

Greetings, my name is Maria Brenes and I am **honored** to be a candidate for this important open seat.

I am a long-time public education and children's advocate and a proud LAUSD parent. And I am also the proud daughter of Mexican immigrants. Both who worked tirelessly in Los Angeles and sacrificed so their U.S. born children could have better opportunities than they had.

After graduate school, I returned to LA, where I started working as a community organizer with students and parents at InnerCity Struggle in the Eastside. This work took me to some of the poorest schools in LA Unified.

For decades, LAUSD was a district that allowed public schools in our highest need communities to be overcrowded, under-resourced and neglected. Our local schools faced a crisis, so we came together as an intergenerational movement and we were successful by building people power through organizing.

Together, we won educational policies that were passed by the LA Unified School Board. We fought for and secured the first new LAUSD traditional public schools in the Eastside after more than 85 years. We raised college eligibility by pushing LAUSD to make the college preparatory requirements mandatory for graduation. We fought for the removal of punitive discipline policies and raised graduation rates. We brought the first wellness centers to local schools. We won equitable school funding to ensure students in foster care, low-income students and English Learners would not be left behind.

And we did this by building strong coalitions – Coalitions that brought together labor, students, parents, and the community.

Today, as the Executive Director of InnerCity Struggle, I continue to bring everyday people together to find solutions to bring about change even amidst crisis.

I am proud of the progress we have made and I am ready to fight for stronger neighborhood schools. It's time to bring MORE mental health services to help all of our children heal. It's time to lower classroom sizes to help our educators maximize time with students. It's time to give additional resources to our highest-need students - English Learners, foster youth, students facing homelessness, LGBTQIA students, Black students, Indigenous youth and those in special education. Because no matter your immigration status, zip code, or skin color, every child should thrive in school.

My track record has been about uplifting and fighting for our public-school system.

Thank you.