

East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club Endorsement Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in obtaining an endorsement from the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club.

Per the Club's bylaws, to be eligible for endorsement, a candidate must be a registered Democrat. All candidates must also complete this candidate questionnaire to be considered for an endorsement. Endorsements are decided by the general membership, and candidates must receive at least 60% of votes cast to be endorsed.

The deadline for questionnaires is posted on the East Bay Stonewall website (<http://eastbaystonewalldemocrats.org/Elections>). Any candidate submitting a questionnaire that is received after the deadline will not appear on the endorsement ballot. To ensure a fair process, no grace period will be granted.

Please return your completed questionnaire via Google forms by clicking submit at the bottom of this form. All form submissions are final. If you have questions, please contact Joe Greaves, EBSDC PAC chair via email at jsphgreaves@gmail.com.

Email *

janani@jananiforoakland.com

Name (First Last) *

Janani Ramachandran

Are you a registered Democrat *

Yes

No

Office you are seeking? (e.g. City Council, School Board, Supervisor, etc) *

City Council

Jurisdiction *

Oakland

District *

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Are you an East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club member in good standing? If you are unsure, email eastbaystonewalldems@gmail.com. *

Yes

No

I self-identify as: (check all boxes that apply; note these identifiers will be used publicly during our endorsement process.) *

Gay

Lesbian

Transgender

Gender non-conforming

Bisexual

Queer

Straight

Other:

How have you participated in East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club activities, and/or supported the Club other ways? What other LGBTQ+ organizations are you affiliated with and in what capacity? What other Democratic clubs are you affiliated with? *

I am a member of East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club, and have participated in both candidate forums and social events organized by the club. I have actively campaigned for and financially supported many of Stonewall's endorsed candidates over the years. I am also a member of the LGBTQ Harvey Milk Club who have endorsed me in this race. I'm also a member of East Bay Young Democrats (who have also endorsed me in this race), Wellstone Democratic Club, the Oakland East Bay Democratic Club, MGO Democratic Club, among others.

I am a 2020 LGBTQ Victory Empowerment Fellow, one of eight nationwide individuals part of this cohort. I am also a Equality California Northern California Leadership Fellow, and NLC Oakland fellow.

I am also the winner of the BALIF Foundation's inaugural APABA-BALIF Joint Scholarship for my work bridging intersections in the API and LGBTQ communities. I have also served on the boards of two violence prevention nonprofits, and as the sole LGBTQ Board Director in each, providing much-needed perspectives into ensuring access and reach in the LGBTQ community. I was previously a Judicial Extern for LGBTQ judicial leader Judge Tara Flanagan.

Using specific examples, please identify the causes you have advocated for and the ways you have helped advance LGBTQ+ rights or otherwise helped foster a community of inclusivity for LGBTQ+ individuals and families. *

As an openly LGBTQ-identified person, I have been deeply connected to various LGBTQ communities in California and beyond in my personal and professional capacities.

If and when elected, I would be Oakland's first LGBTQ woman of color to serve on our city council, and the third-ever openly LGBTQ councilmember in Oakland's history. I would also be the first LGBTQ API Councilwoman in California. I will use the unique lenses of my identity to be a voice for so many communities historically underrepresented in government: LGBTQ folks, first-generation Americans, South Asians, and millennials. I believe that my visible presence as a legislator can vastly improve the everyday experiences of individuals who share my identities, draw attention to their needs, and create meaningful change.

One of the social justice areas in which I have fiercely advocated for in my career includes domestic violence, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of LGBTQ survivors. I am deeply aware of how survivors face seemingly insurmountable barriers from every direction. I witnessed these challenges first-hand during my post-college employment at a network of community health clinics as a home visiting case manager. My clients were low-income, immigrant domestic violence survivors. Most of them did not have a lawyer and were forced to navigate complex court systems independently. Many were still trapped in abusive relationships, desperately trying to leave but unable to find shelters with available beds. I advocated for these individuals to the extent that I could, provided basic education on their fundamental legal rights, and liaised with government agencies, shelters, and hospitals. I recognized how LGBTQ individuals face disproportionately high levels of assault, stalking, rape, and familial violence compared to their heterosexual counterparts throughout this work. Because these realities are vastly underreported, queer victims of violence remain invisible. Queer survivors, mainly from non-white communities, often do not seek support because they fear being outed, discredited, and publicly gaslighted. Many victims even fear that perpetrators of violence will utilize criminal justice institutions against them as a threat to silence their voices.

I was eventually given the opportunity to launch a new domestic violence program for the health clinic network. I trained medical staff, mental health professionals, patients, youth, and partner agencies on the impacts of intimate partner abuse. I built strategic partnerships with government agencies and advocacy groups to launch district-wide public outreach campaigns. I was one of few openly queer staff members and made conscientious efforts to make my trainings inclusive of various genders, gender identities, and sexual orientations, and their distinct struggles. Victims' rights movements have traditionally focused on addressing the dynamics of violence most relatable to white, heterosexual women, partly because legal advocates and elected officials primarily reflected those identities. These movements improperly rely on the criminal justice system to provide inadequate and even unsafe recourses for queer victims. I believe that more creative solutions and restorative justice tools are required to address domestic violence within LGBTQ communities meaningfully; I intend to advocate for funding such efforts as a state legislator relentlessly.

From my very first week of law school, I pursued opportunities that would allow me to expand my understanding of domestic violence law and its impact on queer communities. I was elected Board Director at the Family Violence Appellate Project ("FVAP") at the end of my first year of law school, where I served as

Board Secretary and Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. I initiated conversations around LGBTQ inclusiveness among program participants, staff, and board composition in this role. As one of the only openly queer board members, I questioned the organization's lack of outreach to LGBTQ individuals and brainstormed solutions.

In my first half of law school, I had meaningful experiences representing low-income domestic violence survivors at legal aid agencies. However, I questioned the lack of outreach to potential LGBTQ clients, as well as the apparent absence of LGBTQ attorneys and policy leaders in this space. This led me to engage in constructive conversations with academics and family law practitioners and seek mentorship from pioneering LGBTQ rights lawyers. After receiving a joint scholarship from Bay Area Lawyers For Individual Freedom and the Asian Pacific Islander Bar Association of Silicon Valley, I began to interact with a broader network of LGBTQ attorneys. I had the incredible opportunity to work as a Judicial Extern for Judge Tara Flanagan, who is a renowned, openly lesbian leader. One of my externship projects involved observing and evaluating court-approved batterer intervention programs in my county – and I developed a newfound interest in this area. I successfully sought out a position as Board Director at one such program, Men Creating Peace, which profoundly impacts holding men accountable for their behaviors. One of my key projects has been researching ways that the organization can expand to working with LGBTQ perpetrators of violence, empowering them to heal and transform their lives. I later began a clerkship with a family law firm, Ross Family Law, which was founded and led by a well-known openly lesbian attorney. I have worked on several domestic violence and family law cases representing LGBTQ individuals.

During law school, I founded Berkeley Resistance Against Inter-Partner Violence (BRAIV), which advocated for survivors through court observations, educational campaigns, and partnerships with legal aid organizations. As most of my group leaders were also queer, BRAIV worked to ensure that campus conversations around violence were intersectional, and inclusive of diverse gender identities, sexualities, and races. We collaborated with other student groups I held leadership positions in, including Queers United In Revolutionary Subversion and Berkeley Law Womxn of Color Collective.

In recent years, I sought opportunities to engage with other aspiring LGBTQ political leadership and was selected to be an Equality California fellow at the 2019 Northern California Leadership Academy. In this program, I was inspired by the several LGBTQ elected officials, government leaders, and campaign strategists that we spoke with. I also developed a community with dozens of aspiring queer political leaders and still continue to collaborate with them. In 2020, I was selected to be an LGBTQ Victory Empowerment Fellow, where I had similarly positive experiences in learning from and collaborating with elected LGBTQ leaders and others involved in politics.

In my legal career, as an attorney at Family Violence Appellate Project and Centro Legal de la Raza, I engaged in legal advocacy efforts that furthered the rights of the LGBTQ community. For example, I wrote letters opposing HUD's proposed attacks on eliminating shelter options for the transgender community and advocating for greater family leave protections that expanded the definition of what a family could consist of (which significantly benefitted LGBTQ families). I also conducted legal education presentations on the intersections of tenants' rights, workers' rights, and domestic violence for LGBTQ immigrant and youth advocacy organizations based in the Bay Area.

Throughout my life, I have been committed to furthering the goals of the LGBTQ community in all that I do. I fully intend to continue to pursue this through my work as a Councilmember in Oakland.

Have you previously supported LGBTQ+ candidates for office? If yes, did that include financial support? *

I have publicly supported several LGBTQ+ candidates, including Assemblymember Alex Lee, Councilmember James Coleman, Alfred Twu, Vice Mayor Victor Aguilar, School Board President James Aguilar, Mayor Gabriel Quinto, AC Transit Director Jovanka Beckles, Commissioner James Chang, Jennifer Esteen, Judge Tara Flanagan (for whom I externed with in law school), among many others. I have given financial contributions to many of these candidates.

Which LGBTQ+ organizations and elected officials have formally endorsed you for this race? *

Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club
LPAC

Assemblymember Alex Lee

AC Transit Director Jovanka Beckles,

Mayor of El Cerrito Gabriel Quinto

Vice Mayor of San Leandro Victor Aguilar

San Leandro School Board President James Aguilar

South San Francisco Councilmember James Coleman

Berkeley Rent Board Commissioner James Chang

Berkeley Planning Commissioner Alfred Twu

Alameda County Democratic Party Central Committee Member Bobbi Lopez

Ohlone Community College Trustee Lance Kwan

among others

Please describe a policy/goal that is part of your formal platform that benefits the LGBTQ+ community? *

I would view all policy issues through a lens that addresses the needs of the LGBTQ community, a lens that has often been lacking in Oakland given the fact that we have only had two openly LGBTQ councilmembers in our city's history.

There are several specific issues that I would be interested in addressing. For example, I would draft local legislation that addresses domestic violence in LGBTQ communities, an issue I have worked on throughout my career, and proactively identify funding sources and partner with the county. Lawmakers have not adequately addressed this issue through legislation nor through dedicated funding, and our existing domestic violence laws simply do not factor into account the nuance, and prevalence of violence within our communities. I believe that violence against LGBTQ individuals must be recognized as a public health crisis in our county, and given far greater attention and resources on a local basis. LGBTQ individuals face greater incidents of abuse than their heterosexual counterparts; 61% of bisexual women, 44% of lesbian women, 37% of bisexual men, and 26% of gay men experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner during their lives. In addition, in a national 2015 survey, 54% of transgender individuals reported that they experienced some form of intimate partner violence, and 47% reported that they had been sexually assaulted. This violence, in turn, leads to immense consequences to physical health and longevity, higher rates of mental health struggles and suicide, economic instability, and homelessness, particularly among youth and transgender victims.

I would also advocate for policies that address the need for greater services for Oakland's houseless LGBTQ population and discrimination in the housing and rental industry. LGBTQ adults are twice as likely as the general population to experience homelessness, which is significantly higher among Black and Latinx LGBTQ communities. 30% of transgender individuals in California have experienced homelessness during their lives - and Oakland also has a large number of unhoused transgender youth. To address these gaps, Oakland must do more to support the production of housing that is truly affordable for our communities. We are far below our state targets for building low-income housing, largely because of a glaring funding gaps. We must enact a comprehensive inclusionary zoning ordinance and re-structure impact fees for residential and commercial developments. We must build on publicly-owned land, and make Oakland more competitive in advocating for greater state and federal funds. We must also conduct a comprehensive audit to understand why our city's homelessness dollars are not being spent efficiently or in a culturally-competent matter. Oakland must implement evidence-based solutions that include the production of safe tiny homes, pathways to permanent housing and comprehensive mental health and addiction services.

I would also promote policies that address the many issues that exacerbate homelessness. For example, it is clear that LGBTQ individuals are more likely to live in poverty; in 2018, 612,000 LGBTQ California lived below 200% of the federal poverty line, with an average income of \$24,000 per person per year. 20% of LGBTQ Californians experience food insecurity. I thus support expanding Oakland's UBI pilot, and ensuring that as many sectors are unionized and paying living wages. I would support LGBTQ entrepreneurs and small business owners through amplifying the technical assistance and free legal services our city departments and local merchant associations can provide, and increase access to capital particularly for BIPOC LGBTQ entrepreneurs.

In addition, I would fight for greater workplace protections for LGBTQ individuals, because the way in which our anti-discrimination laws are written and poorly enforced does not serve the ends of justice. 1 in 5

LGBTQ Americans have experienced discrimination in the workplace or housing, compounded among LGBTQ people of color. Transgender Californians are three times more likely to be unemployed than cis-gender Californians, and in a recent survey, 26% reported being fired, denied a promotion, or not hired because of their gender identity or expression. As a workers' rights attorney at a local nonprofit, I have personally engaged in work with the Fair Labor Oakland coalition to strengthen our local worker protection enforcement mechanisms through the Department of Workplace Enforcement Standards – and will continue to amplify this important work when on Council.

Finally, I would ensure that the wide variety of nonprofits and civil society organizations doing powerful work, whether regarding violence prevention, education, senior assistance, and more, are given adequate funding. Organizations at the grassroots level serving our Oakland LGBTQ communities often do not get the funding, publicity, nor respect that they deserve for serving our communities.

What makes you uniquely qualified for the office and how are you different or unique from the other candidates in your race? *

I am the only public interest attorney in my race, prepared to get to work right on day 1. I have dedicated my life to empowering our communities and fighting for responsive, accountable governments. In my legal, and prior social work, career, I have represented small business owners, workers, survivors of abuse, and families failed by the status quo. My service on the Oakland Public Ethics Commissioner exposed me to the corruption and fiscal mismanagement within the city of Oakland, but also to the potential of innovative local government initiatives to curb unethical behavior and build transparency. My service on the California Commission on API American Affairs, as well as on the board of two local violence prevention nonprofits, are all relevant leadership experience that included budgetary management and fiscal oversight, that I will use as a Councilmember to best serve constituents. Moreover, my educational background, studying political governance at Stanford University, and everything from land use law to statutory interpretation to income tax Berkeley Law, will support my ability to be an effective and accountable policymaker, with a keen eye to our budget and program efficiency.

I am also the only lifelong Democrat in my race (registered days after my 18th birthday and never changing my party registration since.)

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