

★ ENGAGE MIAMI ★ 2022 VOTER GUIDE



Our Future, Our Vote!

Every year in Florida, important state and local races are decided by razor thin margins and not all of those elections are in November! August primary and local elections tend to have really low turnout, meaning a lot of registered voters don't end up voting in important races like school board, legislative primaries, or for judges and county commissioners. There isn't always enough info out there about these races, and young people often don't even know they're happening or who is running.

That's why we put together this nonpartisan voter guide for August's local elections: Gen Z + millennials of Miami-Dade need to know who's on the ballot, what the candidates would do if elected, and the kind of power local government has to shape our lives, our city, and our future.

This guide focuses on nonpartisan races for County Commission and School Board in which everyone who is registered can vote, but there are other races for party primaries where you have to be registered with the party of your choice. Check your sample ballot and make your plan to weigh in on who represents you and your community.



Pledge to Engage with us for reminders, information on your voting rights, & instructions on how to vote.



What's your plan to vote?

This voter guide is by young people for everyone. Get your friends, your family, & get ready to cast your ballot!

Vote by Mail

You can request your Vote by Mail ballot up to 10 days before any election, but we recommend doing it as early as possible so you can get it back in the mail or drop it off at an early voting site drop box (available only during early voting times). You can track your ballot online to make sure it is counted.



Early Voting

Monday, August 8 to Friday, August 12	7 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Monday, August 15 to Friday, August 19	11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Weekends (August 13, 14, 20, and 21)	8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Early voting sites include:

Coral Reef Branch Library
Lemon City Branch Library
Northeast Dade-Aventura Branch Library
Miami Beach City Hall
South Dade Regional Library
The Student Academic Success Center at Florida International University
The Fascell Conference Center at Miami Dade College Kendall Campus

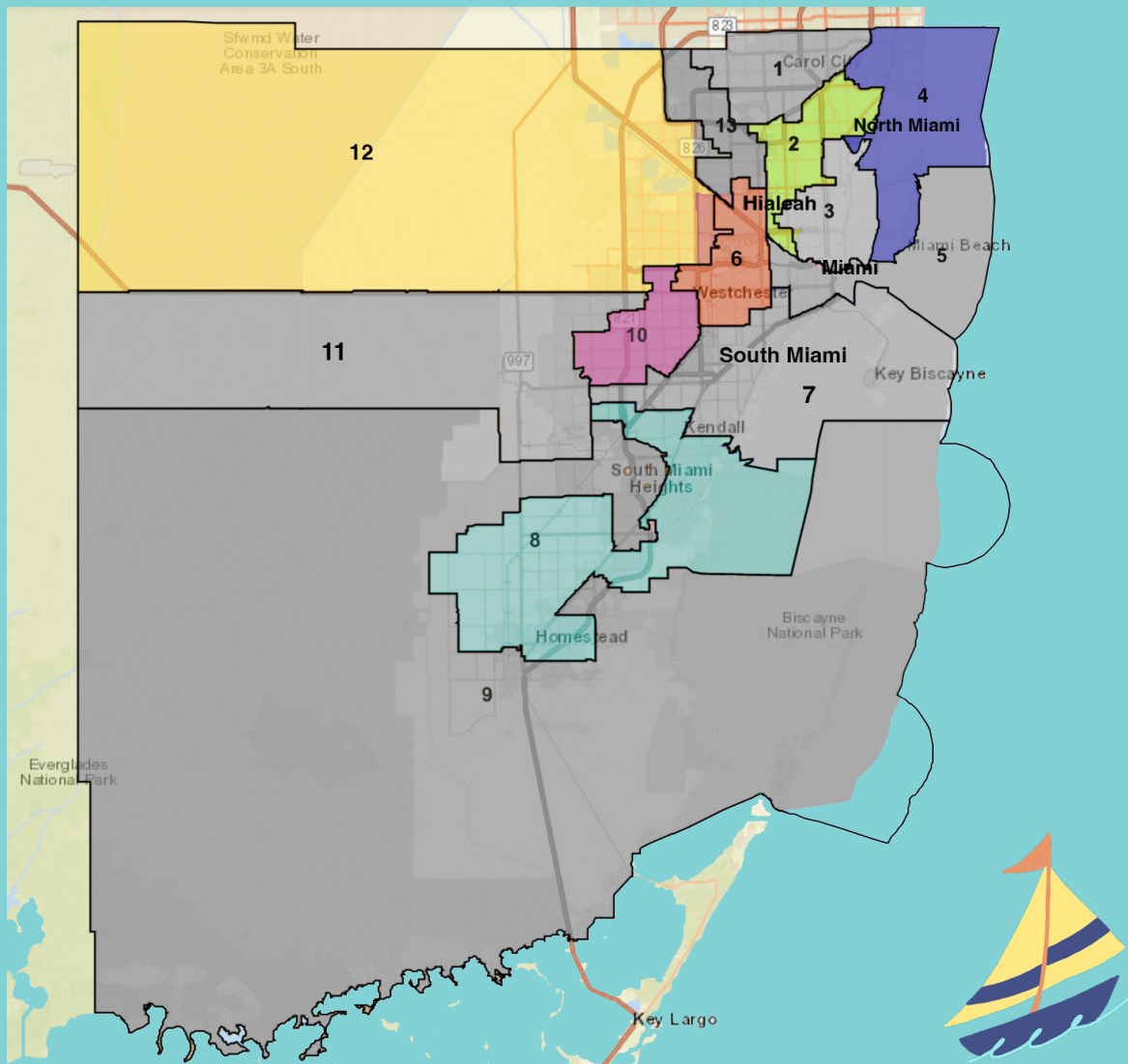
Stephen P. Clark Gov't Center
The Library at Miami Dade College North Campus
West Kendall Regional Library
Homestead Community Center
Miami Lakes Community Center
West Miami Community Center
John F. Kennedy Library
North Dade Regional Library
Westchester Regional Library
Joseph Caleb Center Community Meeting Room

Election Day

Election Day is Tuesday, August 23. You must vote at your assigned voting location, which you can find on your voter information card or online at the Department of Elections website. Precincts are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Election Day.

Remember to bring identification with your name, picture, & signature in order to vote early or on Election Day!

Miami-Dade County Commission Districts

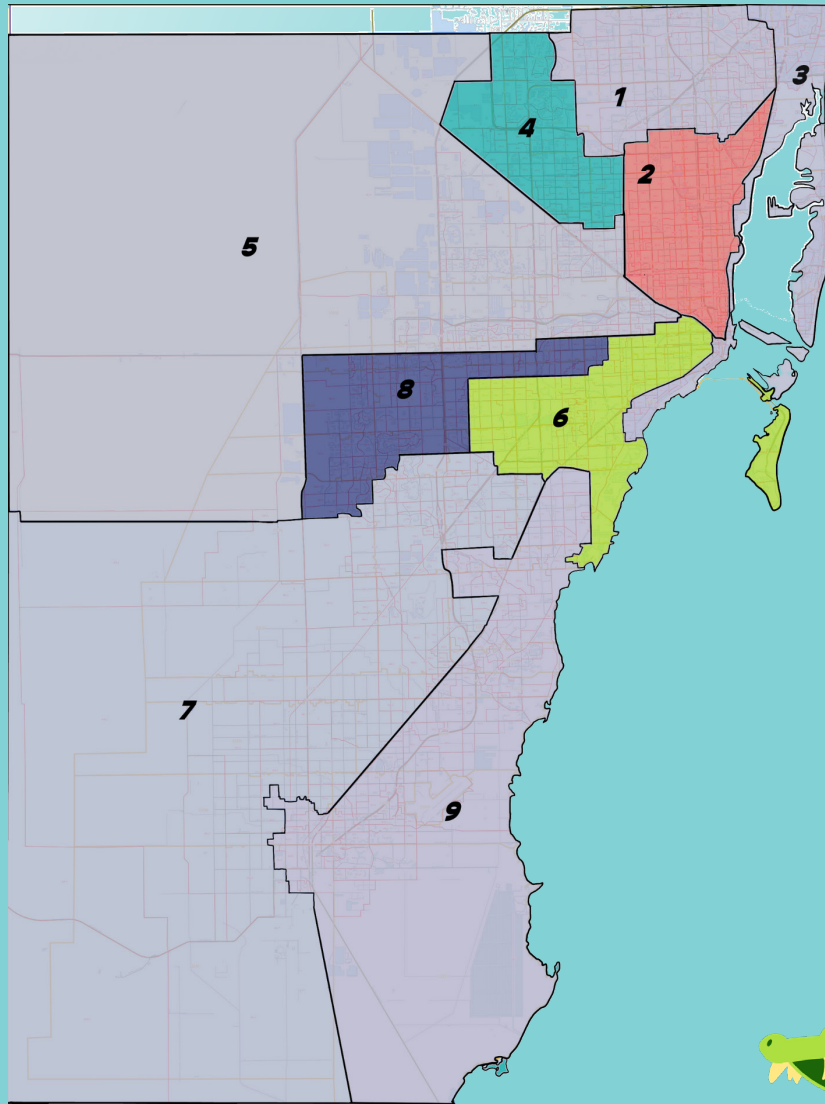


Redistricting

Every ten years the census counts every resident in the United States, and based on population changes every level of government undergoes a redistricting process to make sure districts are about even with the same number of people. Redistricting is the redrawing of electoral boundaries, so it's important to pay attention because we want to make sure every district is fairly representing the whole population. Your school board, county commission, state senate or representative, or congressional districts may have changed recently. Districts tend to stay about the same, but that's not always the case! Before voting, look up your sample ballot to **double check** what district you're in and which races you're voting in!



Miami-Dade County School Board Districts



Redistricting (cont.)

You may have heard of issues like political or racial gerrymandering. This means that a particular district or set of districts is drawn to favor or disfavor a particular political party, or limit racial representation. Political or racial gerrymandering is often the basis to have a district map challenged in court under the Voting Rights Act (which was created to, among other things, protect minority voters) or Florida's Fair Districts Constitutional Amendments (passed by voters in 2010 to promote politically balanced legislative and congressional districts). Florida had some really intense fights over redistricting this year, but the districts are locked in for upcoming elections.



The Power of Local Electeds

Miami-Dade County Commission

- Are limited to two four-year terms
- Have nonpartisan races (you won't see a D or R next to their names and there are no partisan primary elections)
- Hold public meetings every time they move to take an action
- Can override a Mayor's veto (a rejection of law or policy) with a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority

The County Commission is the legislative, or lawmaking, body of Miami-Dade County, with 13 members, each representing their specific district, together representing Florida's most populous county with 2.7 million residents: Miami-Dade!

The County Commission works with the County Mayor (Daniella Levine Cava, elected in 2020) and they make plans for how public land is used; are responsible for public transportation; establish public health and safety policies; and set policies for county housing and social service programs. They also approve the County budget, overseeing around \$10 billion per fiscal year that gets spent on housing, transportation, county police and jails, parks, waste management, services and much more. This year even-numbered districts are up for election and due to term limits pretty much every candidate will be new to the board if they win.

Miami-Dade County School Board

- Members have four-year terms with nonpartisan races
- Set district policy and appoint the MDCPS Superintendent
- Hold regular public meetings monthly and special meetings when necessary
- Cannot override state legislature

The School Board of Miami-Dade County is composed of nine members who govern the fourth largest public school district in the U.S with over 330,000 students. The Miami-Dade County School Board annually elects their chair and vice-chair and appoints a superintendent, who in turn hires administrators. They pass everyday policies that impact students at MDCPS and are the ones who approve textbooks, set teacher pay, and determine how many school counselors there are. They're subject to laws that are passed from the state legislature. They control a \$7 billion budget and are in charge of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our students. This year even-numbered districts are up for election.

Closed primaries: If you're registered with a political party (which you do when you complete or update your voter registration form), you'll see candidates for partisan primary races such as Governor, US Senate, and legislative positions. You can't vote in the closed primaries if you're not registered with a party, but you can vote in nonpartisan elections, like the ones in this guide. You can increase the power of your vote by updating your voter registration with the party affiliation of your choice. Voters have to be registered 29 days before an election.

Miami-Dade County Fast Facts

- Miami is named after the Mayaimi people and means “big water” in the languages of the Mayaimi, Calusa, and Tequesta. Miami is on the land of the Tequesta, Calusa, Miccosukee, and Seminole peoples.
- Miami-Dade County has about 2,758,636 residents. 72% of the population is Hispanic or Latinx, 16% is Black or African American, and 1.5% is Asian American or Pacific Islander.
- The Miami-Dade County budget is approximately \$10 billion! The Board of County Commissioners has public meetings every year before they approve the budget in September where community members can attend and advocate for their priorities.
- Miami has been ranked as the least affordable housing market in the U.S. According to a report from realtor.com, Miami-area apartments have risen 46% since May of 2021 — the fastest rate for any major US metropolitan area.
- Miami’s surrounding waters rose 6 inches within the past 25 years—some of the fastest rates globally—and “sunny day flooding” (flooding not caused by rain) is up 400 percent since 2006. To combat climate change, Miami-Dade County created the Office of Resilience in 2016 and hired a Chief Heat Officer in 2021.
- The Miami-Dade Police Department is the largest law enforcement department in the southeastern United States and one of the ten largest in the U.S. The Miami-Dade Police Department was the largest spender in the County’s 2021-2022 operational budget.
- Miami residents’ average commute is 56 minutes, one of the longest average commutes in the U.S.
- Miami-Dade Public Schools is the fourth largest public school district in the U.S. The Miami-Dade School Board passed a \$7 billion budget in 2021, its largest ever!





What's in this Voter Guide

In this guide, you can find responses from Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners and Miami-Dade County School Board candidates. County Commission and School Board elections are in August, and if no candidate receives a majority of the vote run offs will be held in November during the General Election. County Commission District 4 has already been decided as only one candidate filed to run. We feature all candidates that responded to our questionnaire, and all candidates for all races are listed on the back page.

All candidates who met our minimum fundraising requirements (\$2,500) were asked to complete the questionnaire - we'll list all candidates for each race, even those who did not complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire responses were limited to 500 characters and are printed exactly as entered with minor typos corrected.

Who We Are

Engage Miami builds equity and power through voter engagement, civic education, leadership development, and organizing around our issue platform, the Young People's Policy Priorities. We're all about Gen Z and millennial voters and leaders, building young people's power in majority Black and Latinx communities. Our members, volunteers, students, and staff are the heart of who we are and why we do what we do. We're pushing the envelope of what's possible as a multiracial, multigenerational organization founded by and for young people. We are the home base and hub for young people in South Florida making our communities more just, sustainable, and democratic through civic leadership and engagement.

We bring civic engagement directly to young people on college campuses and in communities and go beyond the ballot box as advocates, organizers, and community leaders. Every year, we register voters, create voter guides that show where the candidates stand on the issues that matter most to young people, and make sure all of us have the information we need to be confident and ready to vote.

We're always looking to connect and build with folks across South Florida who are passionate and driven to do the work. If you're interested in volunteering to phone or text bank, distribute care packages, and/or provide event support, scan the QR code now!





County Commission Candidate Questionnaire

- What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?
- What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?
- How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?
- How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?
- What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

School Board Candidate Questionnaire

- What steps will you take to increase access to mental health services and emotional support for students in schools?
- What is your plan for prioritizing comprehensive sex education in school curriculum? If you don't agree that comprehensive sex ed should be taught in schools, please explain that too.
- How can MDCPS reduce punitive disciplinary approaches and end the school-to-prison pipeline?
- How will you increase sustainability, environmental awareness, and advance climate action in our public school system?
- What is your plan to protect, retain, and support teachers, as well as recruit well-qualified educators?



We are including only five questions for both school board and county commission candidates in the printed voter guide. For the full list of questions and candidate responses, go to engage.miami/voter-guide.

County Commission District 2

Wallace Aristide

What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?

I will engage in collaborative efforts with key stakeholders to develop effective plans that address barriers to the voter's ability to exercise their constitutional right to vote. My plan would be an incremental approach with a mix of strategies that includes developing a new budget that focuses on educating our constituents, rethinking the infrastructure, revising our digital community engagement platform, creating a plan for inclusive public spaces.

How will you address the influence of special interests in local elections?

The only special interest is our residence. As I speak to developers and other people that want to contribute to my campaign, I make it clear that the only promises I make are those that address the concerns of residents in District 2. I believe in transparency and full disclosure because it provides citizens and stakeholders the necessary information to engage with corporate entities in the most advantageous manner.

What steps will you take to make our County budget process more transparent and increase the direct participation of residents?

As a Miami-Dade County Commissioner, I would work with other Commissioners to expand beyond the basics to build a robust budgeting process that provides a written record and reasoning, which would allow transparency for District 2 constituents and key stakeholders: bond holders, business leaders, government employees, other elected officials, and surrounding communities.

What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?

I will urge the Miami-Dade County commission to develop the PEACE AND PROSPERITY PLAN that includes Public Housing and Community Development and Community Development Block Grant funds. It can support numerous efforts for community revitalization and economic development, including jobs with sustainable wages for low to moderate income residents, child care assistance, homeowner repair programs, small business assistance, upgrades to childcare and youth centers, home renovation, and more.

How will you support the rights and well-being of renters?

Housing will be supported by the Tenet Bill of Rights, small business bill of rights. I will be an aggressive advocate for enactment of legislation at the local and state level to address the burdens currently felt by many residents; not only in District 2, but all areas of the County.

How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?

One of the biggest issues facing our planet today is the challenge of reducing the effects of climate change while continuing to meet people's need for affordable energy and the products they rely on every day. We can start by advancing Lower-Emission Energy Solutions Through Science and Technology, Partnering with Universities, Government Labs, and Other Companies.

What steps will you take to protect our environment and our water, including Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration?

I would work with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in its efforts to protect Florida's water resources through multi-faceted and innovative solutions. These actions are vital to Florida's environment, economy, and communities. DEP works collaboratively with the Governor and Florida Legislature, water management districts, partner state agencies, local governments, the public and other stakeholders to implement projects and programs to protect our state's iconic water resources.

How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?

I will work hard to prevent gun violence in the hardest impacted communities across Miami-Dade, address the alarming incidence of gun violence in North Dade, and build safer, more prosperous neighborhoods for all families. I will leverage collaboration with other community and government efforts coordinated through the new Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) to expand the impact of this funding.

What types of immigration services or programs will you champion?

I am an immigrant, so the immigrant crisis is close to my heart. I know the importance of feeling like you belong. These are some of the issues I will tackle and champion: Family, Based Immigration, Employment-Based Immigration, Per-Country Ceilings, Refugees and Asylees, The Diversity Visa Program, Other Forms of Humanitarian Relief and U.S. Citizenship.

What will you do to prioritize pedestrian and bike safety and access for all residents?

It is important to me that the county increase its investment in this area. From bike lanes and bike storage to curb extensions and shared-use paths, there is plenty of opportunity for improvement. While more cities are implementing programs to build safer cities like those contemplated in Vision Zero plans, District 2, and Miami-Dade County, collectively, can greatly benefit.

What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

As a member of the Commission, I would conduct a comprehensive analysis and review of the Smart Plan to ensure, through the various transportation initiatives, the needs of District 2 residents are identified and incorporated in the Smart Plan. I would sponsor amendments, if required, to the Smart Plan to ensure District 2 needs are identified, fully funded, and implemented.

County Commission District 2

Marleine Bastien

What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?

To make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County, I will work with the County Commissioners and the Supervisor of Elections to ensure that more voter registration drives are scheduled and promoted to the residents of Miami Dade County. Additionally, I will support community initiatives that educate and empower new voters in the electoral process

How will you address the influence of special interests in local elections?

As County Commissioner of District 2, I will propose that a system be created matching contributions to a commissioner's campaign account with vendors who are lobbying the Commission. If a member is identified to be receiving campaign contributions, they would have to declare a conflict of interest and be barred from voting on the issue or project. This will decrease the influence of special interests if Commissioners they support cannot vote on their projects.

What steps will you take to make our County budget process more transparent and increase the direct participation of residents?

I will host Community Town Halls. One at the start of the budget season with various departments and the Budget office to receive input on projects requested from the community. Upon the Proposed Annual Budget being provided by the Mayor's Office, I will host an additional town hall meeting informing residents of the currently funded projects and receive feedback. Once the budget is approved, I will host a final meeting informing the residents of the projects that received funding.

What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?

Miami Dade County has taken the right steps in passing a resolution to investigate whether there is a housing crisis. The next steps should be to explore a one-year rent increase moratorium, place caps on the amount of rent that can be increased year over year, review all current evictions in the courts, see if they qualify for County Housing assistance, and provide them with immediate relief. All new housing projects would have mandatory low-income housing mandates to prevent gentrification.

How will you support the rights and well-being of renters?

Propose legislation that will support the creation of a Housing commission that review rent increases across the County. Increases in rent in designated low-income areas would be

flagged, requiring approval from the Housing Commission. If the rent increase is denied, the landlord would be unable to increase rent for one year. Residents in low-income communities will be able to report landlords that violate rent increase cap limits.

How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?

I agree that climate change is a real-life phenomenon that must be addressed. I will request that the County do a comprehensive review of County-owned assets and see how these assets can be phased out and replaced with more clean energy alternatives. Additionally, I would request that contractors who need approval from the County be required to build energy-efficient buildings and be LEED certified.

What steps will you take to protect our environment and our water, including Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration?

I would advocate for the State and Federal governments to provide funding for restoration projects. Biscayne Bay and Everglades Restoration projects have not been a funding priority from the State; nevertheless, federal funding opportunities are available to the County and can be utilized to repair some of the damage done by overpopulation and pollution in the everglades and in Biscayne Bay.

How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?

To reduce the incarceration and criminalization of communities of color, I will push for civil citations as an alternative to arrestation for non-violent crimes. The civil citation program would allow officers more discretion in issuing tickets for minor infractions that typically end with people of color behind bars. The civil citation program will also decrease the overcrowding in the County jail system.

What types of immigration services or programs will you champion?

As a community advocate for over 40 years, I have spent most of my adult life fighting on behalf of immigrants. I will support the initiative to create a public advocate within the Public Defender's office to represent undocumented residents within our community. The funding will be supported by private businesses, grants, and other non-ad Valorem assessments. Like New York, I will also be a champion of state-approved IDs and Drivers Licenses for the undocumented within our community.

What will you do to prioritize pedestrian and bike safety and access for all residents?

I will prioritize pedestrian and bike safety access for all residents by approving road improvement projects that provide lanes with dividers that allow bikers to share the road with vehicles safely. For pedestrians, an assessment will be done in quadrants across District 2 to identify where sidewalks have to be installed or improved. This would allow residents to safely travel on sidewalks instead of roads with heavy inbound and outbound traffic.

What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

My First step would be to review plans for the public transit system within the county and identify how much funds are available in the transportation surtax for Miami Dade County. Next, I would propose the County commit funds from the American Recuse Plan act to expand public transportation in low-income areas. If bus routes have to be developed, adjusted, or eliminated, I will propose those recommendations to the Commission.

County Commission District 2

William Clark

What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?

Engage every Ethnic group, wed my efforts with Miami Dade County Public Schools and meet with every Civic group, including Sororities and Fraternities to discuss the importance of voting and how to enhance the specter of voting. I would also present legislation that would possibly make voting a holiday and perhaps move it to the weekend.

How will you address the influence of special interests in local elections?

I would simply call them out, in particular Developers and Contractors, that do everything in their power to prevent such policies as rent control or curtailing the rise of house gauging. I would also shine a light on all of my colleagues who are heavily influenced on special interests that retards those of us from implementing measures that will assist the Renter and or Homeowner.

What steps will you take to make our County budget process more transparent and increase the direct participation of residents?

I will attempt to send a chart to each resident explaining what the current budget entails and what are the proposed changes. The general populace is encouraged to comment on each area they would like to see changed. The next thing I would do is side with the Mayor and create legislation that would promote rent control.

What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?

Miami Dade County has a lot of unused properties at its disposal. Use those properties to develop low income or affordable housing for the families that need it. Do this instead of giving those unscrupulous developers this land that they can build on and then give the politician a kickback for giving them the land for little or nothing.

How will you support the rights and well-being of renters?

I will support the newly implemented Renters Bill of Rights and enforce any violations by the owner/landlords that renders that Bill of Rights null and void.

How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?

I will confer with the experts on the subject matter to come up with a comprehensive plan of action to combat greenhouse emissions. I will also review current guidelines as they relate to emissions and suggest updated changes where I see fit.

What steps will you take to protect our environment and our water, including Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration?

We must get tough on violators to send a message that the environment is an important part of our existence, maybe the most important part. We should inform the general public how our environment affects our daily lives. Clean water is a must in this geographical area where we are literally surrounded by 3/4ths water. It's vitally important that we implement measures that keep our waterways clean.

How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?

One of the first things I would do is combine the efforts of the Police, Dade County Public Schools, and the Business communities to create Trade and Logistics hubs around the County to give to those who are constantly involved in criminal activities a chance to become whole. They would be given a chance to earn an Industry Certification and possibly be given a job at the Airport, Seaport, or Amazon just to name a few.

What types of immigration services or programs will you champion?

Immigrants are very important to this community. Some are very skilled and immediately ascend to the upper echelon of this society. However, some are laborers who don't mind working the thousands of jobs that are left unclaimed in the community. Either way, immigrants help this community greatly and have my support assimilating into the greater community.

What will you do to prioritize pedestrian and bike safety and access for all residents?

The safety of our bikers is very important to me. Bikers are a part of the fabric that makes Miami Dade what it is today. Protecting all bikers is very important, whether they are biking to work or going for a leisurely ride on the Rickenbacker Causeway. I would enforce the current laws as they relate to bikers and perhaps place monitors on heavily traveled bike routes to serve as an extra pair of eyes and ears to try to eliminate things that may serve as obstacles to our bikers.

What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

The original Metro Rail was supposed to connect South Dade to North Dade/County Line. It was diverted to Hialeah and now there's talk of it being diverted to Miami Beach. While there's certainly a need to connect the rail to our East and West corridor, we must institute the original plan to go extreme North and South to make this rail complete.

County Commission District 6

Dariel Fernandez

What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?

I will provide more education about all of the candidates. The Residents of the County will have the opportunity to know more about the candidates. I will create more engagement in the community about the importance of elections and the responsibility that we have as citizens of this beautiful country.

How will you address the influence of special interests in local elections?

I will put more transparency into the election system by making it easier for the residents to see who is donating to the campaign of any candidate. Also limit the contributions to the PAC. If the company has any conflicts of interest in the county they can not donate to the candidates.

What steps will you take to make our County budget process more transparent and increase the direct participation of residents?

I will explain to the residents where the taxpayer money is going. We need to create forums around the county to give more participation to our community.

What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?

My main priority is to represent our residents and fight for them. First we need to review all the plans that we have now in place and see why they are not 100% effective. Second, we need to bring insurance companies, construction companies, and the government to the table to find the real solution to this crisis.

How will you support the rights and well-being of renters?

I will protect the rights of renters under the same rights as prescribed by the constitution. I will also try to find ways to help them to become owners of their own houses.

How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?

I will support easing restrictions on private industries that are innovating in the environmental technology sectors. This way, we can rapidly solve the carbon and greenhouse gas emissions problems without harming the lives of our residents.

What steps will you take to protect our environment and our water, including Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration?

Helping property owners to switch from septic tanks to sewers, by giving them credits for their taxes will help us to protect our water and our environments.

How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?

The first thing that we need to do is educate our communities so that politicians cannot use or manipulate minority communities to gain power. Investing in the community will create a better future for their families and help them to understand that the only way to become successful is through hard work. This is how we will achieve their dreams.

What types of immigration services or programs will you champion?

We need to know who is coming to our country. After we see that a person is allowed to enter into the United States, we need to issue them a permit to work, and continue the immigration process in the meantime.

What will you do to prioritize pedestrian and bike safety and access for all residents?

I would protect pedestrians and cyclists by erecting barriers and barricades around pedestrian zones and bike areas. Also, I would find more resources for police and enforcement in those areas.

What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

We need to start investing the "half-penny money" into our public transportation system, as it was designed and voted on by the electorate. We also need to ensure that all of our buses and other modes of public transportation are ADA compliant.

County Commission District 6

Victor Vazquez

What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?

I believe that elections should be exercised as the most important element of a healthy, participatory democracy; people died to get us that right, people have died to preserve it. While a professor at Miami Dade College, I encouraged my students to register and to vote. I never said vote this way or that way but to participate. In my family we vote together, we used to go to the polls together, now we turn in our VBM ballot together. I would encourage that type of mutual participation.

How will you address the influence of special interests in local elections?

Unfortunately, after the US Supreme Court decided that corporations have the same rights as individuals in regards to spending wads of dollars in elections, dark money has spread and so has the influence of special interests. I'm not sure how we curb this now, but elected officials/and those running for elections can opt out of receiving such funds, that might help.

What steps will you take to make our County budget process more transparent and increase the direct participation of residents?

County Commissioners should encourage residents to use every means available to constituents in the County budgeting process including, simply written pieces to explain how the process works. Also, there are online mechanisms available to the public, such as public forums, where regular residents can and should sign up to speak on budgeting items.

What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?

Miami now stands as the least affordable place to live in the US, with both median and monthly rent and the median home price well beyond the range of working families. Rates of home ownership lag among minority households, while senior citizens face increasing costs and deteriorating living conditions. I will marshal federal, state, and local resources and work with stakeholders in the construction, financial, real estate, and nonprofit sectors to spur new projects within the Urban Development Boundary.

How will you support the rights and well-being of renters?

I have supported tenants rights since I was a young community organizer in New York City. I started by organizing the tenants in my own building after a murder occurred and I went on from there. I provide this experiences as background. Although it's been some time since I worked directly with this issue, I understand some of the complexities. Generally speaking, I believe there should be a mechanism in place to protect tenants rights.

How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?

From sea level rise to pollution to the quality of drinking water to the beauty of our public parks and streets, the environment is an important part of our quality of life. I believe the growth of our economy and housing inventory must be balanced with the preservation of these assets so that our children and grandchildren can continue to enjoy all the blessings that Miami-Dade County offers. I will support best practices in growth management, and will pursue all federal, state, and

What steps will you take to protect our environment and our water, including Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration?

contd. from above

local resources to address saltwater intrusion; jump-start septic to sewer conversion; reduce fossil fuel usage and waste, and expand green space.

How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?

This is a more complex problem because it goes to the heart of our history with racism. There is no question that communities of color are disproportionately criminalized and incarcerated. They are also communities that suffer higher levels of poverty, school drop out rates etc. This is a matter of human rights and requires more political action like the project led by Desmond Meade on the voting rights of former felons.

What types of immigration services or programs will you champion?

The very first community education experience I had was as a volunteer English instructor at a Saturday program for Latin American immigrants. I fell in love with teaching and have been doing so for 35 years. I believe that programs for immigrants should focus on learning English but should also emphasize recognition of their respective languages and culture. You don't have to forget who you are to learn English and US culture.

What will you do to prioritize pedestrian and bike safety and access for all residents?

This is a major issue in Miami Dade County. In Miami Springs, where I live, we have taken numerous measures to increase safety among bike riders and pedestrians. We have signs constantly reminding drivers that we are a walking and biking city. In other communities there may be a need for guard rails, although I know bikers that do not like them.

What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

The citizens of Miami-Dade County, who spend hours each week commuting to work, have every right to feel deep frustration that the original promises of the People's Transportation Plan, funded since 2003 by the half-penny sales surtax, have gone unmet. Rapid transit lines to W. Dade, Kendall, Florida City, Miami Beach, and North Dade remain a fantasy. I am

committed to strengthening oversight of transportation plan spending, and increasing incentives for public transit ridership.

County Commission District 8

Karen Baez-Willis

What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?

As a registered nurse and advocate, I would assure timely notification so that working individuals could attend, participation and presence within the community by the commissioner, ease of access to the office of the commissioner for constituents, 24 hour turnaround time to acknowledge receipt of concerns to the office, communication to the district in language of choice, and provide a communication opportunity for residents to recommend activities they would like to see in their community.

How will you address the influence of special interests in local elections?

Local elections have to address the needs of the people within the district. There is an appropriate place for community participation of special interest groups when they are focused on enhancing services and the direction of the community. My role would be to assure that the district would benefit from the special interests group. Otherwise, they would be of little purpose for the community and therefore no need for their presence.

What steps will you take to make our County budget process more transparent and increase the direct participation of residents?

Budget and the budget process can be overwhelming. The average resident needs to be educated and involved in how a budget is created, what terms and definitions mean and why and how their County Commissioner will be voting to assure the most benefit for the district they represent. This education process can be held through a series of pre-recorded video segments to provide education in different languages and a series of town hall meetings to assure residents have a question/answer period.

What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?

Assuring appropriate staffing for the Office of Housing Advocacy. Community services, resources and presence within the community to assure housing is being maintained. Education for both tenants and landlords to assure tenant rights are protected. With housing cost increasing, development of a landlord bill of rights needs to also be developed and possible county programs to protect landlords so that they may continue providing rentals at affordable rates.

How will you support the rights and well-being of renters?

Renters have the right to live in a "livable" place. Supporting renters to assure that rentals are habitable prior to occupancy and during the rental period. Development within the public

housing and community development office/office of housing advocacy, a reporting system in which renters can report and upload pictures of uninhabitable rentals without repercussions from landlords. Ability for the county to inspect and if verified, the rental would be brought up to code and habitable.

How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?

Incentivize, incentivize, and incentivize solar energy. We are the sunshine state and obtaining solar power to decrease energy cost and be used as an alternative clean energy is currently only accessible if homeowners can afford it. We need to make clean energy more accessible for south Floridians through programs that assist with financing and provide incentives.

What steps will you take to protect our environment and our water, including Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration?

Championing the preservation of these beautiful and finite resources needs to be made a priority for all South Floridians if we are to leave them for generations to come. Partnerships with organizations that are experts in protection and restoration need to be at the table when decisions that would pose a harmful impact on these resources may take place. Allowing full education and transparency on potential impact when making decisions.

How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?

Investing in communities and having a presence in the community. Additional resources such as mobile crisis units that can respond in conjunction with law enforcement if necessary. Integrated within the communities access to mental health, child care resources, education, and establish partnerships with nonprofits that have established and successful programs that can enhance or supplement community needs.

What types of immigration services or programs will you champion?

As a non-English speaking immigrant, I clearly remember the priorities within my household. English proficiency programs would be a priority to my office. It's heartbreaking and frustrating to have a need or an emergency and not be able to effectively communicate. I would love to champion this type of program within the district.

What will you do to prioritize pedestrian and bike safety and access for all residents?

Per the Federal Highway Administration, pedestrian & bicyclist fatalities comprised about 20% of all traffic fatalities. As a former trauma nurse, I cared for and saw this so assisting with the adoption of the recommendations from the federal highway administration integrated approach would be a priority. The 4 E's: Education, Engineering, Enforcement, and Emergency Services. Development of the comprehensive program to increase safety within the entire county would benefit all.

What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

To expand access & prioritize public transit, I would recommend an incentive program. By incentivizing the use of transit, it would make it more enticing. Certain components of our transit system do not make it user friendly, such as no cover, seats, lighting, and poorly designated bus stops. I would prioritize improving certain components of our transit, so that riders are motivated to use it. Collaborating with the department of transportation and public works would be a priority.

County Commission District 8

Danielle Cohen Higgins

What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?

I am very dedicated to consistent communication with residents on all things County Government. Without exception, I frequently send board meeting video recaps, agendas, and hearing notices to residents via email and social media. I believe that it is incumbent upon Government officials to engage and inform residents on the issues. This, in turn, will not only inform but also hopefully, engage voters and residents.

How will you address the influence of special interests in local elections?

I am and will continue to be absolutely independent in my votes. After tremendous reading, research and diligence, I do whatever I determine to be in the best interest of the community I have the honor and privilege of representing. Continuing to be clear with special interests about this independence up front and advocating for other government officials to do the same will hopefully reduce the influence of special interests.

What steps will you take to make our County budget process more transparent and increase the direct participation of residents?

Consistent communication, again, is key. We need to involve our residents in our budget process by informing them of when the budget hearings take place and informing them of what's at stake. I've been doing this for the past year and a half and will continue this level of engagement. I also host Community Conversations with our District 8 residents to inform them of the issues, advise them of what we are doing to help and hear directly from them on what's top of mind.

What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?

I have voted to increase funding for our affordable housing programs, co-sponsored legislation to facilitate the development of more affordable housing and spearheaded affordable housing pilot programs in District 8 with modular housing (homes that are built at a fraction of the cost and in a fraction of the time).

How will you support the rights and well-being of renters?

Recently, I supported the tenant bill of rights. I also supported legislation to increase the notice time for tenants when rent hikes are forthcoming. Renters' rights are not subservient to those of landlords; rather, they are equal. I have and will continue to advocate for policies that strike this balance and level the playing field.

How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?

I have consistently been a strong and consistent champion of protecting our Environment. Specifically, in the area of carbon emissions, I support efforts to fast-track Miami-Dade's response to the International Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report and support measures to reduce greenhouse gasses, including ensuring Miami-Dade County cuts pollution of greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030.

What steps will you take to protect our environment and our water, including Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration?

I voted to hold the line on the Urban Development Boundary when it threatens our Bay, sponsoring legislation to expedite our much needed Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP) for Biscayne Bay, sponsoring legislation to encourage funding for our Bay from the State and serving as the Biscayne Bay Watershed Management Advisory Board Chairwoman. I also recently sponsored legislation to preserve 322 acres in District 8 for Everglades restoration.

How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?

In District 8, I created a program called SafeSummers to reduce children from falling through the cracks and keeping them busy and productive full-time throughout the Summer. This was in direct response to the rise in crime we saw last year but due to its success, the program now continues annually. In addition, I support the County's Peace and Prosperity Plan and I support community policing.

What types of immigration services or programs will you champion?

I championed protections for our immigrant community as I am a first generation American and the daughter of immigrants. I supported community IDs. I created and passed an ordinance to make it illegal for the unlicensed practice of immigration law which was prevalent in our County where families were spending thousands of dollars on "notarios" believing they were hiring immigration attorneys when in fact they were notary publics.

What will you do to prioritize pedestrian and bike safety and access for all residents?

I am proud of the fact that for the very first time I visited Tallahassee to advocate on behalf of our County and District 8, I received my full funding request of \$3,000,000 with a match of \$3,000,000 from the County, for a total of \$6,000,000, to renovate the South Dade Trail. Renovating this trail will allow greater safety for cyclists and pedestrians by creating a 20+ mile option because it is a dedicated trail with little through traffic.

What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

Creating an Underline-Type Project on the South Dade Trail where families and residents have a space, abutting public transit, that is safe and well lit will increase ridership. I also support smart development along portions of our transit corridors to help create a more transit

oriented community. Last mile solutions like Go Connect also need to be expanded. Finally, the county needs a robust public relations campaign to reduce any negative stigmas of riding public transportation.

County Commission District 10

Martha Bueno

What will you do to make voting and civic engagement as participatory and equitable as possible in Miami-Dade County?

In order to gain more civic engagement, I will continue to engage with the residents via social media in order to bring attention to the issues being discussed by the Board of County Commissioners. I believe people are really busy and don't feel confident engaging with the BCC, plus it's just hard to comprehend, and a more friendly and down to earth approach is needed.

How will you address the influence of special interests in local elections?

As an independent candidate I have been calling out the established candidates for taking money from special interest groups, and as an activist I have brought campaign donations from the same groups that are responsible for many of the bills brought before the commissioners. I would continue to do so from the Dais.

What steps will you take to make our County budget process more transparent and increase the direct participation of residents?

I believe this is an extremely important issue. The county budget is being proposed at \$10Billion for the 22-23 year, an increase of \$1Billion over the previous year. At the same time the commissioners are debating a ""tax decrease"" which is really an increase. It's time we actually talk to residents about where their funds are going and what programs, if any, should be reduced or eliminated.

What steps will you take to increase affordable housing and prevent gentrification and displacement?

I believe that supply shortages have led to increased demand and increased prices. Economic theory states that if we want prices to lower, we need to increase supply. This means that we have a need for more housing, so zoning regulations should be decreased so that we can have more inventory.

How will you support the rights and well-being of renters?

Currently there is a renters bill of rights that was passed by the County, I believe that no further action is needed at this time.

How will you reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy such as rooftop solar?

I do not have any proposal at this time, however I would consider proposals to lower emissions when they come before the board.

What steps will you take to protect our environment and our water, including Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration?

I would like to see what proposals various environmental groups have regarding Biscayne Bay and the Everglades. At this time I do not have any proposals.

How will you reduce incarceration and criminalization of communities of color?

Every \$.25 of every \$1.00 given to the County is used for Public Safety. This includes police, fire, corrections and rehabilitation. Miami-Dade spends way too much money and has far too many residents locked up. Over 4,000 people are in our facilities at any given time. We need to stop arresting people for victimless crimes such as drugs. People with addiction issues should be treated medically, not by turning them into criminals.

What types of immigration services or programs will you champion?

At this time I do not have any immigration plans, however I will consider proposals.

What will you do to prioritize pedestrian and bike safety and access for all residents?

I believe that residents should be able to bike and use the roads safely. I would like to work with established groups to discuss ways which could protect bikers, however I do not currently have a proposal.

What steps will you take to expand access to and prioritize reliable and efficient public transit in Miami-Dade?

There are many ways to expand public transport, but the first issue would be to request the release of a study done on our public transport in 2019 that has yet to be released. I believe that first and foremost we need to understand the logistics and be able to work off of which routes make most sense prioritizing. This is a complicated subject, and 500 words does not give me enough to expand on this idea.

School Board District 2

La-Shanda West

What steps will you take to increase access to mental health services and emotional support for students in schools?

Developing and maintaining relationships with community partners will increase mental health services and emotional support for students. The Florida Department of Health, Jackson Hospital, and others offer services to M-DCPS. Ensuring every school has a mental health coordinator in compliance with state law is necessary. Supporting the training of School Resource Officers as mental health advocates removes the disciplinarian stigma. Increase mental health activities beyond academic learning.

What is your plan for prioritizing comprehensive sex education in school curriculum? If you don't agree that comprehensive sex ed should be taught in schools, please explain that too.

Health (sex) Education was an elective taught in high school before the curriculum shifted from practical skills to college and work force readiness. Students taking this course must receive parental approval if it's being taught to a minor. However, the Health (sex) Education course is necessary for it discusses uncomfortable topics about human growth and development. This is a priority course to promote awareness, reduce teenage pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

How will you ensure students feel safe and supported in schools, especially students of color, immigrant youth, and queer youth?

Human Rights are God given rights. The 14th Amendment provides equal protection under the law for every living being. As a parent, teacher and safety advocate there is no greater importance than that of providing a safe space for all children at school and within the community. Having round table discussions with local officials, police, students, and parents will build and sustain much needed relationships to protect our vulnerable populations.

How can MDCPS reduce punitive disciplinary approaches and end the school-to-prison pipeline?

Assessments and punitive consequences should not determine a child's trajectory. Education is the great equalizer, for without it, I would not be where I am today. I support the M-DCPS alternative schools which allows students access to uninterrupted structural learning while reflecting on their actions. Equally important, children require counseling, mentorship, and legal advocates to guide and support them to break the school-to-prison pipeline.

How should MDCPS strengthen civic education and access to voter registration for students?

Students should be trained by the Miami-Dade Elections Department ages 16-25, to conduct voter registration drives at the high school, college, and university levels. Similar to poll workers getting a small stipend to work at precincts on election days, students should get community service hours, grade in a government course or some other incentive. Students must see the value in one vote matters. Using their voice and knowledge the trained students will register their peers to vote.

How will you increase sustainability, environmental awareness, and advance climate action in our public school system?

Clean Energy 2030, referred to as the North Star, was approved by the M-DCPS board in 2021 and serves as a blueprint for developing and sustaining environmental action plans. Working with the school board and grants department, I would proffer environmental awareness campaigns and incentives for schools that reduce energy consumption such as power off when not in use and flush once to reduce water use.

What is your plan to protect, retain, and support teachers, as well as recruit well-qualified educators?

To ensure students have access to high-quality learning, there is a need to appropriate funds to recruit and retain quality teachers. There is a teacher shortage across the United States. Teachers must feel valued and supported to be committed to the Miami-Dade education system. One teacher salary is comparable to the current cost of living, and stakeholders are invested in the well being of every school, the teacher performance will meet parents and the community-at-large expectations.

School Board District 4

Maribel Balbin

What steps will you take to increase access to mental health services and emotional support for students in schools?

MDCPS has a Department of Mental Health Services, the staff recently made a presentation about their expanded services being provided for free to students and families. I would make sure that we have the appropriate staff in every school and training for teachers and administrators. This means securing funding to add more counselors, social workers and support staff.

What is your plan for prioritizing comprehensive sex education in school curriculum? If you don't agree that comprehensive sex ed should be taught in schools, please explain that too.

Unfortunately, politics is playing a big role in the sex education space. The district changed a very effective curriculum last April and replaced it with a book. As a board member, I would work to revisit that decision and make sure that we are providing our students with the best, age-appropriate information to lead healthy lives.

How will you ensure students feel safe and supported in schools, especially students of color, immigrant youth, and queer youth?

MDCPS has adopted "GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS," a comprehensive policy initiative aimed at making sure that every student feels welcomed in a safe environment. I would make sure that all the policy recommendations are being put in place and review the policies to make sure that it is up to date with all new initiatives.

How can MDCPS reduce punitive disciplinary approaches and end the school-to-prison pipeline?

I agree with the recommendations of a ACLU study; "Safe to Learn: An Assessment of School Climate and Discipline in Florida, and a profile of Miami-Dade County's School-to-Prison Pipeline. And that starts with a better student-to-professional ratio for school counselors, school psychologists or school social workers. I would make sure we implement programs that prevent suspension so that students don't fall behind in their academic achievements while a discipline problem is being addressed.

How should MDCPS strengthen civic education and access to voter registration for students?

As a long-time member of the League of Women Voters, I'm a strong advocate for civic education and access for every student to register before or by the time they turn 18. I've participated in school voter registration events. Students should have opportunities for

collaborative action research projects, investigating and addressing an issue relevant to their communities, enabling problem-solving and advocacy. Hold high school voter challenges; who can register the most newly eligible voters.

How will you increase sustainability, environmental awareness, and advance climate action in our public school system?

I've spent my professional career in the environmental protection space. As a water conservation manager and a sustainability program manager, I developed and implemented policies and projects to address climate action. In addition to the curriculum, I would like to see hands-on awareness projects for students. I want to join current Board sustainability initiatives to make our school buildings more efficient in energy and water use and involve the students in achieving sustainability goals.

What is your plan to protect, retain, and support teachers, as well as recruit well-qualified educators?

Our biggest challenge is having enough teachers for the next school year, currently, there are over 475 teacher vacancies. In order to attract new talent, we need to be competitive with salary and benefits. I'd like to see a student loan payment assistance program for new hires and an equally beneficial program for our current teachers that have not reached the 10-year threshold. Adequate compensation is a top priority, we are an A-rated school district, and our teachers deserve A+ pay.

All the Candidates

Miami-Dade County Commission

District 2

Wallace Aristide
Marleine Bastien
Philippe Bien-Aime
Joe Celestin
William Clark

District 4

Micky Steinberg
*elected unopposed

District 6

Kevin Marino Cabrera
Dariel Fernandez
Jorge Fors
Victor Vazquez

District 8

Alicia Arellano
Karen Baez-Wallis
Danielle Cohen Higgins

District 10

Martha Bueno
Susan Khoury
Anthony Rodriguez
Julio Sanchez

District 12

Juan Carlos Bermudez
Sophia Lacayo

Miami-Dade County School Board

District 2

Dorothy Bendross-Mindigall
La-Shanda West

District 4

Roberto Alonso
Maribel Balbin
Kevin Menendez Macki

District 6

Sandra Manzieri
Maria Teresa Rojas

District 8

Monica Colucci
Marta Perez



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