

Hi! I'm Michael Lai 赖天宸 and I'm a Chinese American educator, entrepreneur, and community builder running for DCCC in AD17 on the [SF Democrats for Change slate](#). My campaign website & platform is [here](#), and I would be honored to have your endorsement.



1. Are you registered as a Democrat?

Yes.

2. Are you a member of the Eastern Neighborhoods Democratic Club

Yes I am. I also lived in D6 for my first 2 years in SF, from 2014-2016.

3. Are you a member of the Noe Valley Democratic Club?

I am not; I don't live in Noe Valley (though I've gotten my hair cut there the past two years and have friends who live there :)).

4. Why should the Eastern Neighborhoods Democratic Club support your candidacy?

I love San Francisco and have energy and useful experience that I want to bring to making SF better.

As an educator, I've spent time as a volunteer preschool teacher in the Tenderloin, and as a 4th, 5th, and 8th grade volunteer teacher, working in some of the most underperforming schools in South Boston and Southeast DC. I care deeply about equity and giving opportunity to every child.

As an entrepreneur, I helped start a new university with 7 campuses around the world, and founded a network of 35+ early childhood micro-schools with a new model of providing housing for preschool teachers that directly benefited the East side of SF (many were in D6!). I've focused on creative solutions and results.

As a community builder, I've built multiple hundred+ person communities in the Mission / Hayes Valley, started a community for Chinese Americans connecting back to their roots, have been a volunteer preschool teacher in the Tenderloin, and I volunteer monthly serving breakfast at Glide Memorial Church in the Tenderloin. I believe in being community and people first.

I would love to bring my passion, experience, and voice to the DCCC. I would focus on outcomes not ideology — public safety, more housing, better schools, small businesses, downtown recovery, better transit, and good governance fixes to improve trust in government. I would energize new people and new money into SF politics — for example, at Nancy Tung and I's co-launch party Saturday 12/2 that was covered by the [SF Standard](#), there were 110 attendees, of which 98% were first time donors to SF politics.

5. Did you support the Board of Education Recall? Why/Why Not?*

Yes. I believe the three members of the School Board who were recalled were spending more time on performative ideology than on real student outcomes, and ignoring real fiscal issues in the district, and that negatively impacted our most disadvantaged students.

I spent the last decade focused on innovation in education. SFUSD has the 2nd highest achievement gap of any school district in CA. This is tragic and unacceptable. There are two goals in education reform — raising the ceiling and raising the floor. However, the way to increase equity is not to lower the ceiling, which the recalled school board was trying to do by getting rid of 8th grade algebra and attacking Lowell. The solution is to raise the floor!

We need to invest in research backed interventions that raise the floor — comprehensive home visitation and early childhood education (I spent the last 5 years working on early education and am on the board of Wu Yee, the largest Head Start provider in the city), a reading curriculum backed by science, individualized tutoring, bringing back 8th grade algebra, and incentivizing more experienced teachers to work in our most underperforming schools. We need more merit based programs, in addition to Lowell.

If I was a member of the DCCC I would endorse members of the School Board who aim to raise the ceiling, raise the floor, and keep the lights on at SFUSD.

6. Did you support the District Attorney Recall? Why/Why Not?*

Yes. People don't feel safe on the streets, and the social contract felt broken with a district attorney who was not holding people who broke the law accountable, such as fentanyl dealers and those who attacked Asian elders. This was also demoralizing for the police department, who didn't want to give cases to a DA who didn't prosecute them.

Just recalling a DA with a progressive ideology is not enough to solve a problem as complex as public safety (we also have to elect new judges to the Superior Court, fully staff the police department, and more). In addition to advocating for commonsense public safety measures like arresting fentanyl dealers, we need to address the root causes of crime — the economy, addiction, homelessness, and more.

There are real social justice concerns about police brutality and criminal justice reform, especially from the history of a failed war on drugs, and we should be conscious of this. Having taught in low income schools and seen inequity firsthand, after the murder of George Floyd, I spent time (humbly) educating my communities on my experiences with the history of race in America.

Ultimately, everyone has a right to feel safe, and this DA's policy was putting ideology ahead of outcomes and that's why I supported the recall.

For AD 17 Candidates

7. What are your 3 core policy issues you care about which affect the eastern half of the city the most?*

Here are three of my top policy priorities that affect the Eastern half of the city the most:

1. **Public safety:** everyone deserves to feel safe on the streets, especially our families and our elders. Safety is holding back full ridership on public transit; on walkability in downtown; on retail recovery. We need a fully staffed police department that doesn't spend 45% of their time on administrative paperwork and we need to arrest fentanyl dealers.
2. **Downtown recovery and vibrancy:** where downtown goes, so does San Francisco's economy. We need to rezone downtown to residential and create subsidies to return retail & commercial space. We should also organize more night markets like the Sunset & Chinatown Night Markets to bring more joy to downtown.
3. **Building more affordable housing:** so many social issues, from homelessness to SFUSD teachers & police officers not being able to afford to live in the city, are downstream of not building enough housing, especially affordable housing. We need to build more housing.

There are other issues I care about, like education (bringing back 8th grade algebra, putting SFUSD on better financial footing), small business streamlining, transit and good governance. Read about my platform here: www.votemichaellai.com

8. If elected, how do you see yourself as being able to influence these problems?*

DCCC is the most powerful group because its endorsement represents the official Democratic Party, and can swing 8-14% of the vote, in a city where elections are decided by <1%.

As a DCCC member I would work hard to ensure that we endorse supervisor, board of education, community college board, and other candidates that have common sense policy priorities and are good, competent people, not too ideological or out for personal gain.

I am also energizing new bases of voters to get involved in politics; I hope to get more competent candidates into the DCCC and higher offices in the future.

In addition, the DCCC works on voter registration. D10 especially has had lower turnout and has been neglected — Wu Yee, the nonprofit board I'm on, has a childcare center there. I'm giving a talk next Friday on civic engagement to 50 youth in the Bayview area, and hope to continue to partner with ENDC on increasing voter registration & civic engagement as a DCCC member.