

## Candidate Questionnaire

**From: Santa Cruz for Bernie**

**To: Candidates for Local Races in the March 5, 2024 Primary Election**

Santa Cruz for Bernie, with over 2,000 politically active members in the Central Coast region, requests that you complete this questionnaire so we can provide guidance to our membership in the upcoming important Primary Election in March.

Because SC4B members widely support policy proposals promoted by Senator Bernie Sanders, some of those topics are reflected in this questionnaire. (See [berniesanders.com/issues](https://berniesanders.com/issues))

*(Just start typing after the >> cue)*

1. Your full name >> **Celeste Gutierrez**
2. Your city and county of residence >> **Watsonville, Santa Cruz County**
3. Office you are seeking >> **Democratic Central Committee member**
4. Length of residence in your current District >> **28 years**
5. Your occupation or avocation >> **Analyst, County of Santa Cruz**
6. Significant memberships, affiliations, and leadership positions held (political, labor union, public service, etc.) >> **Co-Chair - Pajaro Valley Cesar Chavez Democratic Club, Gratitude Committee - Youth Resource Bank, Secretary - California Association of Youth Courts, Youth Advisory Liaison - California Association of Youth Courts**
7. In what political campaigns, organizations, and movements have you been active, and what role did you play? >> **Campaign Manager - Cummings for Supervisor 2022, Coordinator - Hernandez for Supervisor 2022, Campaign Manager, Maxwell for City Council 2022, Campaign Manager - Vanessa Quiroz-Carter for City Council 2021, Campaign Manager - Watkins for City Council 2020**
8. Which policy proposals championed by Bernie Sanders are you most passionate about? >> **Housing, Infrastructure, income and wealth inequality**
9. What actions would you take at the local level in support of single-payer healthcare including a national Medicare for All and a state CalCare plan? >> **I have signed on to every petition about Medicare for All and a state CalCare plan. I would also encourage our local representatives at the county level to advocate at the state level for CalCare. I would also support campaigns that support single-payer healthcare as well as inform community members.**
10. What bold and transformative policy proposals would you support to address the climate crisis at the local, state and national levels? >> **As someone deeply committed to progressive, community-oriented and humanity-centered values, addressing the climate crisis requires bold and transformative policy at all levels. Locally, I would advocate for community-led renewable energy projects, prioritizing the development of sustainable infrastructure that not only reduces carbon emissions but also fosters local economic growth. I would also encourage policy that would encourage local communities such as schools, cities and counties to adopt policies that would ensure that vendors were local with sustainable practices. At the state level, I support comprehensive renewable energy mandates as well as establish and expand green job training programs, ensuring a just transition for workers in traditional industries. Nationally, I endorse ambitious carbon reducing mechanisms and increased investments in research and development for clean energy technologies. I would also advocate for policies that prioritize environmental justice that is crucial to ensure minoritized communities, that have been disproportionately affected by climate change. These policies should be designed with active participation by diverse stakeholders, reflecting the interconnectedness of environmental, social and economic well-being. All policies should take the environment into consideration as an active living participant that also wants to thrive.**

11. What policy proposals would you support that address the issue of growing income/wealth inequality? >> **The issue of growing income and wealth inequality is paramount. A multifaceted approach is necessary. I advocate for the implementation of progressive taxation policies that ensure the wealthy contribute their fair share to society, we used to at one point tax. This could involve increasing income tax rates for the highest earners and closing loopholes that allow for tax evasion. Additionally, I support the idea of a wealth tax to curb the accumulation of extreme wealth and redirect resources towards programs that benefit the broader community. Investing in education, job training and affordable healthcare can empower individuals. Advocating for a living wage and workers' rights is crucial to ensure that all individuals can enjoy a good quality of life. In terms of housing, policies that address affordable housing shortages and prevent displacement can help stabilize communities and provide access to safe and affordable homes. Additionally, I support a ban on hedge funds from buying homes and forcing them to sell off their stock. Fostering community-based initiatives and social programs that address the root causes of inequality, such as systemic racism and discrimination, can create a more just and equitable society for everyone. Finally, listening with empathy to what the community thinks and would like to have happen we can work towards a future where economic prosperity is shared by all.**

12. What policy proposals would you support that address our local housing and homelessness crises? >> **Addressing the local housing and homelessness crisis requires a multifaceted and compassionate approach. I advocate for the implementation of affordable housing policies that prioritize inclusive and accessibility. This could involve incentivizing the construction of affordable housing units, encouraging mixed-income developments, and collaborating with community organizations to ensure that housing solutions incorporate the community into the decision making process. I support the expansion of social services aimed at preventing homelessness and providing support to those already experiencing it. Mental health, substance abuse treatment programs and job training initiatives are also programs I support however they are needed whether you are housed or unhoused.**

**In addition, I support policies that protect tenants' rights and prevent unjust evictions. Implementing just-cause evention policies and promoting tenant organizing can help create more stable and secure housing environments. It is essential to recognize housing as a human right and work towards policies that foster dignity and respect for every individual in our community.**

**Lastly, I support addressing the root cause of homelessness - who is benefiting from poverty and why do we allow it to continue?**

13. What measures would you support to foster union jobs? (e.g. adopt project labor agreements with local hire and apprenticeship training requirements; invest in fully staffed public sector workforce.) >> **I am a staunch advocate for fostering union jobs through a multifaceted approach that prioritizes local engagement and environmental sustainability. I wholeheartedly support the implementation of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) with stringent local hiring provisions and apprenticeship training requirements. By adopting PLAs, we ensure that projects prioritize hiring from the local workforce, thereby not only bolstering the regional economy but also significantly reducing road miles and associated carbon emissions. Furthermore, I believe in investing in fully staffed public sector workforces to create more job opportunities within the community. This includes advocating for policies that promote the establishment of apprenticeship programs starting at the high school level, providing young individuals with the skills and training needed for successful entry into unionized professions. These initiatives not only strengthen our local economies but also contribute to the development of a skilled and empowered workforce, fostering a sense of community pride and shared prosperity.**

14. If you were eligible, did you vote for Bernie Sanders in the Primary Election 2016? *Yes or No* >> **Yes**  
In 2020? *Yes or No* >> **Yes**

15. If elected, what do you realistically hope to accomplish during your term of office? >> **My primary goal would be to champion and implement progressive policies that reflect my deeply rooted**

values of community centrality, empathy, and a commitment to minimizing harm. I aspire to foster an environment where the well-being of our local community takes precedence, and inclusivity becomes the cornerstone of decision-making processes. I envision a term marked by tangible progress in areas that matter most to our community such as housing, healthcare, and education. By supporting progressive candidates and policies, fostering inclusivity, and minimizing harm through thoughtful decision-making, I aspire to create a local government that stands as a true reflection of our shared values and aspirations.

16. Give an example of when you spoke truth to power. Who were the players, what were the stakes, and what did you do? >>

**As a member of the Police and Social Equity Committee for the City of Watsonville. In a pivotal meeting that was closed to the public and unrecorded, the city proposed a vote to determine whether future committee sessions would remain open to the public or become exclusive to committee members, with the latter winning by a narrow margin. Recognizing the importance of transparency and accountability in fostering community trust, I felt compelled to take action.**

**During the following council meeting, I used the public comment platform to share the outcome of the unrecorded vote and disclosed the names of those who voted for the closure of meetings. This act was driven by my unwavering belief that transparency and accountability are foundational pillars for the growth of trust in government. By publicly disclosing the details of the closed-door decision-making process, I aimed to hold the committee accountable for its choices and ensure that the community remained informed about decisions that directly affected them.**

**In this instance, the players involved were fellow committee members and, indirectly, the broader community of Watsonville. The stakes were high, as the decision to close meetings had the potential to limit public oversight and participation in matters of social equity and policing. By speaking truth to power, I sought to uphold the values of inclusivity and openness, advocating for a governance structure that prioritizes the well-being and engagement of the community it serves.**

17. Are you running in coordination with any other local candidate? >> **No**

18. Why should members of Santa Cruz for Bernie vote for you to be their elected representative? (max 50 words) >> **With a proven track record in progressive politics, I'm dedicated to reshaping the Democratic Party in line with our shared values. I've actively campaigned, shifting local party dynamics towards inclusivity. My commitment to collaboration, understanding diverse perspectives, and adept use of emotional and cognitive empathy positions me as the ideal representative for SC for Bernie.**

**Please return your completed questionnaire to [santacruz4bernie@gmail.com](mailto:santacruz4bernie@gmail.com) by December 17, 2023.**

**Thank you for your participation in this democratic process of candidate endorsement.**