



## **ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2022**

**Michael Daniels**

**Running for  
Orange County School Board  
District 3**

## Candidate Information

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### **1. What motivated you to run for this position?**

I have more than 20 years of higher education experience plus more than 2 decades of volunteering with OCPS. My kids have graduated from the District and I want to give back to the community. I feel we need experienced School Board Member so I decided to run.

### **2. What does being an ally or advocate for the LGBTQ+ community mean to you?**

It means looking out for a community that is being marginalized by our state leaders. It means listening and helping to facilitate solutions to issues that effect the LGBTQ+ community. Running for public office puts you in a position of being a public servant and I would happily serve and support the LGBTQ+ community.

### **3. Please summarize your history of community involvement. This may include city boards, civic associations, non-profits, etc.**

My community involvement started in 1996. My wife was a first grade teacher at Pine Hills Elementary and for several years I would take off work to chaperone on field trips because that school didn't have much community or parental support. I then started mentoring kids at Tildenville Elementary at the request of a Principal. Shortly after I began to volunteer at the A Gift For Teaching store. I joined a few SAC committees, joined the Education Facilities Board of Orange County along with the Citizens Review Board. I also volunteered a lot at my church as a council member, council vice president, and council president. I am also currently the vice chair of the Orange County Health Facilities Board.

### **4. Please summarize any work you have performed in the past five years to further LGBTQ+ rights. This may include paid positions, volunteer work, and donations.**

As the Campus Director for Nova Southeastern University- Orlando , I provided space and support for the Zebra Coalition to hold community trainings and seminars on the campus. I felt it was a great opportunity to provide our students and staff with training on current issue effecting the LGBTQ+ community and I wanted to support the coalition. Outside of that I proudly posted my ally decal on my office door and tried to model values that I would want my children and others to follow.

## Questions

5. **The rise in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation barreling down from Tallahassee has caused a sharp increase in discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Orange County. How would you go about reducing discrimination in your district or local community? How would you measure your progress?**

Speaking up...speaking out...listening and focusing on outcomes. I certainly don't have all the answers but I feel I do a decent job at listening to people and together come up with solutions.

6. **Elected officials and office staff are still woefully under-educated on the transgender community. This means that the services their offices provide are often ignorant of the needs of the transgender community. What actions would you take to ensure that the services your office will provide will be educated on and cognizant of the needs of the transgender community?**

I would regular meet with LGBTQ+ student groups to hear what their needs are, in real-time so I can address either through my office directly or through the community.

7. **The Florida Republican Party is leading the country in stripping away LGBTQ+ rights, starting with our children. Students are having their lives and livelihoods placed at risk by laws such as the Transgender Sports Ban, the so-called Parental Bill of Rights, and now Don't Say Gay. These shamelessly discriminatory bills are forcing LGBTQ+ families to reconsider their future in Florida. What would you tell the parents of LGBTQ+ children in your district who feel they need to leave Florida in order to protect their children?**

I wouldn't so much as "tell" as I would listen to their situations and what has brought them to consider leaving Florida and I would try to find short term solutions while we work as a community to resolve the hate and ignorance that seems to emanate from Tallahassee.

8. **The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health found that 45% of LGBTQ+ students seriously considered attempting suicide and 1-in-5 LGBTQ+ attempt it. How would you lead on this issue and work to decrease these statistics over the course of your term in office?**

I am a strong advocate for more mental health professionals in our schools. We don't have enough and they, along with security and good teachers are the priority.

- 9. The same survey by The Trevor Project found that nearly all transgender and non-binary students have had to worry about their access to gender-affirming healthcare, bathrooms, and sports teams being taken away from them. How would you work to take this fear off their shoulders so that they can go back to just being kids?**

I would work as hard as I could to make sure OCPS policy, where possible, takes the needs of transgender and non-binary students into account.

- 10. Far-right groups are pushing to ban books on any topic they find disagreeable, such as books on Black history and experiences, immigration, the LGBTQ+ community, climate change, etc. Do you support these book bans? If not, what is your plan to counter them and ensure students have access to a full array of age-appropriate knowledge and experiences?**

My wife is a media specialist (teacher/librarian) for OCPS. We don't believe in book bans. It's always important to be mindful that schools have age appropriate books, and our media specialists have had that covered. The far-right is just trying to turn the calendar back to 1950 and I'm not having any of it!

- 11. During a town hall in your district, a constituent describes being gay or transgender as a "lifestyle choice." What is incorrect about their description? How would you constructively respond in this situation?**

I would ask if they feel their sexual preference was a lifestyle choice also? They almost certainly would say no and that would start some dialogue that would hopefully get them to think about their beliefs. I would follow up later with that constituent to continue to educate them and support them as well. Even ignorant people need to be extended grace and a chance to be better.

- 12. During a board meeting, the board chair purposely refers to a transgender woman as "he" and "him" as the woman attempts to give her public comment. The woman corrects the board chair each time, insisting that her pronouns are "she" and "her." The board chair continues to misgender the woman until she eventually leaves the chamber in tears. How would you respond in this situation?**

I would express my concern publicly for how the woman was treated and make sure I used the proper pronouns. After the board meeting I would burn up a little relationship capital and coach the chair on how to properly treat his constituents.

- 13. A parent approaches you at an event, insisting that her son's teachers have "groomed" him into liking boys. Her son is at her side when she says this. How do respond to the parent's statement such that the young boy leaves feeling better about himself?**

While their son is present I would keep the focus on how he's doing in school and what his interests are. Publicly embarrassing him at an event would not be helpful. I would ask to meet with the parent during a follow up meeting and coach/ counsel them.

- 14. Orange County continues to embrace urban sprawl, despite a plethora of data that links urban sprawl to severe strains on our housing, employment, healthcare, and public transit systems (to name a few). What are your thoughts on Orange County's growth? What could Orange County in terms of development that would better serve the communities in your district?**

As a School Board Member I would look to provide high quality and inclusive education to our kids so they can be part of the solution to our current urban sprawl. I want to make sure that they have options so they can stay and help us make our community better or pursue their dreams elsewhere because they have been prepared for success.

- 15. Do you support the idea of constructing more multi-family homes in neighborhoods traditionally zoned for single-family homes? What impact would this have on your district?**

I do support "some" additional multi-family homes in existing neighborhoods. We still have a homeless problem with kids in OCPS. A kid that doesn't have a home or food won't be able to learn. A few more multi-family homes could be a huge blessing for hundreds of kids.

- 16. Homeowner Associations often prevent homeowners from transitioning their lawns away from non-functional grasses such as turf and towards sustainable options such as native Florida plants and edible landscapes. HOAs insist that moving away from the traditional pristine green lawn would lower housing prices. What is your opinion on this issue?**

The HOA is run by the residents of that community. The change needs to come from them and their children. I would love to support STEM programs where our kids can help develop literal "green" alternatives for lawns and pitch ideas to the HOA.