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- How will you make APS different?

While I believe that there are some good board members currently on the school board, there is no representation from northwest Aurora. I graduated from Aurora Central High School, currently one of the neediest schools in the state. No current board member, or candidate, graduated from Aurora Central. I live within walking distance of my alma mater and still have family that lives in northwest Aurora. Reflective of the community, I am the proud son of an immigrant and appreciate the cultural diversity of Aurora. While all of the school board members are at-large candidates, I do believe it is important to have a board that is reflective of the community. As a school board member with deep roots in Aurora, I will make the governance of APS different by adding in a much-needed -- and currently missing -- perspective.

Aurora Public Schools is also in great need of support and leadership. Schools in the district still face the possibility of state action if quality ratings don't improve. Recently released CMAS scores (including PARCC scores in English and math), point to growth in English language arts above the state average. Still, overall proficiency continues to lag far behind other school districts. This is particularly true in northwest Aurora. I will push for urgent and continued improvement of our school district.

- Why do you want the position? What is your current occupation?

In 2000, I joined the newly launched Daniels Fund, one of the largest private foundations in the region. As one of the founding members of the Daniels scholarship team, I helped design and refine the scholarship selection process. Since inception, our scholarship program has helped thousands of students break cycles of poverty by earning college degrees and moving on to successful careers. Currently, I manage a multimillion-dollar grantmaking budget for aging and disabilities organizations in the Denver-metro area and for cradle-to-career educational efforts in the entire state of New Mexico. In addition, I recently led an outreach effort to understand the assets and highest needs in Aurora. This included several meetings with government, nonprofit, business, education and community leaders.

The breadth and depth of these experiences have given me multiple professional perspectives, from the classroom to budget management to community building, that I will bring with me as an elected member of the Board of Education of Aurora Public Schools. While I certainly don't bill myself as an expert, I do feel like I bring something of value to the position. Given the many needs in the school district -- including challenges at my old high school Aurora Central -- I'm stepping up to the plate and trying to be part of the solution.

- What are your thoughts on last year's discovery of Eric Nelson's fabricated resume?

In 2016, I addressed Eric Nelson at a school board meeting and implored him to resign. We, as adults and men, are being looked to as role models by our boys and young men -- whether we want to or not. The right thing to do is to take responsibility for our actions and own up to mistakes that we've made. Unfortunately, Mr. Nelson did not do so.

I applaud the steps taken by the school board to censure one of their fellow school board members when it was apparent that he faked and embellished major sections of his resume. Faced with the inability to remove a sitting board member, the board took the maximum course of action by relieving him of his secretary duties, removing him from representing a cluster of

schools, and taking away his district credit card. I believe that all of these actions were the right decisions to make.

- What is your campaign slogan? If you do not have one, what would it be?

I believe that all students, regardless of where they live, have the right to attend a high-quality school that prepares them for success in college, careers, and life.

- What do you plan to focus on?

As a school board member, I will push the district to operate with a sense of urgency to fulfill its obligation to provide a high-quality education for all students. In the neediest parts of our district, students and families can't wait for improvement. I don't believe that we need to reinvent the wheel. There are numerous examples of success in Aurora Public Schools, in neighboring school districts, and from communities across the nation that have faced similar challenges and have turned around their schools. I believe that we must learn from these efforts and employ practices that are proven to work.

- With or without being elected, what do you envision APS to be in five year's time?

I envision a school district that is a model for the nation by exemplifying excellence in:

Student academic achievement

Inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and the differently-abled

Graduation rates

Eliminating achievement gaps

Hiring and retaining diverse and amazing teaching staff

Empowering bold school leaders

- What do you think is the biggest problem currently in APS?

To me the single most pressing issue in Aurora Public Schools is student achievement. I consider it our obligation as educators to push our district to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education. It is the promise that we've made with the families of these students. We owe it to them to deliver. In order to address these issues, I believe that the district must have district, administration, and teacher leaders that are aligned and working in concert with one another towards the same goals of supporting every student in every neighborhood of our district.

- How do you plan on approaching the budget deficit?

Unfortunately, fluctuations in student enrollment are what school districts and school boards have to regularly deal with. This means making adjustments from year to year. It comes with the territory of governance. Generally, I applaud the effort that the district made to engage the community with the projected decline in enrollment and the effect on the budget. That said, I'm sure that there was room for improvement to ensure that all constituents were included.

A notable positive outcome of the recent move to grant innovation status to five schools in Aurora was the decision to keep interpretation and translation services despite the cuts to this service districtwide. The flexibility to make school-level decisions like this made perfect sense, especially when schools like Crawford Elementary use telephone translations services three times more often than the average school in the district.

- What would you do to positively impact the current teacher shortage and attract more teachers?

APS struggles, as do districts nationwide, with recruiting and retaining teachers – in particular, teachers that are reflective of the multicultural diversity of Aurora. I am excited to explore options to ensure that we have a strong pipeline of incredible teachers in our district — whether it means a district-specific recruitment program, enabling paras to become full-time educators, teacher residencies, and partnering with our institutions of higher education to “grow our own.”