



## 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](https://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](mailto:info@empoweroakland.com). Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.*

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**Candidate Name: Nikki Fortunato Bas**

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**Phone Number: 510-995-0786**

**Office & District Sought: Alameda County Board of Supervisors, District 5**

**Campaign Website: <https://nikki4supervisor.com/>**

**Social Media Handles**

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Nikkiforallofus>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiForAllOfUs>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nikkiforallofus/>
- LinkedIn:
- TikTok:

**Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$950,000**

**Funds Raised To Date: \$466,141 (as of 6/30/24)**

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland or Alameda County?

I'm a 27-year Alameda County resident, a working mom, a lifelong organizer, and an effective legislator that gets things done working in coalition with our community. I'm guided by my lived experiences as the daughter of Filipino immigrant healthcare workers whose struggles inspired me to lead labor-community coalitions fighting for a living wage, an end to food insecurity, and access to affordable healthcare and housing.



First elected to Oakland City Council in 2018, I currently serve as Oakland's City Council President. I lead the fight for an East Bay where every family is healthy, safe, and housed. I authored the \$350 million bond measure to create up to 2,400 affordable housing units for homeless and working families; established a \$14 million Fund to assist low-income housing insecure tenants to purchase their homes; expanded violence prevention and anti-sex trafficking programs; and launched Fire Department mobile crisis teams to address mental health and 911 calls.

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

Community safety is a top challenge and priority. As a mother and sexual assault survivor, nothing is more important to me than our safety. Each and every one of us needs to feel safe — whether it's taking our kids out to play; walking, biking, or driving to run errands; or coming home at night from a long day, without worry.

Housing affordability and homelessness is another top challenge and priority. We must prevent homelessness, intervene early with a housing first approach and permanent supportive housing, and create housing that's affordable to working families and to the fastest growing segment of our unhoused community — seniors who become homeless for the first time after 50.

A bright spot is critical strides Oakland has made making necessary changes expanding our holistic safety infrastructure by:

- re-establishing specialized OPD Crime Reduction Teams,
- enhancing law enforcement with technology such as ALPR cameras,
- focusing violence interruption strategies on the small number of people at the center of violence (Ceasefire Program),
- expanding community ambassadors in our commercial corridors, and
- standing up an alternative crisis response program (MACRO).

[Violent crime appears to be declining](#) and we will all continue to prioritize safety until our residents and businesses feel safe.

Affordable housing creation is another bright spot. Oakland is providing funds for deeply needed affordable housing at a time when these funds are scarce. Since allocating the first tranche of funds in 2023 after the passage of Measure U, which I championed, affordable housing units are now under construction with even more in the pipeline.

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 Alameda County Supervisor, District 5. Alameda County and its cities and unincorporated areas face the persistent challenges of homelessness, lack of affordable housing, inadequate mental health/substance abuse programs, and a need for greater



community safety.

During my tenure on the Oakland City Council, I have seen that our local solutions only go so far without the County's partnership and support. We've raised funds to create deeply affordable housing, but we need the County's partnership on supportive services to house our unsheltered neighbors. We've expanded violence prevention and alternative crisis response, but we need the County's partnership to align our criminal legal system towards more coordinated prevention, diversion and rehabilitation.

I am the only candidate that can bring a strong voice for Oakland to the County, as a long-time resident and effective policymaker. Years of confronting policy issues and budgets in Oakland's complex large and complex urban landscape are unmatched in this race.. We need to go beyond silos and jurisdictions to work together and advance the East Bay region.

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

I began my advocacy at UC Berkeley over two decades ago. Since that time, I've successfully organized Chinatown garment workers in Oakland, built the student anti-sweatshop movement in Berkeley, and advocated for fair pay and working conditions for the East Bay's most vulnerable residents in Oakland, Emeryville, Berkeley and Pleasanton. Previously the Executive Director of the Partnership for Working Families and the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy, I have been honored on multiple occasions for my transformative leadership, including receiving the Mario Savio Young Activist Award for my work organizing the student anti-sweatshop movement at UC Berkeley and across the country.

Alameda County Supervisor

5. The City of Oakland is often referred to as the "dead weight of Alameda County", with the highest homelessness rate, highest violent crime rates and incarceration rates, lowest educational outcomes, poorest health outcomes, and most precarious city budget compared with other Alameda County cities.

As supervisor what tangible actions will you undertake to improve the conditions in Oakland and overall quality of life for Oakland residents, businesses, and visitors?

Oakland is the heart and county seat of Alameda County. Together with the Port of Oakland, it is a regional economic driver. With the future Coliseum development and collaboration with businesses from Hegenberger to Downtown, Oakland is turning a corner. Many are talking about change, but implementing it is harder. I am deeply involved in that work, and am gratified that we are seeing real changes. [Violent crime appears to be declining. Homelessness has been slowing down.](#) I agree that there is much more to do, and I feel I am the best person to partner with Oakland at the County level as Supervisor. With deeper collaboration between Oakland and the County, along with regional coordination on key issues like safety and homelessness, I believe we can achieve a brighter future for our town.

My priorities as County Supervisor are Safety, Homelessness, Housing, and Healthcare.



**Safety** – This topic is deeply personal to me. I am not just an advocate and elected official, but a mother and sexual assault survivor. Whether it's taking our kids out to play; walking, biking, or driving to run errands; or coming home at night from a long day- everyone deserves safety. My public safety vision is a holistic approach that embraces two critical elements: maintaining trained, accountable law enforcement combined with increasing financial investment to attack the root causes of crime and poverty.

As County Supervisor, I'll advocate forcefully for investment in both approaches. The County can increase its regional coordination with every community's police department to get guns and violence off our streets, while expanding access to mental health and after-school programs, enhancing community violence prevention programs, and investing in rehabilitation and re-entry services.

**Homelessness** – Homelessness is a crisis in the East Bay and California. I'll take my results-oriented approaches to ending homelessness to the County through an integrated approach by expanding job training, placement and creation; enhanced mental health counseling and substance abuse/addiction programs, and transitional housing for families, seniors and veterans.

**Housing** – Home ownership should be possible for every East Bay family and resident. I'm honored to be solely endorsed by housing justice organizations such as the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment for my work to secure \$350 Million to create 2,400 housing units for local homeless and working families. I established a \$14 Million Fund to help low-income tenants purchase homes, and will prioritize creating housing that our future generations, teachers and public safety providers can afford.

**Healthcare** – County government provides safety net programs for the most vulnerable residents: working families struggling to make ends meet, seniors on fixed incomes, and women needing access to specialized health services. The California Nurses Association endorses my candidacy and vision for ensuring that every family who needs access to quality healthcare, receives it, including access to bilingual and culturally competent services.

6. In July 2022, the three national credit rating agencies (Standard and Poor's, Moody's, and Fitch) all reaffirmed the County's current AAA rating, citing the County's prudent **financial management policies and practices**, consistent positive budgetary performance, and a strong stable management team. The County obtaining the highest possible rating from the 3 major agencies allows the County to finance major projects with lower interest costs, saving substantial tax payer resources over time.
  - a. Summarize the largest contributors to Alameda County's consistent positive budgetary performance and the Board of Supervisors' role in maintaining it.



What specific policies, measures, and actions will you commit to that will ensure consistently strong budget performance?

- b. Describe your understanding of why some cities in the county have consistently widening structural budget deficits while others maintain minimal (if any) budget deficits. What can/should the county do to support cities who are struggling financially?
- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that will give Alameda County residents confidence you can deliver on these goals?

Alameda County's consistent positive budgetary performance can be attributed to its prudent financial management, careful oversight, and commitment to maintaining a balanced budget while investing in essential services. The Board of Supervisors has played a critical role in ensuring fiscal stability by adopting conservative revenue estimates, maintaining strong reserves, and prioritizing spending on critical needs like public safety, healthcare, and housing.

The largest contributors to the County's consistent positive budgetary performance include:

- Longstanding financial leadership from County Administrator Muranishi and Supervisor Carson.
- Approval of a balanced budget each year, and careful management to that budget through the countywide forecasting system and careful attention to spending and revenue throughout the year.
- Preservation of a County reserve that is responsible and contributes to the excellent credit rating.
- Prudent use of the County's allocation of discretionary revenue (primarily property taxes), including increased spending for community-based organization (CBO) and employee Cost of Living Adjustments, as well as annual set-asides for capital and the County reserve.
- Implementation of an annual budget process that strives to be inclusive, transparent and fiscally responsible, which engages County departments, labor, and community organization partners through public meetings (Board of Supervisors Budget Work Group)

As a member of the Board of Supervisors, I will commit to maintaining and enhancing these practices by advocating for long-term financial planning, ensuring that budget decisions are made transparently and in consultation with community stakeholders, and focusing on equity in budget allocations. I will also push for performance-based budgeting to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent effectively and efficiently, aligning expenditures with clear outcomes that benefit all residents, especially those in marginalized communities.

Structural budget deficits in some cities are often due to a combination of declining revenues, increasing pension and healthcare costs, and inadequate reserves. Cities with minimal deficits



have often benefited from more diversified revenue bases, robust economic development, and strong fiscal management practices, often including conservative revenue projections.

The County can support struggling cities by providing technical assistance in financial management, fostering regional collaboration on economic development initiatives, and offering targeted financial aid for critical services. Additionally, the County can work with state and federal partners to secure additional funding for cities in distress, ensuring that they can maintain essential services while working toward long-term fiscal health.

As Oakland City Council President, I led the adoption of two balanced biennial budgets in challenging economic times, closing significant deficits while maintaining city services and expanding resources for homelessness, affordable housing, and violence prevention. I have consistently prioritized fiscal responsibility while ensuring that our budget reflects our community's values of equity and justice. My experience in negotiating tough legislation and balancing competing priorities will give Alameda County residents confidence that I can deliver strong budgetary performance at the county level.

7. Please describe the current state of the **Sheriff's budget** and the main public safety concerns in Alameda County. As part of your response, please:
  - a. Propose how you will manage and allocate the Sheriff's budget to effectively address public safety concerns in Alameda County.
  - b. Discuss your perspective on:
    - i. How will you ensure accountability and transparency in the use of these funds?
    - ii. How will you measure the impact of these budget allocations on public safety outcomes?
  - c. Summarize measures will you take to ensure that young people in the juvenile justice system receive the necessary support to prevent reoffending?

The Sheriff's budget is nearly \$625 million annually and includes nearly 2,000 employees. Approximately 75% of the Sheriff's budget is funded by County discretionary revenue (General Fund), and the budget is subject to the Board of Supervisors approval. Pending factors affecting the budget include meeting the consent decree requirements posed by the Babu litigation, and implementation of AB 1185 regarding Sheriff oversight.

The Sheriff's budget must be managed with a focus on accountability, transparency, and community safety. I will work to ensure that resources are allocated toward effective crime prevention strategies, including community policing, violence prevention programs, and alternatives to incarceration. Additionally, I will advocate for reallocating funds from punitive measures to programs that address the root causes of crime, such as mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and economic opportunities for underserved communities.



I will ensure accountability and transparency by establishing clear reporting requirements, and supporting a community oversight board to review spending and outcomes. This board would include representatives from impacted communities, ensuring that the voices of those most affected by law enforcement practices are heard.

The impact of budget allocations will be measured by tracking key public safety metrics such as crime rates, solve/clearance rates, recidivism rates, community trust in law enforcement, and the success of diversion programs. We will use data-driven approaches to assess whether the funds are achieving their intended outcomes and make adjustments as necessary.

To support young people from reoffending, I will prioritize expanding restorative justice programs, providing access to mental health and substance abuse treatment, and increasing educational and job training opportunities for young people in the juvenile justice system. By focusing on rehabilitation and support, rather than punishment, we can help prevent reoffending and support young people in leading successful, productive lives.

8. What specific and measurable improvements will you implement towards **mental health services**? As part of your response, please:
  - a. Summarize the current challenges and landscape of mental health services under the purview of Alameda County.
  - b. Discuss your perspectives on the current strengths and weaknesses in the county's **mental health services** and what service systems and funding opportunities will you advance and advocate for as a county Supervisor to improve Mental Health across:
    - i. Unhoused populations/ those with inadequate housing
    - ii. Youth (Age 0-18)
    - iii. Youth we are trying to divert from Juvenile Hall
    - iv. Adults we are trying to divert and transition from the criminal justice system
  - c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that will give Alameda County residents confidence you can deliver on these goals?

Alameda County faces significant challenges in providing adequate mental health services, including a lack of sufficient funding, workforce shortages, and barriers to access for marginalized populations. The increasing demand for services, particularly among unhoused individuals and those involved in the criminal legal system, has stretched resources thin, leading to long wait times and inadequate care.

#### **i. Unhoused populations/those with inadequate housing**

The county's strengths include a strong network of community-based organizations and dedicated mental health professionals. However, the system is underfunded and lacks



coordination. I will advocate for increased funding through state and federal grants, as well as reallocating existing county resources. Expanding mobile crisis teams and integrating mental health services with housing initiatives will be key to addressing the needs of unhoused populations.

In addition, Medi-Cal CalAIM now provides funding for housing navigation, tenancy sustaining services and housing deposits for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Working with the County Cal-AIM service providers and the County's public Medi-Cal managed care plan to ensure services are robust and accessible should be a priority.

### **ii. Youth (Age 0-18)**

The county has made progress in providing school-based mental health services, but gaps remain, particularly for youth in marginalized communities. I will support partnering with the Alameda County Office of Education to expand these services and advocate for increased collaboration between schools, mental health providers, and community organizations. We need to ensure that every child has access to timely and culturally competent care.

### **iii. Youth we are trying to divert from Juvenile Hall**

For youth involved in the juvenile justice system, the focus should be on diversion and rehabilitation rather than incarceration. I will work to expand mental health services within diversion programs, ensuring that youth receive the support they need to address underlying issues and prevent future involvement with the justice system.

### **iv. Adults we are trying to divert and transition from the criminal justice system**

I will advocate for expanding mental health courts and increasing access to treatment programs that serve as alternatives to incarceration. By addressing mental health needs, we can reduce recidivism and support successful reentry into the community.

In addition, I believe the Board of Supervisors must take more leadership in addressing the problems of incarceration and lack of mental health and housing in the County.

It's unacceptable that people are dying in our jails. As Supervisor, I will partner with our community to address the problems of incarceration and lack of mental health and housing in the County. The death of Maurice Monk illustrates the problems in the County. He should not have been in Santa Rita Jail. He should have been treated for his mental illness.

As Supervisor, I would work with our community – and with County leaders and departments – to implement the recommendations from the Reimagining Adult Justice initiative and those from the Care First, Jails Last Task Force. This will help ensure people with mental illness, substance use disorders, or who simply can't afford housing, get the care they need in the community. These recommendations include civilian oversight of the Sheriff, as well as investments in treatment and prevention of mental health illnesses.





The county should reallocate the \$26.6 million in capital improvements it had committed to the jail expansion, to building out permanent supportive housing units and crisis treatment beds services (such as Amber House) for justice involved individuals and their loved ones.

As an Oakland City Councilmember, I have been a strong advocate for mental health services, and co-authored legislation that created the MACRO program, alternative crisis response teams that addresses mental health crises, and low level calls for service, without police intervention-allowing police to focus on responding to violent crimes. My work in expanding mental health services and integrating them with public safety initiatives demonstrates my commitment to improving mental health care in Alameda County.

9. What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver for **children's services** in Alameda County? As part of your response, please:
  - a. Discuss your perspectives on:
    - i. Current state of behavioral health services for children and youth including how effectively integrated children services are with behavioral health services
    - ii. What improvements need to be made? What are the key metrics you will use to measure your/ the Board of Supervisors' success?
    - iii. How will you ensure these services are equitably distributed across all communities within Alameda County?
    - iv. What partnerships will you leverage to improve this integration?
  - b. Describe the experience(s) from your past that will give Alameda County residents confidence you can deliver on these goals?

Behavioral health services for children and youth in Alameda County are crucial but currently under-resourced and not fully integrated with other services. While there are strong individual programs, there is a need for better coordination between mental health services, schools, and child welfare systems.

Improvements include expanding access to early intervention services, increasing the availability of school-based mental health professionals, and ensuring that services are culturally responsive and accessible to all communities. Success will be measured by metrics such as reduced wait times for services, improved mental health outcomes for children and youth, and increased satisfaction among families with the care provided.

I will advocate for an equity lens in all decision-making processes, ensuring that resources are allocated to communities with the greatest need. This includes targeted outreach and service provision in historically underserved areas, as well as ongoing monitoring to ensure that disparities are addressed.



Partnerships with school districts, community-based organizations, and healthcare providers will be essential in improving service integration. I will also work with state and federal agencies to secure additional funding and support for these initiatives.

My experience in reauthorizing the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (approximately \$21 million per year serving thousands of families) and expanding Oakland's Department of Violence Prevention, which includes youth services and mental health support, has prepared me to tackle these challenges at the county level. I have a track record of bringing together diverse stakeholders to create comprehensive, community-centered solutions.

10. What specific and measurable improvements will you implement for **housing development and housing affordability** in Alameda County? As part of your response, please:

- a. Summarize current budget allocations for housing in Alameda County
- b. Discuss your perspectives on:
  - i. Where do you see the greatest needs or successes in housing allocations?
  - ii. How will you coordinate these efforts with local cities and municipalities to ensure a unified approach?
  - iii. What legislative policies should be modified or created to deliver these measurable improvements?
- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that will give Alameda County residents confidence you can deliver on these goals?

The County's health care agency, Alameda County Health (ACH) had a budget of approximately \$50 million in FY24 for housing navigation, tenancy sustaining services, housing deposits, street health for homeless individuals and families and other related services.

The County's Community Development Agency (CDA) budget is \$135 million and includes but is not limited to the following services related to housing and homelessness

- Provide financing, project administration, environmental review, and construction management for housing, community development, rehabilitation, and homelessness programs and projects as mandated by local, State, or federal funding sources.
- Administer the Measure A1 affordable housing general obligation bond program, including affordable housing development financing and oversight, housing preservation and down payment assistance programs, staffing the Citizen Oversight Committee, and tracking local hire and contracting compliance and goals.



- Administer supportive services, shelter, housing operations, and rental assistance funding for programs serving homeless and at-risk individuals and families in the unincorporated County.

The greatest needs are in the development of deeply affordable housing and supportive services for the unhoused. Successes include the County's A1 program and efforts in leveraging state and federal funds for housing development and the implementation of programs that prioritize housing for vulnerable populations, such as seniors and veterans.

I will work closely with city governments, regional agencies, and community organizations to ensure that housing efforts are coordinated and that resources are used efficiently. This includes advocating for regional solutions to housing challenges and homeless/housing action plans between cities with the greatest need and the County, as the County updates its Home Together Plan.

With the recent withdrawal of Regional Measure 4, Alameda County and the Bay Area are in desperate need of a funding source for affordable housing. I will advocate with our state and federal delegations for funding to help solve our housing crisis.

As an Oakland City Councilmember, I led the effort for a \$350 million bond for affordable housing and have authored legislation to protect tenants and prevent displacement. My work in creating and funding the Acquisition & Conversion to Affordable Housing Fund demonstrates my commitment to expanding housing affordability and ensuring that all residents have access to safe, stable housing. I have also served on the Executive Board of the Association of Bay Area Governments where we focus on regional affordable housing issues and solutions.

11. What specific and measurable improvements will you implement for **emergency response services for the unhoused population** in Alameda County?

- a. Summarize strategies for coordinating emergency response services for unhoused populations in Alameda County.
- b. Discuss your perspectives on:
  - i. How will you work with mental health providers and housing services to improve the utilization of existing housing stock?
  - ii. What are the main challenges in coordinating these services, and how do you plan to address them?
  - iii. How will you measure the effectiveness of these coordinated efforts?
- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that will give Alameda County residents confidence you can deliver on these goals?



Effective coordination of emergency response services for the unhoused requires a multi-agency approach that includes mental health providers, housing services, and law enforcement. I will advocate for the creation of a centralized coordination system that tracks available resources and ensures that services are delivered in a timely and efficient manner. This system will prioritize connecting unhoused individuals with permanent housing solutions, rather than relying solely on temporary shelters.

I will work to ensure that mental health providers and housing services are integrated into a comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness. This includes expanding access to supportive housing, which pairs housing with mental health and other wraparound services. I will also advocate for better utilization of existing housing stock by streamlining the process for converting vacant properties into affordable housing.

The main challenges include a lack of coordination between agencies, insufficient funding, and the complexity of navigating multiple service systems. To address these challenges, I will work to improve communication and collaboration between service providers, advocate for increased funding, and support the creation of a centralized service hub where individuals can access all necessary resources in one location. In addition, coordination between cities and the County will improve outcomes for unhoused residents.

Effectiveness will be measured by tracking key outcomes such as the reduction in the number of unhoused individuals, the speed at which people are connected to permanent housing, and improvements in mental health and overall well-being for those served. Regular reporting and evaluation will ensure that we are meeting our goals and making necessary adjustments.

My leadership in creating the MACRO program, which coordinates alternative crisis responses in Oakland, and my work securing funding for housing and homelessness prevention demonstrate my ability to deliver effective and innovative solutions. In addition, I launched Oakland's first upgraded tiny homes community with single-occupancy shelters providing heat, lockable doors, storage, and space for pets to more than 65 unhoused residents, using city owned public land. This program successfully housed participants, then wrapped up to make way for the first of two 100% affordable housing projects. My experience in bringing together diverse stakeholders to address complex challenges will be invaluable in coordinating emergency response services for the unhoused at the county level.

**12. As a current legislator at the city level, 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.**

In 2020, I authored a resolution to extend the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth another 12 years. Initially, some of my colleagues had concerns and wanted to take the issue to the voters by ballot measure. Together with many community organizations, we worked with my Council colleagues to address their concerns and eventually won unanimous support. This Fund is



critical in that it provides more than \$21 million every year in guaranteed funding for local youth and family programs serving tens of thousands of families, including childcare, job training, early childhood education, summer programs, and youth jobs. I am proud of authoring this legislation and securing the votes of all of my colleagues.

One of the hardest votes was on the Encampment Management Policy. While we all understood the intent of having clarity on managing homeless encampments, despite my best efforts, the policy was not paired with a funded implementation plan. Better coordination with the County on the continuum of services for unhoused residents will make encampment management more effective.

**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)
- b. Would you vote to Recall Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao? (YES/NO)
- c. Would you vote to pass California Prop 36 (makes changes to Prop 47)? (YES/NO) – NO

Regarding the two recalls, I trust the voters to make the best decisions for their families, the City and County we all love in what will be a consequential election locally, regionally and nationally. It would be inappropriate for me to share my personal vote, or take a public position. As a current City Councilmember and Council President, I could be in a future position of serving as Oakland's Interim Mayor, or voting for an Interim Mayor. As a future Supervisor, I could be in a future position of voting for an interim District Attorney.