

# Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire 2019

**Submission Note:** The submission deadline for this questionnaire is 12:01 PM PT, ten days prior to the membership meeting where the candidate's endorsement will be considered. Please refer to the questionnaire deadline and meeting date here: <https://waprogressives.org/endorsements/endorsement-policy-and-timeline/>.

- This questionnaire must be submitted to [waprogressives@gmail.com](mailto:waprogressives@gmail.com) to be considered.

**Explanatory Note:** Our endorsements (and sometimes donations) are generally made to people running for the state legislature, municipal and county offices, public utility commissioners, etc. If you are running for such an office, you may wonder why we are asking questions about state-wide or national issues. The reason is that local officeholders are tomorrow's senators, representatives and governors. Even if you have nothing of the sort in mind now, you may easily feel differently in a few years. We want to put people into the pipeline from, as Howard Dean once put it, "the Democratic wing of the party," We are old fashioned enough to think that the New Deal and the Great Society were good ideas; and modern enough to be up to speed on all the latest organizing methods and apps. If you have reservations about answering any of these questions, please explain why.

**Candidate Name: Chanan Suarez**

**Position Sought: Bellingham City Council, Ward 5**

**Campaign Manager: N/A, democratically-run campaign**

**Consultant: N/A**

**Campaign Email: [suarezforcitycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:suarezforcitycouncil@gmail.com)**

**Campaign Phone: 206-538-7508**

**Website: [chanansuarez.com](http://chanansuarez.com)**

**Campaign Address: PO Box 5925 Bellingham, WA 98227-5925**

**Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes**

## Questions:

### Labor

Do you support raising the minimum wage in your local jurisdiction if state and federal action continues to be stalled? To what level?

Absolutely. Working people in Bellingham are experiencing skyrocketing rents, high childcare costs, as well as job precarity and are struggling to get by. Our campaign is calling for a minimum wage in Bellingham of at least \$15 an hour tied to inflation. Additionally, when in office, we will work to incentivize worker-owned cooperatives and union membership in order to create more jobs that pay a fair, livable wage.

### Education

What is your opinion of high stakes testing? How would you change the way students and teachers are evaluated?

High stakes testing and other forms of standardized testing do a poor job of accurately determining where students are academically. Too often, they fail to take into consideration socio-economic status, test anxiety, language barriers, and other factors. They also put an unfair weight on the

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shoulders of teachers. Not all teachers believe that their role is simply to prep students for a test. Rather, there are many other ways of educating our children that focus less on test preparation and more on learning practical skills and knowledge that will help them become good people and citizens, not just good test takers. I do think there is value in determining where students are at, but I think that there are better ways of doing it than just high-stakes testing. I am still doing research, but things like low-stakes sample testing and portfolio-assessments (looking at things like projects, presentations, etc.) could be potential alternatives to evaluating our students. I think a more holistic approach should be explored. I would take my guidance on this issue from the teachers themselves.

## Environment

What can be accomplished at the local level to promote development of alternative energy and prevent privatization of natural resources?

This campaign is pushing for the passage of a Bellingham Green New Deal that would make massive investments in renewable, clean energy while working to incentivize alternative means of transportation by building protected bike lanes and making public transit free at the point of service. We also want to require new multi-family and commercial development to install solar panels as a way of moving us towards 100% renewable energy. Furthermore, we want to work to end Puget Sound Energy's monopoly on Bellingham's electricity by moving towards a green municipal electricity option.

## Finance/Taxation

What will you do to support public banking at the local level?

Washington State needs a public bank and there is growing support for one. I support the legislation that Senator Bob Hasegawa has put forward. Until then, we will look into local banking options that the city can adopt.

## Health Care/Retirement

Explain your position (for or against) Medicare for All (aka single payer health care) in terms of the effect on local citizens, service providers, and government.

I am unequivocally supportive of a true, single-payer, Medicare for All system. Every person should be able to see a doctor and get the care they need without worrying about how much it is going to cost them. Not only is Medicare for All the moral healthcare solution but it is also the most economical one too. Study after study shows that a Medicare for All system would cover every resident of the United States while saving trillions of dollars on healthcare expenditures over a ten-year period. There are legitimate concerns over the effects that transitioning to a Medicare for All system will have on people working in the private health insurance industry which is why I believe that Medicare for All must include funding for job re-training for displaced workers. As for the effects on government, Medicare for All simply means taking the existing Medicare program, improving it to cover all comprehensive care including dental and vision, and then expanding it to cover everyone. Naturally, that would mean that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid would become much bigger and would employ more people. Being the single payer, the government would then have the ability to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs and procedures. At the municipal level, we have limited power in determining healthcare policy, but if elected, I would move to pass a resolution supporting Medicare for All so that all residents of Bellingham are guaranteed the healthcare they deserve.

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## Security/Public Safety

How would you act to stop the militarization of local police forces and establish civilian oversight of law enforcement?

The militarization of the police has become a major problem across the United States, and I will work to make sure that the Bellingham Police Department does not move in that direction. I think that every city needs an independent civilian oversight board that investigates instances of racial profiling, police brutality, and ensures an end to racist predictive policing practices that disproportionately target low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. I would work closely with Black Lives Matter Bellingham and the Racial Justice Coalition to create strong, anti-racist policing policies once in office.

## General

- Do you consider yourself a Democrat? Do you consider yourself a progressive? Why?  
I identify as a democratic socialist and align closely with the ideals and policies of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. I have been certified as a Democrat by the Whatcom Democrats and will be seeking their endorsement. This is a non-partisan race, so I am choosing not to take a party label while campaigning or while in office.
- What parts, if any, of the [Washington State Democratic Party Platform](#) (← click link to view) do you disagree with? Why?  
I find myself agreeing with all of the policies laid out in the platform. I do wish it specifically mentioned the passage of a Green New Deal.
- If this is not your first election, what other offices have you run for? If it is your first campaign, what other campaigns (candidate or issue) have you participated in? What did you learn from those campaigns?  
This is my first time running for public office, but I am currently one of the co-chairs of the Whatcom Democratic Socialists of America. I have also done a lot of other organizing. After serving in Iraq and seeing the horrors of war, I helped lead Veterans Against the War and actively fought to get troops out of Iraq and the Middle East. Also, after the military, I moved to Seattle and lived on Capitol Hill for seven years where I started the Queer Ally Coalition in response to intensifying gay-bashing and have continued to organize for LGBTQ rights since then. What I have learned through all of this is the importance of community-building and grassroots activism. When everyday people stand up and fight back, we win.
- Have you ever been a precinct committee officer or held other Democratic organization offices?  
No I have not.
- What single issue is the most important motivator for your run for office? What proposals do you have for dealing with it?  
Housing. Bellingham has been struggling with a homelessness and housing affordability crisis. Too many people in our city are sleeping out on the streets and with a vacancy rate hovering around 1%, those who are able to find a place to live are faced with nearly unaffordable rents. Our campaign understands housing to be a right of all people. That is why we are calling for the creation of 3500 social housing units that are city-owned and tenant-managed. Additionally, we want to build a public emergency housing shelter. Currently, the main shelter in our city is the

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Lighthouse Mission, a religious organization whose motives go beyond just housing and feeding people. Unfortunately, there have been reports of them refusing people because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. No person should be left to sleep on the streets because of who they are. That is why it is so critical that the city offers a public shelter that does not discriminate based on one's identity.

- Are there also important secondary issues? Describe your approach to implementing solutions?  
Absolutely. One would be the passage of a Bellingham Green New Deal. We are facing a planetary climate emergency and must do everything we can at all levels of government to combat it. The city of Bellingham created a Climate Change Task Force a couple of years ago that came up with an entire list of recommendations of what the city could do to combat climate change locally. I believe that it is long overdue for the council to pass those recommendations into law and I will work diligently to do just that.
- If you are running in a heavily Republican area, do you have a reasonable chance at winning? If not, how do you plan to use your candidacy to build ongoing connections among local people who share progressive values?  
I am not running in a heavily Republican area. However, our campaign is about more than just winning this election. It is about creating a movement of working people in Bellingham who are eager for real change and want to build power for the long-term. We know that we can only accomplish our goals together, by building relationships with neighbors and community members.