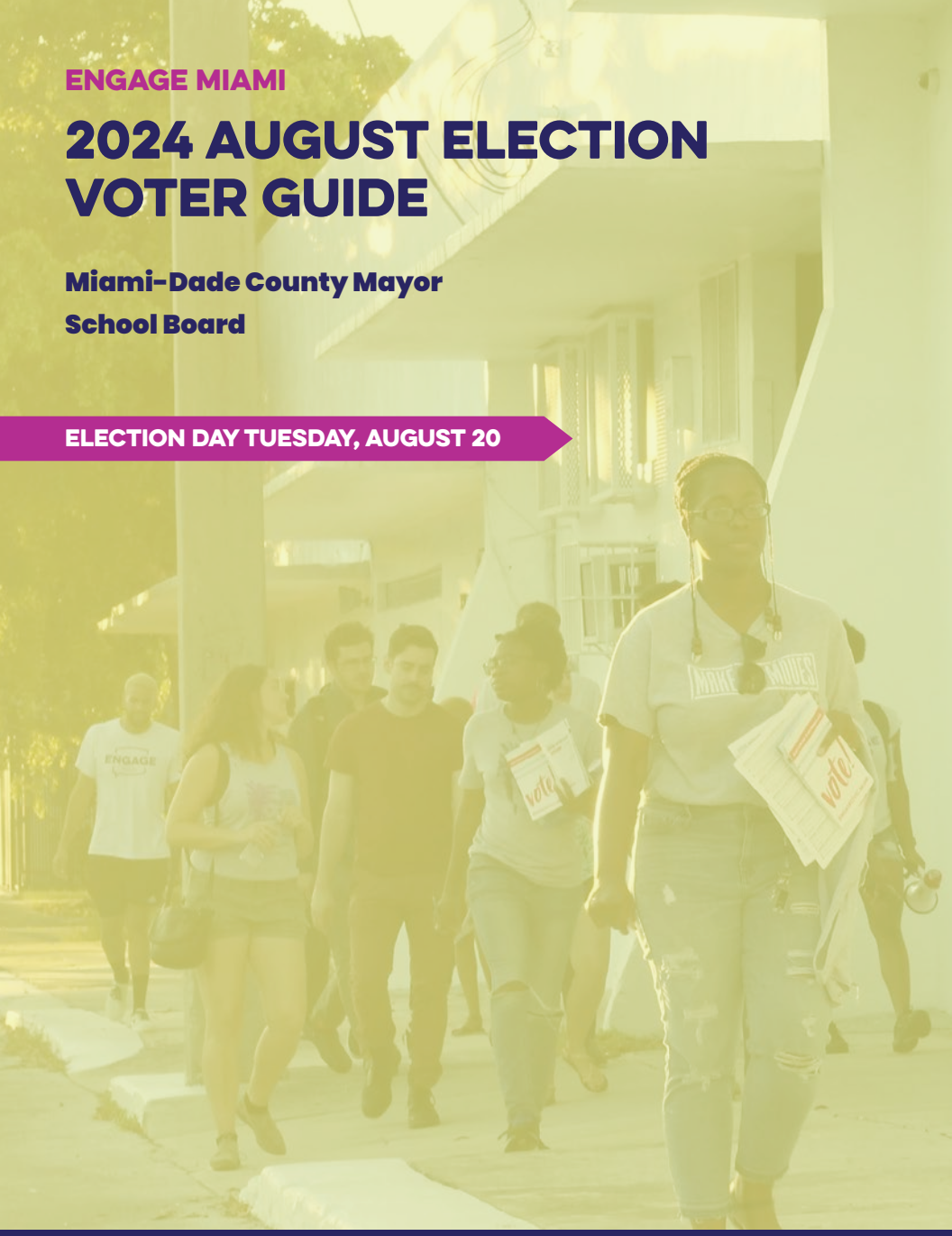


ENGAGE MIAMI

2024 AUGUST ELECTION VOTER GUIDE

**Miami-Dade County Mayor
School Board**

ELECTION DAY TUESDAY, AUGUST 20



Engage Miami is a nonprofit building the civic power of Gen-Z and millennials in South Florida through voter education, civic engagement, and advocacy.



OUR FUTURE, OUR VOTE.

Your Vote Matters! As young people in Florida, we understand the issues affecting our communities. This August, Miami-Dade County has important local elections, and it's up to voters like us to decide who will represent our community.

This voter guide breaks down where the Mayoral and School Board candidates stand on the issues that matter most to young people. Who you vote for is always private, but whether or not you vote is public record. We can't wait to see you on the list of voters this year!

Plan to Vote in Every Election. We are here to send you reminders for election deadlines, early and in-person voting locations, and information on your voting rights. You can bring our guide to the polls with you or use it as you fill out your Vote by Mail ballot.

EARLY VOTING SITES

- * Coral Gables Branch Library | 3443 Segovia Street
- * Coral Reef Branch Library | 9211 SW 152nd Street
- * Elections Department | 2700 NW 87th Avenue
- * FIU Student Academic Success Center | 11200 SW 8th Street
- * Historic Garage | 3250 S Miami Avenue
- * Homestead Community Center | 1601 N Krome Avenue
- * John F. Kennedy Library | 190 W 49th Street
- * Joseph Caleb Center, Community Meeting Room | 5400 NW 22nd Avenue, Building A
- * Kendall Branch Library | 9101 SW 97th Avenue
- * Little Haiti Cultural Complex | 212 NE 59th Terrace
- * Miami Beach City Hall | 1700 Convention Center Drive
- * Miami Dade College Kendall Campus at the Fascell Conference Center | 11011 SW 104th Street, Building K
- * Miami Dade College North Campus Library | 11380 NW 27th Avenue

WHAT'S YOUR PLAN TO VOTE?

Vote by Mail: Ballot must be received by the Elections Department by 7:00PM on Election Day.

Ballots must be requested by August 8. We recommend you mail or send in your completed ballot at least one week before the election. You can track your ballot online to make sure it is counted.

Note: Due to state legislation, previous vote by mail requests were canceled after the 2022 elections. Voters must re-enroll in vote by mail after every General Election.

Vote Early: Monday, August 5 through Sunday, August 18

Weekdays on August 05–09 from 7AM to 3PM

Weekdays on August 12–16 from 11AM to 7PM

Weekends on August 10–11 & 17–18 from 8AM to 4PM

Vote on Election Day: Tuesday, August 20 from 7AM to 7PM.

You must vote at your assigned voting location. You can look this up on your voter information card or at elections.myflorida.com.

- * Miami Lakes Community Center at the Mary Collins Community Center | 15151 NW 82nd Avenue
- * North Dade Regional Library | 2455 NW 183rd Street
- * North Miami Public Library | 835 NE 132nd Street
- * North Shore Branch Library | 7501 Collins Avenue
- * Northeast Dade-Aventura Branch Library | 2930 Aventura Boulevard
- * South Dade Regional Library | 10750 SW 211th Street
- * Stephen P. Clark Government Center (Lobby) | 111 NW 1st Street
- * West Kendall Regional Library | 10201 Hammocks Boulevard
- * West Miami Community Center | 901 SW 62nd Avenue
- * Westchester Regional Library | 9445 SW 24th Street

ROLES + POWER OF COUNTY MAYOR AND SCHOOL BOARD

Local government can have a huge impact on our everyday lives as City residents, sometimes more than state and national government, so it's important that we vote with our values in local elections and help our friends and family do the same! Our School Board and Mayor are nonpartisan offices, so you won't see a D or R next to their names on your ballot.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY MAYOR

The County Mayor oversees the everyday operations of Miami-Dade and appoints leaders to serve in county administration. They enforce the policies the Board of County Commission adopts and can veto decisions made by the Board of County Commissioners. They are also responsible for preparing the county budget for each fiscal year, overseeing an \$11 billion budget, and can make emergency decisions such as during flooding or hurricanes.

The County Mayor can serve two terms of four years each (for a total of eight years).

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

The School Board of Miami-Dade County has nine members who govern the third largest public school district in the U.S with about 350,000 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 \$7.4 billion budget and are in charge of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our students. **This year odd-numbered districts are up for election.**

OTHER OFFICES UP FOR ELECTION

United States Senate	Miami-Dade County	County Sheriff
United States House	Commission	Property Appraiser
Florida Senate	Clerk of Courts	Municipal Elections:
Florida House	Supervisor of Elections	Miami Gardens, Municipal Referendums

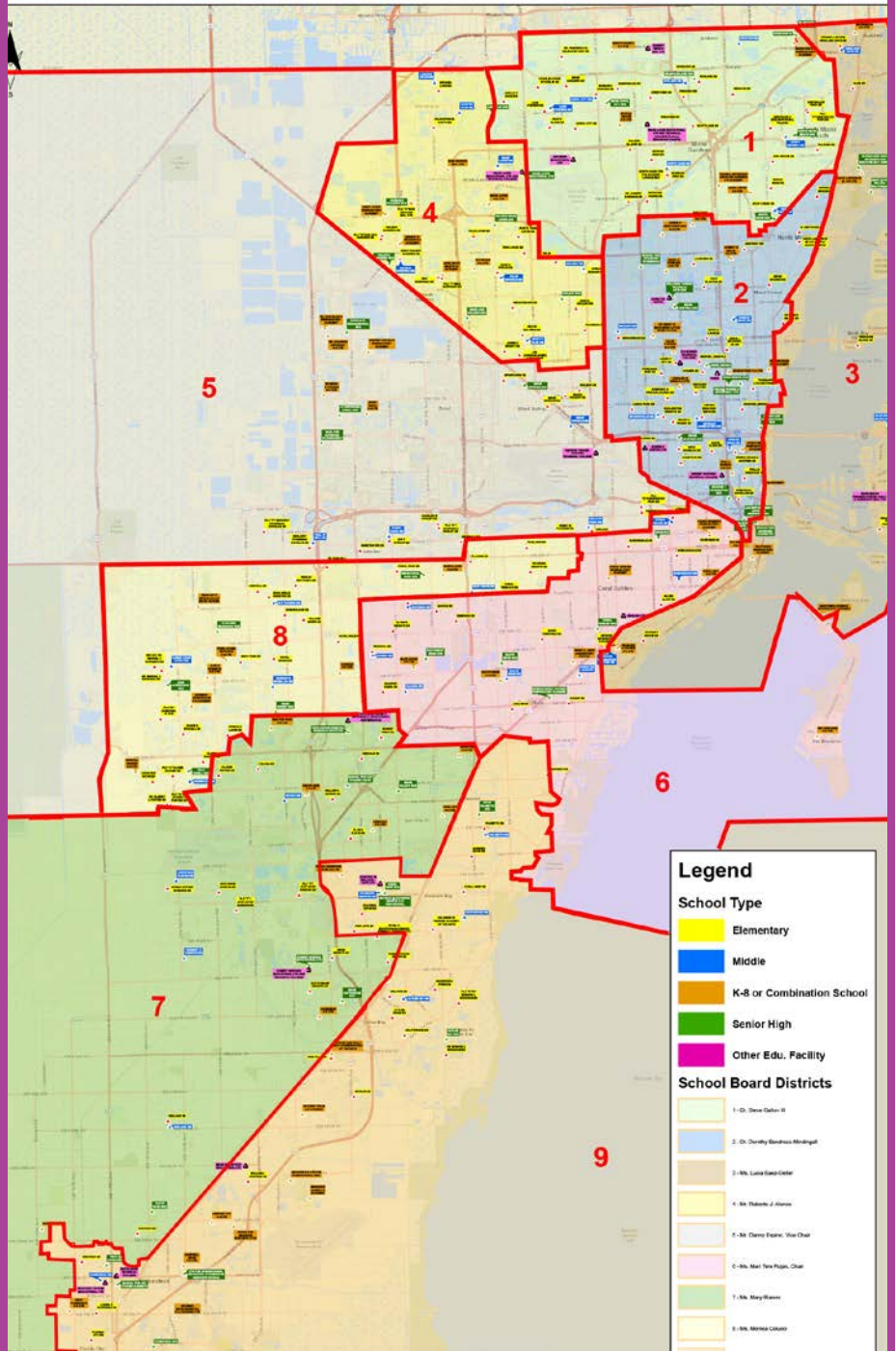
CLOSED PRIMARIES

If you're registered with a political party, you may see candidates for partisan primary races such as the State House and Senate. You can't vote in closed primaries if you're not registered with a party by the voter registration deadline, but everyone who is registered to vote can vote in nonpartisan elections. Voters have to be registered 29 days before an election.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

School Board Districts
2022 - 2023

Governor
Andrew
& La



WHAT'S IN YOUR GUIDE?

You can find responses from candidates for County Mayor and School Board Districts 3, 7, and 9 in this voter guide. The questionnaire responses were limited to 500 characters.

Some candidates who will appear on the ballot do not have their positions included in this guide because they did not submit responses or did not do so by the deadline provided. Only candidates who had raised and reported \$5,000 by July 5 were asked to respond to the questionnaire.

Please note this guide does not endorse or oppose any of the candidates for public office.



**PLEDGE TO ENGAGE
WITH US FOR MORE
ON HOW TO VOTE.**





MAYORAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

- * Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?
- * What are your thoughts on the current state of housing and rental costs in the County?
- * What do you believe the county's role should be when it comes to reducing emissions that are known to lead to climate change?
- * Do you believe the county should take action to protect Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration? If so, how would you lead on these issues if elected?
- * Do you believe the county should do more to increase civic participation and access to voting? If so, what initiatives or changes would you champion?
- * Do you believe that there is an issue with gun violence in our county? If so, what steps would you take to address gun violence in Miami-Dade County?
- * Do you believe the county should take action to increase mental health care access for residents? If so, what would be your priority to lead on this issue?
- * Do you believe the county should support job training and apprenticeship programs and help create green jobs? If so, what would be your priorities for developing a future-ready workforce?
- * What do you believe the county should prioritize when it comes to public transit infrastructure and services in Miami-Dade?
- * If elected, will you take actions to make Miami more walkable and bikeable? If so, what would those actions be?

Miami-Dade County Mayor Candidate Responses are included from: Daniella Levine Cava, Shlomo Danzinger, Alex Otaola, and Miguel Quintero. Manny Cid and Carlos Garin did not respond to our questionnaire. Eddy Rojas did not meet our eligibility criteria.

SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

- * Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?
- * Do you believe students and families currently have equitable access to well-resourced public schools across zip codes and neighborhoods in Miami-Dade?
- * Do you believe students have sufficient access to mental health services for students in schools? Why or why not?
- * What do you believe Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to sex education in school curriculum?
- * Do you believe LGBTQ students currently feel safe and supported in Miami-Dade County Public Schools? What would be your priorities in addressing this issue?
- * Do you believe there is potential for Miami-Dade County Public Schools to reduce punitive disciplinary approaches? What approach would you take to improve disciplinary measures and procedures?
- * If elected, would you recommend Miami-Dade County Public Schools strengthen access to voter registration and education for students?
- * What do you believe should Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to retaining and supporting teachers, as well as recruiting well-qualified educators?
- * What are your thoughts on the topic of book bans and removal of subject matter from curricula? What concerns would you like to have addressed?
- * What would be your priorities when it comes to addressing funding and budget concerns in our public school system?

School Board District 3 Candidate Responses are included from: Joseph 'Joe' Geller and Brent Latham. Martin Karp and Hayley Ross did not respond to our questionnaire. Gustavo Ortega did not meet our eligibility criteria.

School Board District 7 Candidate Responses are included from: Javier 'Javi' Perez and Maxeme 'Max' Tuchman. Mary Blanco did not respond to our questionnaire.

School Board District 9 Candidate Responses are included from: Luisa Santos. Kimberly T. Beltran did not respond to our questionnaire.

DANIELLA LEVINE CAVA

Miami-Dade County Mayor



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

Three years ago I took office & made a promise to build a government that listens, responds, and innovates for the future, and we got right to work. I'm proud of what we've accomplished together, tackling the issues that matter most to Miami-Dade, from affordability to housing and transit, supporting our workers & small businesses, protecting the environment, & so much more. I'm running for reelection to continue this important work, and to continue delivering results for you and your families.

What are your thoughts on the current state of housing and rental costs in the County?

In April 2022 I declared a housing affordability crisis and we developed numerous affordable and workforce housing solutions, committing \$256 million and \$80 million in grants, with 32,000 new units in the pipeline including 18,000 units added under my administration. I protected 26,000 households from eviction and created our first-ever Office of Housing Advocacy. We'll continue to find ways to provide residents with relief and find innovative solutions for this pressing issue.

What do you believe the county's role should be when it comes to reducing emissions that are known to lead to climate change?

The county must be a leader in reducing emissions. We're ground zero for the impacts of climate change. We are preparing for challenges ahead with \$1.5 billion my administration secured for infrastructure including major solar and electric vehicle installations, and conversion of our county's bus fleet to electric. I released the Miami-Dade Climate Action Plan in 2021 outlining our plan to become net zero by 2050. We brought shore power to Port Miami to ensure cleaner air and reduced emissions.

Do you believe the county should take action to protect Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration? If so, how would you lead on these issues if elected?

Absolutely. I'm a proud "Water Warrior" and am committed to protecting Biscayne Bay and the Everglades for the future of our county, and for the sake of our health & economy. That's why I established a Chief Bay Officer and secured \$1.5 billion in federal and state funding for infrastructure and resilience, including funding for Everglades restoration, septic-to-sewer conversions, tree planting, and clean energy transition programs. The Army Corps partners on many of these.

Do you believe the county should do more to increase civic participation and access to voting? If so, what initiatives or changes would you champion?

Our community is strongest when residents' voices are heard. I created THRIVE 305, the largest public engagement initiative in Miami-Dade County history. The guiding principle behind it is simple – government works best when it's driven, informed, and led by the people it represents. Through THRIVE 305, we exponentially increased public participation in the budget process and created offices of Engagement and Resident Services.

Do you believe that there is an issue with gun violence in our county? If so, what steps would you take to address gun violence in Miami-Dade County?

I'm proud that Miami-Dade has one of the lowest gun violence rates of major metro areas and we've taken over 3,000 illegal guns off the street. However, we know certain communities are disproportionately impacted by gun violence and I'm committed to addressing this issue through investment and community collaboration. Our "Peace and Prosperity" plan focuses on prevention, hiring and mentoring at-risk youth, and building resident trust, so they can help us solve and prevent violent crimes.

Do you believe the county should take action to increase mental health care access for residents? If so, what would be your priority to lead on this issue?

As a social worker I am and have been a longtime champion for mental health services. At the county we created a Behavioral Health Advisory Board with members from our schools, prisons, and police departments, whose aim is to improve mental health in our county. We're opening a new Mental Health facility to help take the mentally ill off our streets and out of jails. My administration also created the MDPD Crisis Response Unit, pairing mental health providers with law enforcement.

Do you believe the county should support job training and apprenticeship programs and help create green jobs? If so, what would be your priorities for developing a future-ready workforce?

Absolutely. I worked with the public schools to create a pipeline for good-paying jobs through new internship and apprenticeship opportunities – including paid summer internships through the County. We launched the Miami-Dade County Innovation Authority to empower local companies to solve community issues while building lasting careers. We just received nearly \$20 million in funding for our South Florida Climate Ready Tech Hub that will bring more good-paying, green jobs to Miami-Dade.

What do you believe the county should prioritize when it comes to public transit infrastructure and services in Miami-Dade?

World-class communities need world-class transit. Since 2022, my administration has brought down approximately \$1.5 billion in federal and state grant funding to enhance much-needed infrastructure. We have secured over \$250 million proposed in this year's federal budget for the Northeast Corridor and \$100 million to rehabilitate the deteriorating Venetian Causeway. We are also investing nearly \$9 billion at our Miami International Airport for maintenance and capital improvements.

If elected, will you take actions to make Miami more walkable and bikeable? If so, what would those actions be?

I introduced the C.A.V.A Plan to create a better connected Miami-Dade. The second A stands for Advancing Pedestrians as priority, and over my last term my administration has achieved this, launching Vision Zero. We worked with the National Association of City Transportation to develop standards to prioritize pedestrians, transforming street designs for their safety. In the coming years, we expect an overhaul of our County's bike safety with the development of over 30 miles of bike lanes.

SHLOMO DANZINGER

Miami-Dade County Mayor



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

As the mayor of Surfside, one of Miami-Dade County's 34 municipalities, it was necessary for me to collaborate with the county on various projects and initiatives. During this time, I, along with many other municipal leaders, encountered a county mayor who was unresponsive to the needs of her municipalities. My goal is to open a line of communication and foster cooperation, ensuring that the county provides the necessary resources to address the unique needs of our diverse communities.

What are your thoughts on the current state of housing and rental costs in the County?

The housing and rental crisis we are facing is not due to a lack of available properties, but rather to their affordability. This is clear from the numerous vacant properties across Miami-Dade. The high costs are driven by our steep taxes and increasingly unaffordable insurance rates. These soaring expenses impact current homeowners and extend to prospective buyers and renters. Additionally, the rising costs of materials are forcing developers to increase prices to cover their expenses.

What do you believe the county's role should be when it comes to reducing emissions that are known to lead to climate change?

I believe cultivating economic growth will foster the innovation and ingenuity needed to create real solutions. However, the County can also improve by being mindful of its environmental impact and taking steps to reduce its carbon footprint. For example, when updating the county fleet, prioritizing hybrid and energy-efficient vehicles whenever possible is a good first step. This approach ensures that the County maintains its expected services while promoting sustainability.

Do you believe the county should take action to protect Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration? If so, how would you lead on these issues if elected?

Absolutely! The initial priority is halting the environmental harm inflicted by Miami-Dade County on Biscayne Bay. The county currently ranks as the leading polluter of the bay due to recurring spills from its Waste Management plants. Moving forward, collaboration with our State partners is crucial. The State legislature allocates billions toward safeguarding the Everglades and natural waterways, and Miami-Dade County must take a leading role in these critical conservation efforts.

Do you believe the county should do more to increase civic participation and access to voting? If so, what initiatives or

changes would you champion?

I don't think most people grasp the profound influence local government wields in their daily lives. While many turn out to vote in presidential elections, few could name their local legislators. Education and active engagement are pivotal for boosting civic participation. During my tenure as mayor, I established a Youth Council to engage students in municipal affairs. As a County leader, I would create additional avenues for residents to actively participate in shaping local governance.

Do you believe that there is an issue with gun violence in our county? If so, what steps would you take to address gun violence in Miami-Dade County?

Supporting law enforcement is crucial for maintaining a civilized society based on law and order. Many cities have faced serious repercussions after leaders advocated for defunding the police, leading to higher crime rates and diminished societal well-being. The tragic increase in mass shootings is often linked to mental illness rather than the availability of guns. Enhancing our mental health interventions is essential for effectively addressing this challenge.

Do you believe the county should take action to increase mental health care access for residents? If so, what would be your priority to lead on this issue?

Absolutely! During COVID-19, many people were profoundly affected mentally due to isolation. Improving access to mental health treatment will significantly enhance the safety and well-being of Miami-Dade County residents. Currently, the county spends hundreds of millions of dollars addressing the consequences of mental illness, such as substance abuse, homelessness, and violent crimes. Instead, we need to shift our focus towards preventive measures rather than continually treating the outcomes.

Do you believe the county should support job training and apprenticeship programs and help create green jobs? If so, what would be your priorities for developing a future-ready workforce?

The 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees every American the right to a public education. I believe the government must effectively allocate tax resources to ensure adequate funding for our educational system. This support creates an environment where residents can access the education needed to enter the workforce and sustain themselves and their families. I would also advocate for internship programs within the county to enhance practical experience and skill development.

What do you believe the county should prioritize when it comes to public transit infrastructure and services in Miami-Dade?

In recent years, Florida has seen an annual influx of over 300k new residents, overwhelming our current infrastructure. This surge has made traffic and transportation increasingly difficult. Beyond necessary infrastructure upgrades, we can start improving the situation by better coordinating DOT road closures and enforcing regulations at construction sites. Currently, there is insufficient oversight of ongoing projects, contributing significantly to today's congestion issues.

If elected, will you take actions to make Miami more walkable and bikeable? If so, what would those actions be?

As mayor of Surfside, my top priority was enhancing pedestrian safety and promoting walkability. Our residential area lacked sidewalks, forcing pedestrians to share the road with traffic. I believe walkability is crucial for fostering a healthy and connected community, but it must prioritize safety. As county mayor, I would advocate for all future projects to prioritize the development of safe pedestrian walkways and bike paths to ensure the well-being and convenience of all residents.

ALEX OTAOLA

Miami-Dade County Mayor



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

I believe in our community's potential. My years as a political influencer and human rights defender have shown me the challenges and strengths of our residents. My activism, especially against communism, has equipped me with the resilience, determination, and strategic thinking needed to lead. I am committed to fostering freedom, economic growth, and individual rights. My background prepares me to be an effective advocate for our county's residents, ensuring their voices and needs are heard.

What are your thoughts on the current state of housing and rental costs in the County?

Housing and rental costs in Miami-Dade are critical issues. Skyrocketing prices strain families. As Mayor, I'll prioritize affordable housing and balance property owners' and renters' needs. We must address root causes like zoning regulations and land availability to create sustainable solutions for all residents.

What do you believe the county's role should be when it comes to reducing emissions that are known to lead to climate change?

Miami-Dade must reduce emissions and combat climate change. Our location makes us vulnerable to sea level rise and extreme weather. The county should lead with green initiatives, renewable energy investments, enhanced public transportation, and eco-friendly practices to protect the environment, improve health, and ensure a resilient future.

Do you believe the county should take action to protect Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration? If so, how would you lead on these issues if elected?

Protecting Biscayne Bay and advancing Everglades restoration is crucial. I'll champion pollution reduction, water quality improvement, and habitat restoration. This includes stricter runoff regulations, better monitoring, enforcement, and increased restoration funding. Collaboration with agencies and communities will be key to success.

Do you believe the county should do more to increase civic participation and access to voting? If so, what initiatives or changes would you champion?

Increasing civic participation and voting access is fundamental. I'll advocate for extended early voting, more polling locations, and better voting information. Supporting automatic voter registration and outreach programs will engage underrepresented communities. Making voting accessible and

encouraging civic engagement will strengthen democracy.

Do you believe that there is an issue with gun violence in our county? If so, what steps would you take to address gun violence in Miami-Dade County?

Gun violence is a significant concern in Miami-Dade County, and addressing it requires a multifaceted approach. I will prioritize enhancing community policing efforts, increasing funding for violence prevention programs, and supporting initiatives that provide alternatives for at-risk youth. Collaborating with law enforcement, community leaders, and mental health professionals will be crucial in creating comprehensive strategies to reduce gun violence and improve public safety.

Do you believe the county should take action to increase mental health care access for residents? If so, what would be your priority to lead on this issue?

Increasing mental health care access is essential. I'll prioritize expanding services, integrating mental health into primary care, and increasing funding for community programs. Advocacy for mental health education and awareness campaigns will reduce stigma and encourage seeking help, supporting overall community health.

Do you believe the county should support job training and apprenticeship programs and help create green jobs? If so, what would be your priorities for developing a future-ready workforce?

Supporting job training and apprenticeships, especially in the green economy, is vital. I'll partner with businesses, educational institutions, and unions for comprehensive training aligning with green job market needs. Investing in renewable energy, sustainable construction, and conservation will foster a skilled workforce, promoting economic growth and sustainability.

What do you believe the county should prioritize when it comes to public transit infrastructure and services in Miami-Dade?

Improving public transit is crucial for reducing traffic, lowering emissions, and enhancing mobility. I'll prioritize expanding and modernizing our transit network, increasing service frequency and reliability, and ensuring accessibility. Investing in transit-oriented development and integrating buses, trains, and bicycles will improve residents' quality of life and promote sustainable urban development.

If elected, will you take actions to make Miami more walkable and bikeable? If so, what would those actions be?

Making Miami more walkable and bikeable is a priority. I'll advocate for expanding pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks, crosswalks, and plazas.

Supporting comprehensive bike lane networks and bike-sharing programs is key. Implementing complete streets policies will prioritize safety and convenience for all users, creating a vibrant, connected community.

MIGUEL QUINTERO

Miami-Dade County Mayor



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

I'm running for office because I'm tired of the lack of transparency and accountability among our employees we elect to manage our money and our services. I'm tired of the spin and out-right lies. I'm tired of the awful service when interacting with public officials. I'm tired. We keep hearing customer service. This isn't McDonalds. Legislative Immunity protects these criminals from being held accountable. That can only change from the top. That's called an honesty-slap, BTW. Vote Aug 20th.

What are your thoughts on the current state of housing and rental costs in the County?

Housing and Rental costs are a manifestation of this current administration. They make it ever more difficult to allow for construction of residential homes. This is to inflate the already ballooning property values so more money comes in via taxes from new home owners who need a break. Need proof? Why hasn't the incinerator been built? Because the current administration knows a state law will prevent new home permits and that will make some rich, and others poor. Rich get richer. Vote Aug 20th.

What do you believe the county's role should be when it comes to reducing emissions that are known to lead to climate change?

The county should be leading the charge. Our leaders should be on the front lines. You'll hear the current administration say the same thing, while being fined for allowing sewage from our county facilities to spill into our ocean waters. What else do you hear from this administration? The blame is on residents' septic systems. No. We've established they are liars. The blame is with the current administration that thinks you, reading this, are an idiot. Are they right? Vote Aug 20th.

Do you believe the county should take action to protect Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration? If so, how would you lead on these issues if elected?

I absolutely believe the county should take action to protect Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration. So does the state of Florida. Miami Herald has articles on all this. How? Simple. Use our plethora of tax dollars to repair our aging facilities. What a novel idea. There is 15 million sqft of county owned lands in Deering Estates right in the current mayor's back yard where the incinerator can go. Perfect location. Doral is no longer an option. You know, health issues and all. Vote Aug 20th.

Do you believe the county should do more to increase civic participation and access to voting? If so, what initiatives or

changes would you champion?

I would teach residents everyday how government is working for them or against them. I will grant access to all public records and explain them like I would to a child. Because I'm a man-child. I take the KISS approach (Keep It Simple, Stupid). First thing I do is put a live camera in the mayor's office because it's not my office it's your office and you should know what your employee is doing. See? Easy. Voting should always be accessible and easy. It's a right, not a privilege. Vote Aug 20th.

Do you believe that there is an issue with gun violence in our county? If so, what steps would you take to address gun violence in Miami-Dade County?

There is absolutely an issue with gun violence. We law abiding citizens are continually denied the right to defend ourselves. Guns are dangerous. People are dangerous. Dangerous people with guns is the issue. Good people with guns is the solution. Police do their best, but can't always be there. You have a constitutional right to protect yourselves. Don't be an idiot. Learn how to properly handle/carry/operate/secure your guns. Your life and everyone else's life depends on it. Vote Aug 20th.

Do you believe the county should take action to increase mental health care access for residents? If so, what would be your priority to lead on this issue?

Depending on who you ask, everyone could be viewed as having mental health issues. Especially you, reading this. As you get older you become Red Foreman walking around repeating the phrase, "Dumb Ass." That's probably why it's increasing? Jokes aside, it is an issue. It's an issue that must be discussed and addressed. Now, are you willing to give the government 15% of your earnings aside from all other taxes to this issue? There is definitely a solution, and it ain't cheap. Vote Aug 20th.

Do you believe the county should support job training and apprenticeship programs and help create green jobs? If so, what would be your priorities for developing a future-ready workforce?

Again, you know why everything is so expensive? Because you want to rely on government to solve your problems. Government is a referee, not your daddy. You want help, vote for politicians who even the playing field so you can get your asses out there and choose your education. Education is a right, not a privilege. Tell me, is education financially accessible for you? You ever try roofing? Then why keep voting for the same BS? workforce? You are not a robot. Be who you want to be. Vote Aug 20th.

What do you believe the county should prioritize when it comes to public transit infrastructure and services in Miami-Dade?

Public transit is the most important engine in any thriving economy. That said, consider this, the actual cost every time someone jumps on a bus is north of \$15, including subsidies from taxes. When was the last time you took a bus? Now, what if we did ride sharing instead of buses where 50 miles a day are paid by taxes? Talk about a program that benefits all? Drunk driving? Mitigated. No car? No problem. More jobs? Yes, please. I have a great solution. More on that later. Vote Aug 20th.

If elected, will you take actions to make Miami more walkable and bikeable? If so, what would those actions be?

Nothing like the smell of a sweaty speed walker or bicyclist in the morning. What distance are we talking? How do we pass laws for heat protection and then say, get out there and pound that pavement, champ. Flat tire? Awe, so sad. Walk!!! Oh no, you're dead, heat stroke. Seriously, what do you expect? Welcome to Miami! You now live in an oven. Eff the gym. And now you are engaged. Welcome to civic participation. Government sure is looking more fun, now. Don't be a Dumb Ass. Vote Aug 20th.

AUDREY M. EDMONSON

County Commission District 3

Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

As the former District 3 County Commissioner known for my ability to get things done, I am running to reclaim my seat and continue fighting for the residents I'm proud to represent. My extensive experience serving in this role from 2005-2020 has demonstrated that I am an effective public servant. I was even elected to serve as Board Chair. With my deep community-focused leadership, I'm ready to hit the ground running to address the critical issues that have only worsened since my departure.

What are your thoughts on the current state of housing and rental costs in the County?

Housing affordability continues to be a major critical concern that I am deeply committed to addressing. During my time as Commissioner, I worked to secure funding for affordable housing, reform zoning policies, and explore partnerships. However, skyrocketing costs have forced too many families out. If re-elected, I will renew efforts to implement solutions that significantly expand attainable options for all income levels.

What do you believe the county's role should be when it comes to reducing emissions that are known to lead to climate change

As an Edgewater/East Side resident, environmental protection has been a key focus. I've advocated for bold action to reduce emissions and transition to renewable energy, including electrifying the county fleet and investing in public transit. If re-elected, I will leverage my experience to secure funding and partnerships to drive critical sustainability initiatives forward. Safeguarding natural resources like Biscayne Bay is a moral imperative I am deeply committed to.

Do you believe the county should take action to protect Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration? If so, how would you lead on these issues if elected?

Absolutely. Protecting the health of Biscayne Bay and the Everglades is crucial to our community. As Commissioner, I championed solutions to address pollution and restore habitats through strengthened partnerships, holding UDB line and regulations. I also I will continue these efforts if re-elected, leveraging my experience and relationships to drive these initiatives forward and ensure long-term sustainability of our precious natural resources.

Do you believe the county should do more to increase civic participation and access to voting? If so, what initiatives or changes would you champion?

If re-elected, I will champion a multi-pronged approach to further expand civic participation. This will include working closely with the newly elected Elections Supervisor to develop strategies that increase access to the polls, such as expanding early voting sites and providing comprehensive multilingual voting resources as well as advocate for the county to invest in robust civic education programs that empower residents, to get more involved through voter registration drives.

Do you believe that there is an issue with gun violence in our county? If so, what steps would you take to address gun violence in Miami-Dade County?

During my time as Commissioner, I supported legislation to strengthen background checks and disrupt illegal firearms. I also developed a program with the assistance of community representatives and community agencies to address the violence in our county, which was absolutely working. I will work to expand funding for community-based violence intervention programs, enhance access to mental health services, and bolster youth development initiatives.

Do you believe the county should take action to increase mental health care access for residents? If so, what would be your priority to lead on this issue?

Improving access to quality, affordable mental health care is a critical priority I have championed. I will advocate for increased county funding to expand community-based services and strengthen partnerships to address systemic barriers. Tackling this crisis is both a moral and public safety imperative that requires bold, coordinated action.

Do you believe the county should support job training and apprenticeship programs and help create green jobs? If so, what would be your priorities for developing a future-ready workforce?

Absolutely. Investing in workforce development is key to building a more prosperous, equitable Miami-Dade. My priorities will be expanding partnerships to develop robust career pathways in a variety of high-demand fields, while also making these programs accessible to underserved communities. I will also champion initiatives that connect residents to training and apprenticeships across diverse industries to ensure all have access to quality, family-sustaining jobs.

What do you believe the county should prioritize when it comes to public transit infrastructure and services in Miami-Dade?

Improving public transportation is critical for enhancing mobility, reducing congestion, and improving our overall community's quality of life. My priorities will be securing funding, improving connectivity, and electrifying the fleet to promote sustainability. Delivering a world-class transit system is key to the future of Distric and the Miami Dade County.

If elected, will you take actions to make Miami more walkable and bikeable? If so, what would those actions be?

Absolutely. I believe making our communities more walkable and bikeable is essential. I will champion investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure like protected lanes, safer crosswalks, and expanded greenways. I will also work to integrate these multimodal improvements with transit to create a people-first transportation network. My goal is to transform District 3 and Miami-Dade into places where residents can safely choose to walk, bike, or take transit.

CINDY LERNER

County Commission District 7

Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

As a Guardian ad Litem attorney, serving as a State Representative and as Mayor of Pinecrest, always committed to be a voice for the community's interests and not special interests. We face many critical issues the county must encourage collaboration and make investments to address housing, transit, impacts of climate change, and economic opportunities. My focus has been on engaging constituents being impacted by policies, and budgetary decisions to assure we plan for the future together.

What are your thoughts on the current state of housing and rental costs in the County?

Housing has become unaffordable for the majority of residents. Major developments are popping up throughout the county, whether high rise condominiums, new homes or apartments, but their price point is beyond the budget of most working families. The county must prioritize incentivizing a more creative model such as innovative strategies of affordable housing, ideas from Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. Prefab housing, congregate dorm style housing could be added.

What do you believe the county's role should be when it comes to reducing emissions that are known to lead to climate change?

The county must design a county wide GHG emissions reduction plan, bringing all 34 municipalities together, rather than leaving each city to its own efforts. We must invest and increase transit options, especially in the western part of the county, and design connectivity. The county should also provide more EV charging infrastructure at every county building and park and require it at every new residential and office building. And County building codes must require GHG reductions in HVAC.

Do you believe the county should take action to protect Biscayne Bay and Everglades restoration? If so, how would you lead on these issues if elected?

The county must invest in a more aggressive schedule for maintaining and upgrading sewer lines that continue to burst and pollute, and to expand the sewer lines to allow more septic conversions. At present the county has a 20 year timeline for conversion from septic to sewer results in a constant cycle of pollution. The State must continue investing in Everglades restoration and wetlands protection and the County must prevent development and protect the UDB from any expansion.

Do you believe the county should do more to increase civic participation and access to voting? If so, what initiatives or changes would you champion?

There are many opportunities for Civic participation, including District level advisory groups for Youth, as I initiated while Mayor of Pinecrest, creating a Youth Advisory Council of middle and high school students who learned how their own local government worked, and acted as youth ambassadors ,leading youth led series of summits and speakers. I would do the same as a Commissioner and seek to have it replicated in each district. A District youth councils would focus on voter registration.

Do you believe that there is an issue with gun violence in our county? If so, what steps would you take to address gun violence in Miami-Dade County?

State and federal laws continue to allow easy access to guns and make it impossible for the County to enact prohibitions. However providing more extensive gun safety and anti gun violence education in schools is a start. Banning gun shows on county property , providing more buy back opportunities will reduce such easy access. And most important is to provide community based job apprenticeships and job training opportunities that provide a pathway to economic security than crimes or gangs.

Do you believe the county should take action to increase mental health care access for residents? If so, what would be your priority to lead on this issue?

The county must increase access to mental health care, by working with national Mental health organizations such as NAMI to identify funding for community based health centers to provide mental health services, more resources could be expanded through schools, and through telehealth to provide more counseling services. I had the opportunity to speak to the US Surgeon General recently about the importance of federal funding and grants to come to local government, and NGO not to the state.

Do you believe the county should support job training and apprenticeship programs and help create green jobs? If so, what would be your priorities for developing a future-ready workforce?

The County should collaborate with the vocational training programs at local schools to increase needed trained workforce such as transit and healthcare. I have been focused on growing a climate ready economy since I was Mayor of Pinecrest and created a Climate Action Plan for Pinecrest . We must create a Resilience Think Tank to create innovate solutions addressing Sea level rise , expand Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles and be the Solar industry capital of the South east and Caribbean.

What do you believe the county should prioritize when it comes to public transit infrastructure and services in Miami-Dade?

The implementation of the Better Bus Network, though important to provide community input and updating was underfunded and caused the elimination of some important bus routes, depriving access in some parts of the county.

They must be restored. There must be more connectivity between bus routes and local circulators. Metro mover must be extended to create more frequent transit options for western parts of the county must have increased transit services , including West Kendall and to FIU.

If elected, will you take actions to make Miami more walkable and bikeable? If so, what would those actions be?

I would assure the County and other investments necessary to assure completion of the Commodore trail and the Ludlum Trail, with safety being the first priority in all planning decisions, and encourage public input, which is essential to good planning. Using planning tools such as Safe Routes to schools is an important resource for localities. This includes assuring sidewalks and pathways are connected, and are well lit to allow safe use in the evenings.

BRENT W LATHAM

School Board District 3



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

I have spent much of my career helping others. As a Peace Corps volunteer, a director of non-profit agencies abroad and at home, and now as an elected official, I seek out chances to serve and improve my community.

Do you believe students and families currently have equitable access to well-resourced public schools across zip codes and neighborhoods in Miami-Dade?

No, I do not. It's obvious with a cursory glance that not all public schools are created equal, or have equal access to resources. Current policies of subsidizing for profit businesses running charter schools, and private schools, are only slanting the playing field more.

Do you believe students have sufficient access to mental health services for students in schools? Why or why not?

No they do not. Recurring incidents of bullying and violence are evidence that we are not providing sufficient mental health resources. The teenage years especially are formative years for mental health, and our schools can do more to help our kids in this area.

What do you believe Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to sex education in school curriculum?

Priority in sex ed should be on biology, education on STDs, health and wellness, overall well being.

Do you believe LGBTQ students currently feel safe and supported in Miami-Dade County Public Schools? What would be your priorities in addressing this issue?

Not across the board, though hopefully the situation is improving. LGBTQ students can face particular challenges in counseling and support suited to their needs, and more resources need to be dedicated to providing such tailored support.

Do you believe there is potential for Miami-Dade County Public Schools to reduce punitive disciplinary approaches? What approach would you take to improve disciplinary measures and procedures?

Discipline should be constructive rather than punitive. We need disciplinary procedures that help correct and reintroduce students to school life, rather than sidelining or excluding them.

If elected, would you recommend Miami-Dade County Public Schools strengthen access to voter registration and education for students?

Civics and social studies are core areas that are being politicized and moved away from in the current environment. Our schools have no higher duty than to create civic-minded citizens who can contribute to our community and society. Voter registration and education -- without a political spin -- are core parts of accomplishing that.

What do you believe should Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to retaining and supporting teachers, as well as recruiting well-qualified educators?

In addition to the very obvious answer of better pay, where resources can be obtained, there are other approaches that may help to attract and retain qualified teachers. A pay system that prioritizes achievement and longevity to a much greater extent than current would be an important start. Also, bringing to bear resources to provide needed extras such as housing and transportation would be important to enhancing overall pay packages.

What are your thoughts on the topic of book bans and removal of subject matter from curricula? What concerns would you like to have addressed?

In general books and curricula should always be age appropriate, which is obvious. Beyond that, school is a time by definition to learn, and book bans in general run counter current to the freedom to learn. Teachers and principals must have wide latitude to choose the appropriate materials. A situation in which a small number of activists are determining which materials cannot be used through administrative action is not tenable or useful to society.

What would be your priorities when it comes to addressing funding and budget concerns in our public school system?

The school system in Miami-Dade is a \$9 billion/year enterprise, so from a point of departure, resources are plentiful relative to many other things. We must start by preserving those resources for the public school system, and utilizing them wisely. Next, we must be creative and energetic about engaging our community to find new sources of collaboration and partnership to provide access to new resources, in unconventional ways that support our teachers, students and families.

JOSEPH “JOE “ GELLER

School Board District 3



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

I am unhappy with the direction of the school board, banning books, teaching fake history and targeting vulnerable kids. We need to protect our children, parents, teachers and staff, keep politics out of the classroom, and focus on giving kids the best possible education. As the father of a high school senior, this is personal to me. I served for 8 years in the State House, including on the Education Committee and the K-8 subcommittee, and was able to pass a strong anti-bullying bill into law.

Do you believe students and families currently have equitable access to well-resourced public schools across zip codes and neighborhoods in Miami-Dade?

I do not. We must do more to make sure all students have access to quality educational opportunities. The public schools are a tremendous equalizing opportunity for everyone, but only when they function as intended. Our magnet school program is among the best in the country, and that's a step in the right direction, but it's not enough. We have to try innovative approaches, including principal effectiveness training, and allowing students to attend schools at diverse locations when possible.

Do you believe students have sufficient access to mental health services for students in schools? Why or why not?

I do not. We woefully underserve students in providing mental health, and all health services. Students face many challenges in our society, including hostility from our state government. The prevalence of gun violence in our society is frightening for students, and so is the attempt to restrict reproductive rights. LGBTQ and trans kids are targeted, as are immigrants, black and brown kids, and as always, poor kids. While we solve these problems, we must provide more mental health resources.

What do you believe Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to sex education in school curriculum?

Most important is teaching the truth, not someone's personal morality or religion. Students need to be able to rely on what they're taught in school, not on someone else's agenda. Also, students must be taught how to stay safe and avoid unwanted pregnancies. In addition, students should be taught how to avoid the spread of disease. All of these things are possible if we simply teach the truth in our classrooms. Our children are entitled to the truth, and to our protection and assistance.

Do you believe LGBTQ students currently feel safe and supported in Miami-Dade County Public Schools? What would be your priorities

in addressing this issue?

I do not. The recent defeat of the LGBTQ+ History proclamation only underscores the increasing problem in our schools. I attended the School Board meeting where the issue was debated, and I spoke out in favor of the proclamation. We must reverse policies targeting vulnerable students, like LGBTQ+ and trans kids, and provide a safe and supportive environment. I passed a bill into law while I was in the House that improved anti-bullying policies. We must do more to protect our vulnerable students.

Do you believe there is potential for Miami-Dade County Public Schools to reduce punitive disciplinary approaches? What approach would you take to improve disciplinary measures and procedures?

Yes. We do need discipline in our schools, but it should be supportive and not punitive. It must be designed to correct unhealthy and unproductive behaviors, not to punish already struggling students. We need a more productive and proactive approach designed to benefit students, not further alienate them. New approaches should yield fresh results. We need to try to develop these new methods to actually help improve student outcomes.

If elected, would you recommend Miami-Dade County Public Schools strengthen access to voter registration and education for students?

Yes. An educated citizenry is essential to the maintenance of democracy. We need more civics education in our schools. Voter registration opportunities for students are only a first step. We must provide students with the knowledge necessary for them to be informed citizens. We need a curriculum that engages students in the study of how to participate in governing themselves and teaches them how to make wise decisions in doing so. Our focus on civics and democracy will yield better citizens.

What do you believe should Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to retaining and supporting teachers, as well as recruiting well-qualified educators?

Raising salaries is the most important thing, but certainly not the only thing. We must be sure that we reward long-time quality teachers for their service while we continue raising starting salaries for new teachers. We also must ensure that teachers are treated with respect as professionals. We must convince citizens that we are using the resources they have already given us wisely and efficiently. These are among the reasons why the United Teachers of Dade have endorsed me in this election.

What are your thoughts on the topic of book bans and removal of subject matter from curricula? What concerns would you like to have addressed?

I am totally opposed to banning books. Making books unavailable to students is the functional equivalent of banning books. Altering curriculum to meet preconceived political goals is also totally unacceptable. We have to teach real history, even when that makes people uncomfortable. The pressure on textbook publishers to alter their content leads to inaccurate and inappropriate educational content. Parents have rights, but individual parents do not have the unilateral right to dictate content.

What would be your priorities when it comes to addressing funding and budget concerns in our public school system?

We need more resources, but we need to spend what we have efficiently and wisely before we ask citizens to give us additional resources. As a legislator, I fought for more money, as well as a fairer formula for distributing resources. I'll continue to lead that struggle as a school board member. We must also seek new solutions to budget problems. I support the installation of solar panels on our school properties to reduce energy costs. I also want to look at surplus properties to raise money.

JAVIER “JAVI” PEREZ

School Board District 7



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

I am running for the school board because I have 29 years of experience in education and a deep commitment to improving our school system. I am passionate about ensuring every student has access to quality education and the resources they need to succeed. My experience and understanding of our community's needs uniquely qualify me to make a positive impact.

Do you believe students and families currently have equitable access to well-resourced public schools across zip codes and neighborhoods in Miami-Dade?

There are significant disparities in resources, facilities, and educational opportunities available to students, depending on where they live.

Addressing these inequities requires a concerted effort to ensure that all students, regardless of their zip code, have access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. This includes equitable funding models, targeted support for underserved schools, and policies that promote fairness and inclusivity in education.

Do you believe students have sufficient access to mental health services for students in schools? Why or why not?

I believe that the access has improved in the last few years, but there is still a significant stigma associated with seeking mental health support, which can prevent students from accessing available services.

Teachers and staff may not be adequately trained to recognize and address mental health issues. There is also a need for more resources and support systems within schools to ensure students receive the help they need.

What do you believe Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to sex education in school curriculum?

Ensure the curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including human development, relationships and personal skills. This helps students understand the physical, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

Provide information that is suitable for different age groups.

Include information that is relevant to all students, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or cultural background.

Do you believe LGBTQ students currently feel safe and supported in Miami-Dade County Public Schools? What would be your priorities in addressing this issue?

While progress has been made, I believe there is still work to be done to ensure that LGBTQ students feel completely safe and supported in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Many LGBTQ students continue to face challenges such as bullying, discrimination, and lack of understanding from peers.

Provide training for teachers, administrators, and staff on LGBTQ issues, inclusive practices, and how to support LGBTQ students.

Do you believe there is potential for Miami-Dade County Public Schools to reduce punitive disciplinary approaches? What approach would you take to improve disciplinary measures and procedures?

Yes, I believe there is significant potential for Miami-Dade County Public Schools to reduce punitive disciplinary approaches and adopt more restorative and supportive measures. Punitive approaches often do not address the root causes of behavioral issues and can disproportionately affect marginalized students.

If elected, would you recommend Miami-Dade County Public Schools strengthen access to voter registration and education for students?

Yes, I would strongly recommend that Miami-Dade County Public Schools strengthen access to voter registration and education for students. Encouraging civic engagement and political awareness is crucial for fostering responsible and informed citizens.

- Host Voter Registration Drives
- Provide Resources and information
- Engage in Mock Elections
- Guest Speakers and Workshops
- Promote Early Voting and Absentee Voting

What do you believe should Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to retaining and supporting teachers, as well as recruiting well-qualified educators?

Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize the following areas to effectively retain and support teachers, as well as recruit well-qualified educators:

- 1.Competitive Compensation
- 2.Professional Development
- 3.Supportive Work Environment
4. Mentorship Programs

- 5.Career Advancement Opportunities
- 6.Recognition and Incentives
- 7.Strong School Leadership
- 8.Community and Parental Involvement
- 9.Safe and Inclusive School Environment

What are your thoughts on the topic of book bans and removal of subject matter from curricula? What concerns would you like to have addressed?

I am strongly opposed to book bans and the removal of subject matter from curricula. These actions undermine the core principles of education, which are to provide a broad, inclusive, and well-rounded understanding of the world. I do think that books need to be age appropriate.

Education should promote the free exchange of ideas and provide access to a diverse range of perspectives. Banning books and removing content restricts students' ability to think critically and form their own opinions.

What would be your priorities when it comes to addressing funding and budget concerns in our public school system?

Stakeholders must be involved in the budgeting process for accountability and trust. We must work with legislators to secure increased state and federal funding. Regular audits must be conducted to identify inefficiencies and reallocate resources effectively.

Competitive salaries and benefits must be offered to attract and retain educators. We must also invest in modern facilities and educational technology while developing partnerships with businesses and organizations to supplement funding.

MAXEME “MAX” TUCHMAN

School Board District 7



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

I am committed to ensuring every student in Miami has access to a quality education. My passion stems from my experiences as a public school teacher and EdTech founder. At Miami Northwestern, I saw firsthand the challenges students and teachers face. With Master’s Degrees in Business and Public Policy, I am equipped to address these challenges. I aim to expand early childhood education, fund vocational and technical education, and prepare our students for the jobs of the future.

Do you believe students and families currently have equitable access to well-resourced public schools across zip codes and neighborhoods in Miami-Dade?

No, students and families do not have equitable access to well-resourced public schools across Miami. Significant disparities in resources and facilities exist. Every student deserves access to a quality education, support services, and modern facilities. We need equitable resource distribution, fair funding policies, and targeted programs for under-resourced schools. Collaboration with businesses and non-profits is crucial to bridging the gap and ensuring students reach their full potential.

Do you believe students have sufficient access to mental health services for students in schools? Why or why not?

No, students do not have sufficient access to mental health services in our schools. The demand far exceeds the available resources, and many schools lack enough counselors and mental health professionals. We need to hire more qualified professionals, provide training for staff, create a supportive environment, and reduce stigma. Partnerships with community organizations can help expand services. Prioritizing mental health will create a healthier, more productive environment for all students.

What do you believe Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to sex education in school curriculum?

MDCPS should prioritize comprehensive, inclusive, and evidence-based sex education. The curriculum should cover anatomy, reproductive health, contraception, STIs, consent, and healthy relationships, including LGBTQ+ inclusivity. All information must be medically accurate and research-based. Engaging parents and the community can reinforce learning, and schools should ensure access to health services. This approach equips students to make informed decisions and build healthy relationships.

Do you believe LGBTQ students currently feel safe and supported in Miami-Dade County Public Schools? What would be your priorities

in addressing this issue?

Efforts have been made to create a safe environment for LGBTQ students in our schools, but more work is needed. Many students still face bullying and discrimination. My priorities include strengthening anti-bullying policies, clear reporting guidelines, and an inclusive curriculum. Staff training on LGBTQ issues, establishing support systems like student groups and counseling, and engaging parents is vital. Regularly assessing the school climate and ensuring accountability are essential steps.

Do you believe there is potential for Miami-Dade County Public Schools to reduce punitive disciplinary approaches? What approach would you take to improve disciplinary measures and procedures?

Yes, Miami-Dade County Public Schools can reduce punitive disciplinary approaches, which often harm minority and marginalized students. Shifting to restorative justice can create a more equitable system. I support implementing restorative practices, providing professional development for staff, and integrating social-emotional learning (SEL). Involving parents and the community and regularly reviewing disciplinary data will ensure a supportive and effective disciplinary system for all students.

If elected, would you recommend Miami-Dade County Public Schools strengthen access to voter registration and education for students?

Yes, if elected, I would strengthen voter registration and education in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Civic engagement is crucial. We can integrate voter registration drives into school events and partner with local officials. Comprehensive civic education, including the importance of voting and the electoral process, should be part of the curriculum. Mock elections and debates can also inspire students. Strengthening these areas will empower future voters and benefit our democracy.

What do you believe should Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to retaining and supporting teachers, as well as recruiting well-qualified educators?

MDCPS should prioritize retaining and supporting teachers and recruiting qualified educators by offering competitive salaries to attract and retain new talent, ongoing professional development, and a supportive work environment with adequate resources and manageable class sizes. Promoting work-life balance and recognizing teachers' contributions is crucial. Targeted recruitment efforts and involving teachers in decision-making can further enhance retention and attract diverse candidates.

What are your thoughts on the topic of book bans and removal of subject matter from curricula? What concerns would you like to have addressed?

Book bans and censorship undermine education by limiting diverse perspectives and critical thinking. They disproportionately affect marginalized communities and hinder students' engagement with challenging ideas. Educational decisions should be transparent and inclusive, involving educators, parents, and the community. Supporting teachers with resources and training is essential. Protecting education from political interference ensures students' best interests and prepares them for the world.

What would be your priorities when it comes to addressing funding and budget concerns in our public school system?

Addressing these concerns requires transparency, equitable resource distribution, and increased funding. I will involve the community in financial decisions and ensure regular audits. To close gaps, more resources must go to underserved schools. Advocating for increased state/federal funding, grants, and partnerships is crucial. Competitive salaries and professional development will attract quality educators. Upgrading facilities and prioritizing early childhood education are essential steps.

LUISA SANTOS

School Board District 9



Why are you running for office, and how does your experience prepare you to be effective as a public servant in this position?

Since becoming the youngest-ever elected School Board Member in Miami-Dade in 2020, I have delivered on the promises I made (luisasantos.com/results). I am committed to furthering this work with our community. I have delivered a 94.2% graduation rate, free breakfast/lunch for every child, and a Clean Energy by 2030 commitment. I'm running for re-election to ensure all students are afforded equitable opportunities to succeed and thrive. We've come a long way, and we still have a long way to go.

Do you believe students and families currently have equitable access to well-resourced public schools across zip codes and neighborhoods in Miami-Dade?

While Miami-Dade has made strides in providing quality schools in every zip code, barriers persist. Over the last four years, I've used my voice to secure funding, advanced coursework, extracurriculars, and counseling services in underserved areas. Despite these efforts, opportunity gaps rooted in socioeconomic disparities continue. I am committed to policies that ensure students and teachers have the resources needed to promote equity and provide every student with access to quality education.

Do you believe students have sufficient access to mental health services for students in schools? Why or why not?

We have expanded mental health services in our schools, recognizing the urgency for more evidence-based social-emotional learning and wellness initiatives. I'm proud to have added more counselors, achieving the lowest student-to-counselor ratio ever. We must continue prioritizing mental health efforts to ensure students are well and can excel academically. Our students deserve a safe environment, free from threats like violence and cyberbullying.

What do you believe Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to sex education in school curriculum?

Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize age-appropriate, comprehensive sex education and preventive health measures that educate, not stigmatize. Emphasizing student health through access to contraceptives, safe-sex practices (including abstinence as AN option), and consent will empower young adults to make healthy choices.

Do you believe LGBTQ students currently feel safe and supported in Miami-Dade County Public Schools? What would be your priorities in addressing this issue?

With the exclusionary rhetoric and policies in Florida's politics, many LGBTQ+ students may not feel supported in schools. I am committed to advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion and ending curriculum censorship and book bans. I believe in fostering an educational environment that celebrates diverse perspectives and provides inclusive education for all students.

Do you believe there is potential for Miami-Dade County Public Schools to reduce punitive disciplinary approaches? What approach would you take to improve disciplinary measures and procedures?

Prioritizing students' needs, from food insecurity to challenges presented by socioeconomic status, and providing mental health resources early are necessary to reduce punitive disciplinary approaches. We've reached the lowest student-to-counselor ratio ever, but still have a long way to go. Our educators should be able to focus their time on teaching in a safe environment and our system should have more professionals and partnerships to help address the root cause of any discipline issues.

If elected, would you recommend Miami-Dade County Public Schools strengthen access to voter registration and education for students?

Yes, I would recommend that Miami-Dade County Public Schools strengthen access to voter registration and education for students. Encouraging civic engagement and ensuring that students understand their rights and responsibilities as voters is crucial for a healthy democracy. Implementing programs that offer easy access to voter registration and comprehensive education on the voting process can empower students to participate in elections and make informed decisions that impact their communities.

What do you believe should Miami-Dade County Public Schools should prioritize when it comes to retaining and supporting teachers, as well as recruiting well-qualified educators?

In terms of recruitment and retention, I will continue to support our Office of Human Capital's recruitment efforts and ensure they remain updated on the job-seeking process. For example, I am proud of the new addition of LinkedIn ads and the revamp of our hiring process to facilitate a welcoming experience. I will be a steadfast supporter of increased State funding to pay our teachers and staff living wages, as well as increasing the number of support staff and reducing administrative burdens.

What are your thoughts on the topic of book bans and removal of subject matter from curricula? What concerns would you like to have addressed?

I believe the decision-making regarding specific curriculum, materials, and instructional resources for local schools should primarily rest with subject-area, trained experts and with local decision makers instead of being

dictated at the state level. As local leaders, we have a closer understanding of our community's unique needs, challenges, and values. We can ensure that educational resources are tailored to best serve the students and teachers in that specific district.

What would be your priorities when it comes to addressing funding and budget concerns in our public school system?

I will continue to relentlessly advocate for our fair share from Tallahassee and work with the Miami-Dade delegation for more state resources. I'll inform the public on school funding and how their vote is a powerful tool in how our M-DCPS system can become the best. I will also empower District 9 to engage legislators, ensuring our community is informed and set up to advocate for the necessary increases in funding for public education.