and have handed out hundreds, if not thousands of The League of Pissed Off Voters' Guides each election cycle. I understand the value of the League's endorsement and know the trust San Francisco voters place in its Guide. I also know that my values are very much in sync with those of the League.

Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Open drug markets fuel the ongoing epidemic of fentanyl use in District 6. I understand this is an issue born of a lack of resources and no safety net for folks coming to our city for a better opportunity.



However, we must hold drug dealers accountable. We cannot sit by and let 2 people die every single day from a drug overdose. Funding is essential for organizations such as Urban Alchemy, community ambassadors, and other non-law enforcement organizations to help, not only in the area around Civic Center, but in the entire District. I support a non-carceral approach to this issue, and I also know that we need to have better relationships and partnership with PD in order for these community based safety plans to work. The folks whom I've worked with and talk to all want to hold PD accountable and also want PD to do their jobs in helping keep D6 safe. These include BI-POC communities, immigrants, trans people, etc all who live in the neighborhood, and all demanding solutions that include police staffing. In addition I am committed to prioritizing funding for services that will help those involved in the open-air drug market through job training, food and housing assistance, and more to incentivise people away from engaging in the drug market. And of course, my primary focus will be on decreasing the demand on the market by doing what I've done for years which is getting people into recovery and care.

Do you support requiring 100% affordable housing on public land? If not, under what circumstances would you support allowing a percentage or all market-rate housing?

As a city we have failed at building enough housing, failing to reach our RHNA goals, especially when it comes to building affordable housing. Legislation like Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act has created a rapidly decreasing affordable housing stock, and until we are able to build the political will in Sacramento to overturn it, I want to work on three things to address the issue of housing in San Francisco: I am committed to finding more ways to build more affordable, including making sure that we get funding from the State to make that happen. We need to expand the types of affordable housing we preserve and build and get more creative with affordable housing models i.e. community land trusts, co-ops, social housing, and municipally owned housing. Additionally, we have to make sure that the housing that does exist is used to house people and is not sitting empty as an investment for someone across the country or overseas. I also want to help to put progressive revenue measures on the ballot.

Do you believe the amount of real estate contributions to a candidate impacts their fitness as a candidate?

Yes

Do you support the City funding community land trusts?

Yes

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Yes

What are your ideas for a comprehensive plan for the city to achieve Vision Zero?

it is crucial that we further improve the efficiency of the Muni and Bart. I will continue the work I accomplished in Supervisor Matt Haney's office, restructuring infrastructure to enable faster and more reliable public transit and safer biking and walking. By advocating to expand our protected bike-lane-network; protecting pedestrians with bulb-outs, pedestrian scrambles, wider sidewalks and more; advocating for value-based parking to subsidize Muni funding, more bonds to fund Muni maintenance and improvements, subsidies and credits for e-bike infrastructure, and automated signal priority, we can holistically increase the efficacy of our transit system, all while reducing our Carbon footprint.

What role should city government play with regard to SFUSD, and what policies would you support / have you supported to support our public schools?

Unfortunately, to this day many of our schools are still operating in disarray as a result of the pandemic. A lot of this is due to lack of funding, problems with executive management, and bad governance. We need to ensure we are stockpiling PPE, we are doing both backward and forward contact tracing, and have funding to support both efforts. To this day, we still put the onus on many school staffers to do their own contact tracing, rather than hired health professionals from the Department of Public Health.

I will advocate for more funding from our city and state to ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are being funded and supported, so when the next pandemic wave hits, our schools can operate safely. Additionally, we need further

investments in 5G infrastructure so all communities can access reliable internet, not just for remote learning, but also for homework, research, etc.

What is your plan for addressing the housing needs in the city's Housing Element?

Like my time as Chief of Staff Supervisor Matt Haney's Office, I will commit myself to build another 9,000 units of housing in my district and ensure that we are building housing at all levels, with a specific focus on affordable housing. Not just in district six but across all of San Francisco

How would you expand checks and balances in regards to mayoral appointments?

I feel that every municipal service need to be held accountable for their work regardless of the political climate of the Mayor's office. My goal as supervisor is to work with every city department and build bridges within our government. But I will not be afraid to hold the mayor's appointees accountable when they are not meeting the communities standards or meet their requirements as appointed officials

What metrics would you use to determine your success as Board Member in four years?

Number of new Units and New Affordable units built

COL of my residents

Number of resolved constituent cases regarding public safety

