1. **Why are you running for the MMSD Board of Education?**

I am running for school board, so that all students and parents have what they need to be successful. To advocate and ensure that the education system is equitable and safe for students and their families, and teachers. That the board and district reflect the students and families it serves.

As a third generation Madisonian, I deeply care about my community and the children who live here. Through advocating for my children and navigating the school district, I found myself with the same struggles that my mother and my grandmother before her had; the struggle of raising black children in a district with a growing achievement gap. I believe our schools are striving to do their best for all students, but after 3 generations, we have to do better. As our community diversifies, so do our schools, but I do not feel that we have yet developed the experience, skill, or leadership in our school district to reflect the identities and needs of the families we serve.

I am running because I want to see changes in (1) how we think about student safety, (2) how we support community members in school board committees, and (3) because I want to change the narrative about our students as underachieving by focusing on the incredible work of teachers in our district who help students master the content and their own learning process.

2. **Please describe what quality public education looks like to you?**

Quality public education should provide all learners with what they need to thrive educationally, while providing a space where they feel like they belong. It should bring all students together in an environment that exemplifies academic rigor and support. It is also where our teachers can shine and feel supported, they can feel and see their meaningful work flourishing.

3. **Name three things you believe the MMSD does well.**

**Black Excellence:** The research and coalition building done by MMSD’s Engagement Department is an example of what MMSD has done well. The Recommendations on Black Excellence report - specifically compiled by Nichelle Nichols did a great job of collecting data from Black students themselves about what Black Excellence is in their own eyes. The inclusion of student ideas and recommendations is truly wonderful and refreshing. It is reflective of a school district that is starting to listen to student voices about curriculum, teacher hiring, college and career readiness. The Black Excellence Think Tank and the administrators committed to this at MMSD are taking Black students seriously

**Inclusive Curriculum:** The implementation of policies that support Transgender, Non-binary students. The guidelines published in 2018 are specific and target oriented. Along
with other parents, I have seen the implementation of these guidelines and policies in my children’s schools.

**Teacher Leadership:** The commitment to supporting teachers. For the past 2 years MMSD has addressed the perpetual dismissal of our teacher in addressing the pay gap post ACT 10 and the school defunding led by the state. Madison has taken an opportunity to provide salary adjustments for teachers and supported full cost of living increase.

4. **Name three things you believe the MMSD needs to improve.**

**Representation across district:** There needs to be more recruitment and retention of school staff and teachers of color, which represent our school’s population. As a child, I remember very few teachers of color. As a parent of MMSD students, I have noticed the lack of teachers of color.

**Safety:** MMSD needs to improve their stance on and processes concerning student and teacher safety. Safety is not just about law enforcement presence in case of emergencies, but also issues regarding citizenship, race, social class, gender, etc. that create unsafe conditions in classrooms, in their hallways, relationships with students and adults. The district just had a community meeting about creating a new process to handle “racial incidents.” How does this plan help teachers, students, and other school staff make the school experiences more psychologically and academically safe? This can be done by expanding curriculum to include histories, accomplishments, languages of all students. MMSD’s greatest challenge is to start seeing issues like these as concerns for our student’s overall safety in MMSD schools.

**Provide more support for Teachers:** Based on teachers I have spoken to, they feel micromanaged and that their input isn't valued by the district. The school district needs to do a much better job of including teachers in decision making processes - especially about what and how they teach. Teachers are held accountable for many things that are often at odds with each other. For example, teaching a classroom of 25 students, making sure each of student has one on one instruction time, making sure to adhere to standards and providing an authentic curriculum all while preparing students for state tests. With decision making power, teachers can negotiate the expectations required of them.

5. **How do you think the MMSD should address these challenges?**

Answer to this question can be found in #4 and #10.

6. **Name three things you believe the State of Wisconsin could do better to support public schools.**

I am going to be very honest. Instead of naming things the state could marginally improve, I am going to state what needs to happen. The legislature needs to overturn Act 10. Act 10 purposefully destabilized our teachers in an effort to privatize education and stop spending state dollars on the programs, policies and budgets that we depend on to keep citizens healthy, productive, socioeconomically stable and informed.
This leads me to my second point. The state needs to fully fund all day 4-K and fully-fund special education services. 4-K is not only a research based, “field tested” way of closing the achievement gap - but it allows parents to work the full day and financially support their families.

Finally, the state needs to find a better funding model. The state controls the school board’s ability to raise property taxes to fund our schools. Increasing property values is an issue none of us would like to face, however the state could investigate other states funding models to take some of the pressure off of property taxes. We need the state to research what other states do to fund education and start a public conversation concerning how they might improve the current funding model.

7. **How would you advocate for these needs as a Board member?**

As school board members we can craft and pass resolutions on legislative issues like transparency on voucher funding, education funding and teachers’ unions. This may sound like a small step, however resolutions can powerful documents that our different communities can rally around. These resolutions, crafted with the community and passed by the school board can create common ground, a way to support our different communities’ efforts at the state level and a strengthened voice to advocate for our needs. Secondly, I will work with the boards legislative liaison to share information on bills and funding priorities at the state level and make it an active discussion at our board meetings. Third, I will leverage my position as an elected official to contact state elected officials and work with them to bring these issues up at both levels. We share constituencies and I would build solid relationships with legislators to encourage sustainable communication about the changes we need to see at the state level.

8. **What do you believe are the three greatest external challenges facing the MMSD?**

The three greatest external challenges facing MMSD are:

1. US culture and society’s macrocosm (i.e. race, wealth, poverty etc.) affects on students and their families, our community, and our schools. Racism, classism, and poverty pose continued challenges to our district and the education of our children.
2. Education privatization and the defunding of public education driven at the federal level. The current US Secretary of Education, a “backer” of private and vouchered schools, has continued to propose funding cuts that would devastate public schools, after school programs, and other public sector programs for our children.
3. Funding public education at the state level. Our current Governor, an advocate of public education, continues to be met with opposition, which has made it difficult to provide the adequate funding for our schools.

9. **How do you think the MMSD can best meet these challenges?**

Public schools are central to students and their family’s lives, therefore we should/must:
- Ensure that our schools are safe, inviting, and positioned to provide high quality academic achievement for all students and their families, teachers, and the community.
- Strengthen collaboration between schools and community, teachers and community members, by leveraging cultural wealth within our city.
- Hire a superintendent who is invested in our city and leads our schools through innovation, culturally relevant pedagogy, advocacy and investment in our teachers.
- Strengthen relationships with city lawmakers, continue advocating for our schools at the state level to lobby for increased funding.

10. **What ideas do you have to support the recruitment and retention of teachers of color so that our work force is more representative of our student population?**

    The racism in Madison is so deeply rooted and apparent that hiring incentives, diversity trainings etc. often are not enough to attract or retain teachers of color. I propose a different approach. Have we studied the culture of whiteness in our schools and how it effects the school environment? I support workshops that encourage teachers of all races to explore their own assumptions about people of color. Everything that we do customs and traditions in our society place a priority on developing a racial identity. We need examine our own racial identity in an anti-racist format - and need to commit the resources, counselors and community members to make this a regular ongoing process - not just another professional development.

11. **What do you view as the underlying issues involving the opportunity gap? How would you address those?**

    Systematic racism: The growth of the wealth divide and the purposeful stripping of resources from communities of color. For example, the multimillion-dollar private prison system and zero-tolerance school discipline policies that lead students from school and to those prisons.

    As a school board member, I would find funding for educational programs in underserved communities as a way to enrich the committees themselves. I plan to advocate for fully funding of all day 4-K and other programs that not only benefit our children but also give working parents more flexibility.

12. **What are your thoughts about public charter schools governed by the BOE? (Instrumentality schools)**

    As a graduate of James C. Wright Middle School, I know first-hand that public charters governed by the Board of Education can work. Instrumentality schools, such as Wright and Nuestro Mundo, have benefited the district and are great examples of innovation education. However, we can find other ways to be innovative with education without having to create more public charters.
13. **What are your thoughts about private charter schools governed by others? (Non-instrumentality schools)**

I am opposed to privatizing public education, which includes private charter schools and school vouchers. I do not support policies that take resources from public schools and redistribute them to privately.

14. **What are your thoughts about vouchers (using public funds to pay for private schools)?**

Public school funding should be for public schools and should not be redirected to private schools.

15. **Non-incumbents only: Have you ever attended a PTO, PTA meeting or a school board meeting? If so, what issues motivated your attendance?**

Yes, I have attended PTO, PTA meetings and school board meetings. I felt that it was important to form community with other parents and with the teachers and principals of the schools my children attended. I also participated on behalf of other parents in my community, to not only gather information, but to advocate and make sure their voices are heard.

16. **Describe which of the following issues you believe teachers and other employees should have a voice in and what that would look like?**

   a. Their pay and benefits  
   b. Their working conditions  
   c. Their students’ learning conditions (e.g. class size, use of technology, building conditions, behavior response)  
   d. Curriculum and assessment selection and decisions

Teachers know best what they need and should be bought to the table when there are decision affecting each of the above items. When one is involved in decision making, they are more likely to uphold them and support. Solutions should always include all stakeholders.

17. **Would you support the reinstatement of collective bargaining rights for all public employees (currently prohibited by Act 10)?**

Yes!

18. **School staff experienced a reduction in take home pay after Act 10 was passed and salary increases have not kept pace with the cost-of-living. The District is experiencing increasing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified employees. If elected to the Board of Education, what is your plan to increase pay for school staff?**

I plan to support recommendations regarding the increased pay for school staff. If elected, with other board members, I will seek alternative ways to generate revenue to support increased pay. For example, there have been successful city-wide referendums.
passed regarding school funding. I support and believe in our teachers and will advocate for them to receive competitive salaries.

19. **Are you aware of the MMSD’s collaborative employee handbook process with employee representatives?**
   Yes.
   a) **If so, do you support the continuation of that process?**
      Yes, as it guarantees that teachers participate in compensation decision making.

20. **The school board is considering two referenda questions for the community to vote on in 2020 – one for facilities and one for operating expenses. Do you support these referenda?**
    Yes.
    a) **If yes, how will you work to support the passage of these referenda?**
       I will support the passing of these referenda’s by working with the community to understand each item and provide input and feedback.

21. **If you had to identify $10 million in necessary cuts, what would you prioritize cutting? If you could identify $10 million in additional investments what would you invest in?**
    Although $10 million may be a fraction of the overall budget, if we had to make cuts, it should be cuts to the administration budget. Instead of hiring more administrators’ teachers should be making decisions along with school leadership. We could use $10 million to invest in our teachers’ salaries and antiracist training and their overall development as professionals.

22. **How do you think the MMSD could improve in providing parents and students greater voice on issues that impact them?**
    Working with community centers and working through with support services. Finding ways to bridge the cultural gaps, which allows parents and families to come together. As I mentioned earlier, we need transportation and meals at the appropriate meetings and a revamped committee meeting strategy so that community members walk way knowing that they accomplished something.

23. **Are you aware of the MMSD’s Behavior Education Plan?**
    Yes, I am very aware and familiar with MMSD’s Behavior Education Plan.
    a) **If so, what are your thoughts about the goals of the plan?**
       I don’t believe that it allows for children to understand their emotions and the behaviors that go with them. The goals of the plan are very limited. They do not take into account the fact that issues that students get frustrated by are academic ones like not including black history in the content etc. The plan is more of a de-escalation plan for adults to follow than it is a tool to help students identify their concerns and process them in ways that do not harm themselves and others.
b) What are your thoughts about the implementation of the plan?
We need to rethink the Behavior Plan period. We need to include teachers, parents and community members in the implementation of a program that focuses on the whole child - not just the behavior of the child.

The implementation of this plan needs to include anti-racist training that shows teachers how they can mistake students actions in which they advocate for themselves as defiance.

We need to revisit culturally relevant teaching and connect that to behavioral issues that come up in the classroom. There are many teachers in the district whose curriculum and teaching style create spaces that are culturally relevant, and create students that are culturally competent. They should give workshops on how they curb harmful behavior in their classroom by implementing culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching.

24. What do you see as the proper relationship between the Board of Education and the MMSD Superintendent and Administration?
The Board of Education's main priority as public elected officials is to ensure that students, their families, and district staff needs considered and met. Therefore, as the employer of the Superintendent, the board must support the administration, while holding it accountable on behalf of the community.

25. Who do you plan to seek advice from should you be elected to the Board of Education?
I believe that those who attend our schools and are most affected by the Board of Education’s policies, should be able to provide advice. I plan on consulting our students and their families, teachers, and the community. In addition, I plan to learn and seek advice from past board members, such as Bill Clingan. I plan to also seek advice from University education leaders, such as Gloria Landson-Billings.

25. Are you seeking MTI’s endorsement of your campaign?
Yes.

27. Are you seeking MTI political action contributions for your campaign?
Yes.

28. Is there anything else you would like MTI members to know about your candidacy and why you are seeking election to the Board of Education?
I am running because I am a mother. People underestimate what parents know about schools. I have grown up as a black girl in our schools and I am currently raising three black children. I am running because I have intimate knowledge about how MMSD policies and initiatives play out in the lives of minority students. My job is to represent our community in this school district that raised me and help me raise my kids. I am the only one who can bring this particular perspective to the school board. It’s this
perspective the school board needs if it is going to succeed in becoming racially and socioeconomically equitable

29. **Who has endorsed your campaign?**

This list continues to grow. Currently my campaign is endorsed by:

- Shelia Stubbs, WI State Representative
- Bill Clingan, Former School Board member
- Sherri Carter, City of Madison Alder
- Juan José López, Former School Board member
- Ali Muldrow, Current School Board member
- Ananda Mirilli, Current School Board member

Supporters include:
- Sabrina Madison, Progress Center for Black Women

30. **Who serves on your campaign committee?**

My campaign committee is made of community members, teachers, parents who volunteer their time, including Ananda Mirilli and Ali Muldrow. My campaign manager is Ashley Moncrief.

31. **Are you aware of any conflicts of interest which may prohibit you from voting on certain items before the Board of Education? If so, what are they?**

As an employee of the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, the department is currently reviewing possible future conflicts. If conflicts arise, board policy requires that I recuse myself, in which I will do so accordingly.