**1) Education and Skills: What steps will you take to ensure that students with disabilities of all backgrounds have what they need to succeed?**

By the time a child enters kindergarten, there is already a gap between students that predisposes success or failure. That gap correlates with a child’s zip code, and with that their income level and type of upbringing, which includes whether or not they can access the accommodations necessary for the education they are legally entitled to. The pandemic forced us to create a variety of options for students, and while the success was questionable for an emergency situation, the possibilities of virtual, hybrid and independent learning are worth further refining to address individual needs.

The overarching issue to being able to provide the necessary accessibility to students is a lack of adequate resources. I believe the state as a whole needs to reexamine how we fund public education. One of the major challenges during covid was the lack of ASL interpreters, aides, and speech therapists, who are necessary for student learning. I will work with LAUSD to ensure we have the funding in place and allocated for the resources and programming our students with disabilities need and are entitled to.

With regard to Payan vs. LACCD, that case demonstrated the importance of making sure all educators, from administrators down to those in the classroom, are fully educated on accessibility guidelines, best practices and legal requirements for communication materials and learning tools. As a lawyer who has spent my career fighting for the rights of workers, tenants and refugees, I am fully in support of using the legal system when necessary to affirm students rights as well. I have also worked in the IDEA arena and understand that Los Angeles must do more to comply with our obligations under the IDEA.

**2) Access and Inclusion: Whether or not you have a formal platform, what specific plans do you have to incorporate the voices of people with disabilities into your decision-making processes, if elected? What steps, if any, have you taken to make your campaign accessible for people with disabilities and to ensure that our voices are heard?**

I serve on the Board of ETTA, a leading local non-profit organization that provides housing, programs, and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In that role, I worked with the organization to build housing for this vulnerable community of Angelenos, create employment training and opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities, obtain government grants to expand programming, and lobby the state legislature to increase reimbursement rates for in-home supportive services through the Regional Center. These issues are close to my heart.

As such, I understand deeply the importance of incorporating all voices and accessibility into everything we do as candidates and elected officials. I am committed to hiring a diverse staff and making recommendations to the new mayoral administration on appointments and hiring. People with disabilities should not just be siloed to the Department on Disability or Aging, their voices need to be present in decision-making across all departments, such as Public Works, Planning, Building & Safety and Transportation. Disability input is not something to be tagged on as an afterthought to new policy or programs, but something to be baked in at a foundational level. I am proud to have worked with Respectability’s staff in Los Angeles in connection with my role as a board member of the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles. I look forward to furthering our relationship and work together as a Council Member.

**3) Homelessness, Poverty, and Equity: What is your plan to address homelessness among your constituents, to work with other organizations to address the issue in the region, and to coordinate with other municipalities to create more affordable and accessible housing?**

1) Prevention of Homelessness

Studies suggest that three out of four Los Angeles households are rent-burdened, meaning they spend over 30% of household income on rent and utilities – making it extremely likely that they are only one adverse life event or an unexpected bill away from an eviction and potential homelessness. The most effective and cost-efficient approach to mitigating homelessness is to reduce the inflow in the first place.

As Councilmember, I will fight to:

* Invest in increased rental subsidies
* Improve and expand our rental assistance programs
* Simplify and scale the Section 8 voucher program for all Angelenos who qualify
* Protect tenants from unscrupulous landlords
* Proactively mediate evictions when the eviction moratorium is eventually lifted
* Provide counsel for low-income tenants in residential eviction proceedings.

2) Triaging Homelessness Through Homeless Shelters

When someone falls into homelessness, the City of Los Angeles has a duty to provide safe shelter immediately and triage any suffering on the streets. Instead, the City of Los Angeles is spending upwards of 6 years and $837,000,000 to build a single unit of homeless housing.

As Councilmember, I will fight for:

* A massive infusion of various short-term shelter and housing options to serve as a bridge for those currently living on our streets. Like other cities, Los Angeles must transform its shelter approach using more cost-effective models, such as tiny homes and pallet shelters on unused government land (but not our public parks) that can be up and running within one week for less than $20,000 per unit. Controller Ron Galperin has identified nearly 8,000 city-owned properties that are under-utilized, unused, or vacant, which can be used for interim shelter, including 27 acres of unused City land adjacent to LAX. With respect to the LAX site, I refuse to simply accept no as the final answer when federal regulations impose roadblocks to utilizing this City-owned land to save lives with urgency.
* Personalization of our safe shelter approach. Shelter seekers must feel safe in our shelters, be allowed to safely and securely store their possessions, and to bring with them their partners and pets. These barriers often discourage people from accepting shelter.
Flexibility and safety in our shelters are imperative to saving lives.
* Housing our veterans. We can no longer tolerate excuses and delays for our City’s 3,000 unhoused veterans. As your Councilmember, I will work with our federal partners to prioritize the delivery of housing, wraparound services (including addiction counseling and mental health treatment), job training, and employment assistance for every veteran who served our country.

3) Prioritizing Affordable and Workforce Housing

Simply put, the problem with affordable housing is that no one can build affordable housing affordably in Los Angeles. On top of the costs for land, labor, and materials that are skyrocketing daily, the complicated maze of funding sources and governmental agencies for affordable housing projects leads to ballooning legal and consulting fees and carrying costs, which ultimately drown projects.

To address this, the City must make larger investments in preserving, acquiring, and building affordable housing innovatively. As Councilmember, I will fight to:

* Protect existing affordable housing units and robustly enforce its affordable housing covenants. Currently, the City is failing to ensure, through public registries, audits and enforcement actions, that affordable units built as part of Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) density incentives program are actually placed on the market and rented to low-income Angelenos.
* Prioritize cost-effective acquisition of existing apartment buildings, hotels, and motels. This approach is faster, cheaper, and more environmentally friendly than building brand-new construction. Project Home-Key is one of our better approaches for affordable interim housing.
* Streamline the process for funding, permitting, and developing new affordable and workforce housing projects to reduce construction timeliness and thereby dramatically reduce costs. We can accomplish this goal by reducing permitting costs, hiring City staff devoted to move these projects expeditiously on strict timelines, zoning changes to commercial and industrial properties, reducing material costs through bulk sourcing, developing low-cost bridge financing programs, and incentivizing innovative and more cost-effective housing options such as hotel and motel conversions, prefabricated and modular housing, shared housing models, the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings for housing, and the master leasing of residential units for use as homeless housing.
* As a board member of a non-profit organization building housing for adults with special needs on Pico Blvd., I have witnessed firsthand the delays, red tape, and hurdles for such win-win projects. We need leaders who will disrupt the status quo.

4) Investment in Mental Health and Addiction Services, Facilities, and Reforms

A growing population of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles are suffering from significant issues of untreated mental health, addiction, and diminished capacity. Unless we tackle these mental health and addiction crises head on, the suffering on our streets will worsen.

As Councilmember, I will:

* Scrutinize every dollar we spend on the homelessness crisis and prioritize funding to established non-profit organizations. These non-profit organizations can do more with less money and can offer personalized treatment and care for those suffering unique trauma on the streets.
* Advocate for common sense reforms to our mental health laws at the state level and local enforcement levels. Trained mental health professionals – not LAPD officers – should be the ones who reach out to individuals suffering from mental health and addiction issues, including making 5150 involuntary hold determinations.
* Incentivize and streamline the construction and conversion of mental health care facilities throughout Los Angeles. One such potential facility adjacent to the 5th District is the Olympia Medical Center, which UCLA Health recently acquired and is reportedly considering transitioning to a mental health care facility.
* Expand the mandate of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) so that it becomes the Los Angeles Homeless Solutions Authority. Since its founding in 1993,

LAHSA has served largely as a pass-through agency through which federal, state, and local government funds are allocated to various private providers of shelter, housing, and services to those experiencing homelessness. While this is an important function that guards against fraud, waste, and abuse, it is akin to placing a bandage on a gaping wound. The ten appointed Commissioners (five from the city, and five from the county) should be mandated to work together to develop, advocate, and help implement broad and lasting solutions to our homelessness crisis.

5) Ensuring Public Spaces Are Clean, Safe, And Accessible For All Angelenos

While working toward the goal of bringing everyone indoors, we owe it to all housed and unhoused Angelenos to keep our streets clean, safe, and accessible. Ensuring that sidewalks are passable is required under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. Nor can we tolerate
open-air drug trafficking, fires, or acts of violence that are increasingly occurring in encampments, including in broad daylight in residential communities. Laws must be enforced to protect both the unhoused and the community at large.

As the 5th District Councilmember, I will work to:

* Maintain basic public health, safety, and accessibility standards on the sidewalks, public spaces, and sensitive areas of the 5th District – especially near schools, parks, and libraries. However, to accomplish this, the LAPD should be the agency of last resort, not the agency of first response when it comes to our homelessness crisis. We cannot arrest our way out of homelessness.
* Transition the responsibility for outreach to social workers, mental health professionals, and non-profit organizations. These professionals – and not armed LAPD officers – should be responding to the bulk of 911 calls related to homelessness that Angelenos make to LAPD and the City every year.
* Pair the right to shelter with the obligation to use it when available. In order to urgently transition people experiencing homelessness onto the path towards housing, we must use recently enacted Los Angeles City Ordinance 41.18 when necessary and appropriate. I am the only Democrat in this race willing to do so. This approach is used effectively by neighboring cities. This approach will bring unhoused Angelenos into warmth and shelter faster. This approach will return our public spaces for public use. And this approach will save lives.

**4) Other Priorities: What other policies that impact people with disabilities are you ready and eager to work on? What is your plan to involve your constituents with disabilities in key decision-making processes?**

A consistent complaint I hear from residents throughout CD 5 is the decline in Los Angeles’ delivery of basic city services — from sanitation, sidewalks, and streets to parks, trees, libraries and transit. We are spending millions in tax dollars on litigation and settlements, money that should be going into services for Angelenos and improving safety and access for all. On sidewalks alone, we are still feeling the reverberations from the Willits class action lawsuit regarding the poor condition of sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure. In the last five years, the City has paid out over $35 million in settlements from sidewalk injuries. This is unacceptable. Bringing our basic services up to standards befitting a world-class city will be a top priority of mine.

However, right now, the problem is not simply budgetary. In fact, the City of Los Angeles is sitting on a massive year-end surplus due largely to federal dollars and the skyrocketing stock market, but also has hundreds of vacant city jobs (40 at the Dept. of Transportation alone). The City needs a strategy to retain and recruit talent if we are going to improve city services and enhance the quality of life for everyone, including people with disabilities. That talent that the city needs to hire also needs to be representative and include people from all perspectives and walks of life so that we are truly improving and designing a city that works for everyone.