



Empower Oakland 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

Empower Oakland is a movement fueled by Oakland residents who recognize that “business as usual politics” will only further perpetuate Oakland’s downward spiral. We believe in empowering Oaklanders to amplify their collective voices for greater political impact and influence.

All submissions will be published on empoweroakland.com to educate Oakland voters and will be unedited for spelling and grammar. Empower Oakland will also use candidate submissions to help inform their Candidate Endorsement process. Candidates may be asked to interview in-person with the Empower Oakland Endorsement Committee. Final endorsement decisions will be made by early September.

Please email the completed questionnaire as a .docx or .pdf document to info@empoweroakland.com. Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.

Candidate Name: Charlene Wang

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Office & District Sought: City Council At-Large

Campaign Website: <https://www.charleneforoakland.com>

Social Media Handles

- Twitter: <https://x.com/charlenewang>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Charlene-for-Oakland-City-Council/61558711491827/>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/charleneforoakland/>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/charleneawang>
- TikTok:

Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$130,000, and if you like what I say here, please help me share it with more Oaklanders: <https://secure.engageraise.com/donate/charlene-for-oakland/>

Funds Raised To Date: \$68,000

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?

Some of my most vivid childhood memories were of Oakland’s vibrant Chinatown. This was my first exposure to Asian leadership and the broader Chinese community. My grandparents’ Oakland apartment was a safe place during my childhood and I returned to Oakland to be closer to my family.

Today, storefronts close much earlier and “out of business” signs keep cropping up in Chinatown and business districts throughout the city. The town gave me a lot when I needed it, now I want to give back. I served as a board member with Oakland’s Family Violence Law Center to empower people experiencing family and intimate partner violence. I also volunteered to serve as an Alameda County Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, primarily helping to connect seniors with resources and county services. I’m running for City Council At-Large to put my experience delivering results at local, state, and federal levels to work for Oakland.



When I'm not working, you can find me walking my rescue dog, Galvi, exploring walking trails in the hills, or training with my dragon boat team. A fun coincidence in this election is that one of my teammates and small business owner, Kanitha Matoury, is also running for the at-large seat. In the event of a tie vote, maybe we'll have to replace the standard coin toss with a boat race across Lake Merritt!

2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?

Crime and the high cost of living are our two biggest challenges. They're also tied at the hip. Economic desperation, and general pessimism around limited opportunity, are major factors that push many people to crime. At the same time, in addition to the incalculable human costs of assaults and gun violence, property crimes result in business closures, higher costs to consumers, and less tax revenue that could have been spent addressing underlying causes.

We need both police and economic opportunities to break out of this loop. Reducing crime and the cost of living will be my priorities if elected.

I know that, if we get the right policies in place, Oakland can shine. The town has a lot going for it; diverse, vibrant communities, a thriving arts scene, a world-class climate, and a central location within a region connected by mass transit. Raimondi Park and the revitalized Prescott Market are incredible investments in West Oakland and textbook examples of how the community benefits when we make it easier to build.

3. Why are you running for office and why are you uniquely qualified to fulfill the office you are running for at this time?

I'm running for office because my experience at local, state, and federal levels of government can benefit Oakland.

I was appointed by the Biden-Harris administration, where I launched a \$4.2 billion Department of Transportation initiative, Reconnecting Communities, a historic federal program to restore communities segregated by highways. I'm proud that my initiative is already bringing union jobs to Oakland's upcoming Lake Merritt to San Leandro Greenway and funding the planning process to reconnect West Oakland to the Downtown area over I-980. We can build on this, but we need to show up and proactively seek funding!

From my work in the Biden-Harris administration, I see immense opportunity to bring in new blue-collar jobs in renewables and clean transportation. We have abandoned warehouses in East and West Oakland and environmental justice communities that are in need of jobs. Oakland was built on manufacturing and with our port, workforce, and proximity to major tech and investment hubs, has the capacity to be a manufacturing powerhouse. I'll work to court green manufacturing companies, use tax incentives to seal the deal, and work with our school district and Department of Workforce Development to establish career pathways into this sector. Shawn Danino, another great candidate in this race, has put forward plans aligned with mine on climate resilience.

I plan to use my knowledge and connections to work for Oakland, making sure that we go from missing grants to claiming our fair share of historic investments from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, and CHIPS Act packages.



I currently work at the EPA and am overseeing the development of the first national environmental justice technical assistance center dedicated to Native American tribes and indigenous people. Some of Oakland's most economically disadvantaged, redlined communities are exposed to higher rates of air pollution which is connected to higher rates of asthma, cancer, and other health problems. Thanks to leadership from Councilmembers Kalb and Kaplan, we've expanded hydrogen fuel infrastructure for trucks loading at the port. This will greatly reduce black carbon emissions linked to cancer and asthma in communities near highways.

At the Department of Transportation, I also created the Federal Highway Administration's first pilot program to connect people just leaving prison with construction jobs. People who have served time face discrimination when seeking jobs; they deserve dignified work and the chance to repair their lives. This type of job program is also an investment in public safety. Statewide, about 46% of people who leave prison will commit crimes again. When they have job opportunities and services, that figure falls in half to 23%. Oakland pays around \$26 million for pothole related liability every 3 years. I'd replicate this pilot program to fix two of Oakland's problems at once. Let's give people alternatives to crime doing work that Oakland drivers, and city finances, desperately need.

I served in then-councilmember Michelle Wu's office, helping launch bike lane expansion and fare-free mass transit in Boston. I'm a transit rider and was thrilled to attend the opening voyage of the free Oakland to Alameda ferry. I know we can catalyze regional commerce and take cars off the road by partnering with the county and AC Transit to improve mass transit options in Oakland.

I worked for the state of Massachusetts to assess and restructure their homelessness response system, this resulted in much faster service delivery times that housed people faster. Our city auditor found that we spent \$70 million on homeless services without any performance metrics, accountability, or transparency. I'll take the lessons I learned in Massachusetts to fix our broken system and get people help as soon as they lose housing, not after they've suffered for months and even years.

It frustrates me to read about City Hall drama, personalities, and politics getting in the way of the people's business. I focus on policy, not personality or political alliance. When I disagree with people, I'll let them know without taking it personally or withholding cooperation on areas of agreement. If elected, my sole objective will be to deliver results for Oakland.

4. Prior to running for office, how were you involved in local government and/or your community? What were your biggest accomplishments?

I'm an Alameda County Commissioner for Consumer Affairs and work with Supervisor Tam's office to make seniors aware of county resources. I volunteer with Afro-Comic Con, which is one of the cultural gems that makes the East Bay such an incredible place, and am also a volunteer English teacher for Chinese-speaking women at Asian Immigrant Women Advocates and as a reader in Oakland public schools. I used to serve on the Family Violence Law Center's Board and am proud of my work helping them mainstream multilingual services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking. I helped with this year's homeless point in time count, interviewing and speaking with unhoused neighbors to better understand their experiences. I know that we can do so much better.



Oakland City Council

5. **What specific and measurable improvements in public safety will you deliver for Oaklanders in 2 years? 4 years? Please describe how you plan to deliver these public safety improvements. As part of your response, please:**
- a. Summarize what existing public safety investments you might increase, reduce or eliminate to ensure adequate resources for you to meet your goal.
 - b. Discuss your perspectives on:
 - i. The effectiveness of Oakland's non-sworn responses to public safety issues. Which ones (if any) are successful and should be continued? Which ones (if any) are not successful and should be discontinued?
 - ii. The appropriate staffing level of sworn police officers for the city of Oakland (provide a specific number of officers you would like to see in place by December 2028).
 - iii. Your prioritized strategies for addressing various types of crime, including gun violence, retail robbery, bipping, residential burglary, traffic violence, and any others.
 - c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?

I'll measure success by reductions in crime, 911 wait times, and overtime expenses. I'll also gauge success by increases in Oakland Police Department to at least 900 officers, the number of police-community forums, and gun buybacks. All of our communities should feel safe and empowered to call the police in the case of an emergency. In fact, an increase in police calls may actually be a positive sign that communities feel they can rely on the police to be responsive.

Our police department is dangerously understaffed. Among 295 cities with populations above 100,000, Oakland had the 4th highest crime per capita before the recent spikes. We also have the 4th highest caseload of crimes per officer in the country. Consequences of understaffing include long 911 wait times, an average of over \$30 million overtime annually, and higher rates of burnout among officers that a growing body of research has connected to increased use-of-force complaints.

I'm thankful that Governor Newsom has stepped in and deployed the California Highway Patrol. We need to expand Oakland's internal capacity but, while crime is still out of control, we should explore invoking a disaster to qualify for help from regional partners through California's Law Enforcement Mutual Aid System. This declaration would also qualify for Alameda County's state of the art emergency dispatch system, something that could speed 911 response times while Oakland fixes its own response system. This is a band-aid solution, not a long-term fix, but we need to stop the bleeding.

A major barrier to adequately staffing is that our police academies do admit or graduate enough officers to fill positions. One of Oakland's State Senators, Nancy Skinner, wrote and passed SB 960 which allows police departments to hire undocumented immigrants who have spent most of their lives in the country. We should take advantage of this law to add badly needed officers and to improve representation and trust with immigrant communities.



My goal is to staff OPD with officers that look like, and are from, Oakland. Former Chief Armstrong is a competitor in this election, but his care for the town is obvious to anybody that talks with him. My policies aim to attract people with that kind of rooted mindset to our police force. Today, less than 10% of our police force lives in Oakland. Let's explore hiring pipelines from Oakland public schools and colleges, referral bonuses for current officers, advertising campaigns, academy exit interviews, and educational incentives to entice Oaklanders to protect our community.

We also need to better leverage technology to help officers do their jobs. A grand jury report found that OPD has failed to cooperate with the city's IT department to integrate software that the city pays for. One glaring example of this is that, even though we pay for a tool that transcribes voice memos, many officers do not use it and waste valuable time writing field reports. San Francisco has been able to hold people accountable for bipping and auto theft by placing GPS-tracked decoys across the city. We should explore this tactic in Oakland. I'd encourage OPD to develop a high-level strategic plan to use technology to improve service delivery.

We need to hire and support officers who protect our community while still holding those who break their oaths accountable. The Oakland Riders' reign of terror, Oscar Grant's murder, and police abuse of Celeste Guap were inexcusable. I support independent, civilian internal affairs, de-escalation training, and protections for whistleblowers like Keith Batt who stood up to the riders. Well-structured accountability will prevent misconduct and corruption, and make us all safer by improving trust. It's also the only way we move on from our expensive federal monitor.

I support alternative mental health responders like MACRO but will push that program to address underlying problems, not just provide band-aid solutions. I'll commend another competitor, Cristina Tostado, for highlighting the need for better partnerships between Oakland and Alameda County on mental health. She's right on the money and, if elected, I'd work to make sure MACRO connects people in crisis with county mental health resources. From there, let's do a better job of tracking how many people accept treatment and what techniques increase that figure.

6. **What specific and measurable improvements in Oakland's homelessness and housing affordability crisis will you deliver for Oaklanders in 2 years? 4 years? How do you plan to deliver these homelessness and housing affordability wins for Oakland?** As part of your response, please:
- a. Describe the biggest problems our city faces that keep us from solving the housing crisis.
 - b. Summarize what homelessness/housing investments you might advance, reduce, or eliminate to ensure adequate resources are available to meet the goals you stated above. What trade-offs might need to be considered in distributing resources between different solutions?
 - c. Discuss your perspectives on:
 - i. The respective roles of affordable (below-market-rate) housing and market-rate housing
 - ii. The City's Housing Element and proposed zoning reforms
 - iii. Oakland's Encampment Management Policy, implementation of it to date, and improvements needed moving forward
 - iv. The City/County's approach to mental health and substance abuse treatment



- d. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?

Our housing crisis is primarily a function of constrained supply. We need more housing for all income levels, but in particular affordable and middle-income housing. I'm going to upzone alongside inclusionary zoning policies, raise height limits, and approve as many new units as I can. I'll also insist that, since developers stand to make incredible profits from these projects, that they hire union builders and set aside units for affordable and very affordable housing.

I do believe that building market rate housing has an important role. Warren Logan, a candidate for District 3, explained the role of market rate housing well. When we add new units, even at higher income levels, we remove those higher income people from the bidding pool for scarce units. That prevents them from "punching down" against lower income applicants for scarce rental units. Furthermore, the impact fees generated from market rate housing actually fund affordable housing projects.

We can also lower the cost of new housing, which is passed along to renters and buyers, by simplifying the process to build. Let's hire more staff to approve building permits, and gain the property tax revenue they bring, faster. Similarly, hiring more fire inspectors can speed the process up. We also need to ditch purely aesthetic building standards. Our recent standards required that buildings have at least two facade materials. This is a vanity measure that adds complexity and cost for builders and ultimately renters.

This week, I had the honor of visiting a Carpenter's Union apprenticeship program. When I was a kid, I helped my mom repair our fixer-upper home, seeing people learn how to use power tools reminded me a lot of my childhood! OUSD is already investing in career pipelines into the trades, I'd like the city to be an ally in these efforts. To fix the structural housing shortage, we need a skilled and trained workforce. I want to make sure that Oaklanders from all backgrounds know that union jobs in the trades, and the middle-class salary and benefits they bring, are within reach.

Nonprofit housing is also an essential part of our housing mix. I see opportunities to open city land like the Army Base or soon to be decommissioned parts of the I-980 to heavily subsidized, low-income housing, alongside storefronts, greenways, and parks. The I-980 runs straight through redlined communities and has been spewing toxic, unfiltered fumes over the communities it splintered for decades. I'd like new housing there to include the right to return to new affordable units for people who were displaced by the I-980 or are related to someone who was. I'm ready to lead on this work because I fought to include authorization for Reconnecting Communities grantees to be able to construct the foundations for social housing on decommissioned highway infrastructure. The I-980 closure could be a generational opportunity to build, but only if we take it.

On homeless response, it is unconscionable that our system traps people on the streets and into chronic homelessness. I'll immediately get to work fixing this. The core of the problem is a broken process called Coordinated Entry that places people on waiting lists and prioritizes people with the highest "vulnerability scores", which has resulted in help and housing withheld until people have been on the street for years instead of helping them quickly, prior to the onset of PTSD and addiction that is spurred by living on the streets. This



system particularly does not serve those who fall on temporary hard times through the loss of a job, who could turn their lives around with just a bit of support.

While building permanent affordable housing is vitally important, our homelessness response also needs more emphasis on job training and employment so that people can move towards independent lives. That's why I am running to take people off the streets quickly, with jobs to pick up trash, clean graffiti, and plant trees while linking them up with housing subsidies. My prior experience in Massachusetts working on programs for unhoused people makes me uniquely qualified to carry out this work.

We can't allow encampments to create fires, force elders and wheelchair users onto roads, and overtake parks. We also need to treat unhoused people with dignity and be mindful that their distrust is often based upon prior false promises of help. I'm committed to leading with empathy and will insist on multiple attempts at outreach before encampment removals. When removals are absolutely necessary, we need to provide advanced notice, ensure that de-escalation rules are followed, respect personal belongings, and make sure that safe housing options are available.

Actionable tenants' rights are also a critical way to prevent evictions and homelessness. When I canvass voters, I consistently hear from tenants who've been mistreated, go to the city, and are referred from one office to the next. Many give up altogether, which emboldens bad actors. Let's make sure that when tenants are mistreated, there is a very clear, straightforward pathway for them to access legal aid.

7. What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver with respect to Oakland's public infrastructure in 2 years? 4 years? How do you plan to deliver these improvements? As part of your response, please:

- a. Summarize the biggest problem(s) Oakland faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable).
- b. Discuss any specific improvements you expect to make during your 4-year term related to:
 - i. Blight, Litter and Dumping
 - ii. Road repair & repaving
 - iii. Bike/pedestrian safety and public transportation
 - iv. Streetscape improvements (trees, parklets, etc)
 - v. Stormwater management
- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?

In our budget environment, we have to get better at doing multiple things at once. That's what I've spent my career doing, especially advancing public safety through re-entry construction jobs at the Federal Highway Administration. My plan for Oakland's homelessness is also a plan for litter, blight, and inadequate trees because it will connect people with jobs doing those maintenance tasks, housing, and wrap-around services the day they lose housing.

I applaud the City Council's investments in our City Attorney's affirmative litigation division and see this as part of a revenue-neutral or revenue-generating response to illegal dumping. City Attorney Parker has joined lawsuits against corporations that knowingly pushed addictive pharmaceuticals on Oaklanders and won money



for addiction treatment services. We should install cameras by dumping hotspots and sue the companies and people who are trashing our city.

Potholes are a significant safety issue for Oakland. I would seek to expedite the contracting process. High vacancy rates in our Department of Transportation's contracts division have held up our ability to meet our paving goals. I would seek to centralize oversight of contracts across departments. We also need automated enforcement of traffic laws, with speed cameras and automated license plate readers.

Given our budget, ambitious infrastructure programs are going to be heavily constrained by what state and federal grants we can win. I've already steered federal dollars to bike/pedestrian infrastructure in Oakland and know we can do more to ensure that Oakland is a more walkable city where people can turn to public transit, biking, and walking instead of relying on cars. Another creative, low-cost way to maintain infrastructure is giving neighbors the green light to install traffic calming fixtures, fix curb cuts, and fill potholes when the city is not stepping in. Councilmember Fife and her Chief of Staff, Tonya Love, have been doing really innovative work here that I'd like to build upon if elected. Last week, city staff cleared barriers to reckless driving that homeowners along East 21st in San Antonio installed. Instead of fighting communities in fear of traffic violence, the city should be a better partner.

8. Please describe how you plan to address Oakland's immediate fiscal budget crisis AND long-term structural budget deficit. What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver in 2 years? 4 years? As part of your response, please:

- a. Summarize the largest contributors to Oakland's budget challenges and your understanding of why previous Councils/Mayoral administrations have not solved the issue(s).
- b. Describe how you will reduce expenses (including cuts you would make to specific programs) that will free up resources that can be allocated toward addressing other budget priorities.
- c. Describe how you will increase revenues to fund much-needed services, avoid painful cuts, invest in the city's future growth, and address the structural deficit.
- d. Discuss your perspectives on:
 - i. Major sources of general fund revenues, and any recent trends or changes
 - ii. Major general fund expenditures, and any recent trends or changes
 - iii. Unfunded liabilities, including pensions and deferred maintenance, and any recent trends or changes
- e. Describe how you will maintain objectivity despite pressure and specific budget asks by the groups and organizations that have endorsed you.
- f. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?

Our structural budget deficit demands structural solutions. That's why you've seen most of my answers discuss cost-saving and revenue generating opportunities. Winning grants, staffing police to avoid overtime expenses, revenue generating industrial policy, and inclusive economic development are key to increasing the city's tax revenue.

I'd follow the Budget Advisory Commission's recommendations to assess every program for effectiveness and cost saving opportunities, provide departments with clear goals, and make sure that we track results. The Grand Jury Report's finding that Oakland spent \$20 million on homeless service contractors without the most basic metrics demonstrates how poor planning wastes money and harms service delivery. Let's shift to a model



that gets people subsidized housing, wrap-around services, and jobs performing vital city maintenance. I'm glad that Mayor Thao recommended consolidating payroll across departments, this is a smart way to cut overhead expenses. I'd look for similar cost-saving opportunities.

We also need to look into creative opportunities for revenue generation. New York City and San Francisco make kiosk space, benches, and other city properties available for advertisements. I was alarmed to read the Grand Jury Report's findings that City Council rejected staff recommendations for a billboard vendor, resulting in \$80+ million less revenue spread across the coming decades than if City Council had chosen the more competitive offer.

You can trust me to deliver because my career has been in public administration. I know how to structure and assess programs to give taxpayers the most bang for their buck. I've also released some of the most detailed plans of any candidate in this race so you know where I stand.

9. Please describe what you plan to do differently from business-as-usual in city hall to ensure effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable governance in Oakland. As part of your response, please:

- a. Describe in what ways the City of Oakland is meeting and/or not meeting your definition of good government.
- b. Summarize what changes you would make in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of city governance and increase transparency.
- c. Answer how Oakland City Council can provide greater oversight and public accountability in contracting, grant-making, and outcomes/performance management.

Good government seeks to be responsive to the needs of all constituents, but in particular should serve and improve the outcomes of people and communities that are often overlooked, who lack the wealth and power to access resources. I would proactively engage communities and be an accessible representative. I have often taken a clipboard and canvass people on the street, and one thing that strikes me is how the wishes and views of most Oaklanders are not being represented at public meetings. Our region is the world's tech capitol but, for example, the format for the online schedule of city meetings looks like it hasn't been updated in decades.

Rowena Brown, Assemblymember Bonta's Chief of Staff and another strong contender for the At-Large seat, shared a similar vision at a community forum we both attended. In response to air pollution and contamination in West Oakland from Radius Recycling's plant, she met with community members and helped Assemblymember Bonta pass legislation improving air quality standards for recycling operations. This is the process of community input that I want to see more of.

We need to do much better on measuring results. The Budget Advisory Commission report I referenced earlier identifies this as a systemic problem. Once we commit to good project management standards, we can better assess what's working, what's not, and go from there. Efficient and cost-effective provision of government services should be a progressive value.

One of the lessons I take from calls to "defund the police" is that hasty moves to one extreme alienate people and often backfire on the people they're intended to help. It concerns me when opponents of defending seem



to mirror this error. You've probably noticed that my policies don't fit neatly into one ideological box; that's because they're based on my conversations with Oaklanders from all walks of life and my honest assessment of the data. I think that whipsawing from one extreme to another just sets the stage for unintended consequences, division, and another over correction to the next extreme.

My goal is to break this cycle. We need safety and racial justice, housing without displacement, and opportunities that help every Oaklander empower themselves.

10. **For incumbents:** What is a vote you're MOST and LEAST proud of in the last four years. Briefly describe the issue, why you voted the way you did, and what you think now about that vote. **N/A**
11. **For new candidates:** What was the most impactful Council vote in the past four years? Briefly describe the issue, what you think of the Council's decision, and what you would have done had you been on the Council.

Selling the Coliseum to pay one-time expenses was the most impactful Council vote in the last four years. We sold an asset to postpone difficult budget decisions. If we didn't approve the sale, people would have lost their lives as a result of catastrophic police and fire cuts. I'm thankful that we avoided that outcome but, our major deficit wasn't exactly a surprise. If I were on the council, I'd have raised the alarm much earlier and asked departments what they could do to cut expenses before we were stuck between a rock and a hard place. The sale buys us time, the next council needs to get to work on day one to make the most of it.

12. **What are the major challenges faced by Oakland businesses? What specific steps will you take to ensure that Oakland businesses can thrive and are able to create more jobs and improve the Oakland economy?**

Crime is the biggest issue hurting Oakland businesses. Two of my favorite restaurants, Agave Uptown and Portal by Lake Merritt, see fewer customers because of the crime. If you haven't tried their respective mole and mini burgers yet, you're missing out. I try to support small businesses with my wallet, but real help requires policy. I've detailed my public safety plans to address crime and will especially work to bring ambassadors and foot patrols to commercial areas. I'll also hire more permitting officials so "coming soon" signs turn to "open for business" faster.

I'm also going to fight for inclusive growth through cultural districts that create opportunity and celebrate our diversity. Throughout the country, Chinatowns have been engines for upward mobility for disenfranchised communities without displacement or gentrification. My goal is to take this model of small business incentives, community institution building, dense mixed-use spaces, and affordable housing to cultural districts throughout Oakland. This will promote entrepreneurship, wealth creation, and housing in all of Oakland's communities and synergize with the city's strategy to attract filmmaking, followed by tourism revenue, to Oakland.

13. **There are important ballot measures that are up for vote in November. How would you vote on the following and why?**
 - a. Would you vote to Recall District Attorney Pamela Price? (YES/NO)



I'm focusing on my own race, not the recalls. The District Attorney is mandated by the California Constitution and Government Code to review, charge and prosecute criminal violations of the laws of California. I commend DA Price's efforts to prosecute instances of police misconduct, especially police killings, but have grave concerns about how she has dropped gun enhancements against the wishes of many victims' families.

b. Would you vote to Recall Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao? (YES/NO)

Mayor Thao was dealt a difficult hand. I respect the office and the fact that many of Oakland's problems precede her tenure. Still, by downplaying crime, postponing difficult budget choices, and not being more proactive about filling the police chief role, Mayor Thao has not risen to the occasion. I'm waiting to see what more we learn about the FBI raid. She's entitled to a presumption of innocence and I'm still deciding how I'll vote. Regardless, once the dust settles, Mayor Thao's supporters and opponents will need to work together to get Oakland back on track.

c. Would you vote to pass the Oakland Measure Z renewal? (YES/NO)

Yes, we badly need this funding to hire new officers. Please make sure your friends and neighbors know how important Measure Z is!

d. Would you vote to pass California Prop 36 (makes changes to Prop 47)? (YES/NO)

Yes, we need penalties for fentanyl trafficking. After the passage of Prop 47, we have unfortunately seen a large uptick in overdose deaths. We must do a better job of holding accountable those who knowingly traffic fatal, highly addictive drugs to our communities. Prop 36 permits people convicted of multiple drug possession crimes the option of participating in drug and mental health treatment instead of being incarcerated.

I wish that Prop 36 was more narrowly focused on those cases, however. Under Prop 47, retail thefts could not be charged unless a civilian witness personally observed the incident and could testify in court. AB 2943, which passed on 8/16/24 closes this loophole, alongside a number of other retail theft bills designed to curtail the extremes of Prop 47. Given that this will make misdemeanor prosecutions easier, I don't think that extending sentence length is, at this time, necessary.