

*Have you ever been appointed or elected to public office?*

Yes.

*If yes, what office?*

Precinct Delegate.

*Have you ever owned a business or has someone in your family owned a business? If yes, please describe.*

No

*Briefly describe the qualifications and experience you possess that make you the best candidate for this office.*

I am running for the Muskegon County Commission because I am deeply concerned about the financial health and direction of our county. I am a mother to two girls, a MSW, an athlete, an advocate for social justice and product of West Michigan schools. As a case manager with a heavy client load, I received the Hope and Compassion Award for my work in Nashville, Tennessee with children, adolescents and families in mental health. I participated in the Tennessee Governor's Children's Cabinet intended to increase cohesion between a very large network of stakeholders and agencies statewide. Based on my experiences and training, I am running to help shape the future of our community.

*What do you believe should be the role of government in today's world?*

Good government should be about delivery of essential services, setting priorities and the efficient management of tax dollars. County government should act as a bridge between the other municipalities to support families through good jobs with benefits, protection of resources, sensible county projects, and advocate for under-served populations and community mental health.

*What do you consider to be the top three issues facing Muskegon County businesses today and how can the county government address them?*

1. Covid 19 Recovery and other quality public health programs.  
Providing a support network for our businesses will be imperative to their success following our current crisis. Family businesses, the heartbeat of our community, will need empathy, guidance and financial assistance to stay afloat.
2. Responsible management of county tax dollars.  
We need elected officials who are willing to make every dollar count. Businesses are being forced to make dollars out of pennies and it is with that same mentality our leaders should spend our hard earned tax dollars. I do believe spending is necessary however, it should be driven by the citizens, researched and then additional funding sources must be considered first.
3. Transparency in government.  
While the introduction of live County Commission meetings has been a great starting

point, there are many discussions that go on behind closed doors. We need County representation that is willing to engage citizens, even when those discussions are extremely difficult. We are not going to all agree on all subjects but we can find ways to work together to achieve success in this county.

*Name one thing that you think is going right in Muskegon County and one thing you think could be changed right away.*

I think that the acquisition of the Nugent Sands property for expanded recreational opportunities for Muskegon County residents is a real win for county residents. It is essential to protect this valuable natural resource in an area that is growing and requires sensible, sustainable development.

One of the biggest issues facing the County is resolving the current crisis at HealthWest, the only publically funded agency that provides mental health services to our most vulnerable population. Due to a current shortfall in state funding, Muskegon County has had to subsidize its continued operations. Given the stress on the community due to the pandemic and rising unemployment, mental health solutions are essential to the well-being of our residents and we must explore ways to keep HealthWest financially viable.

*In what areas do you feel you can make the most difference as a local elected official?*

We live in a society that is constantly changing and advancing. The world I was raised in no longer exists. We need representation from the families in our community that are facing the challenges on the ground and are not only directly impacted by the policies enacted by the County Commission but will also deal with the results well into the future. I have the opportunity to bring a younger perspective to the County Board that focuses on a positive future instead of the crisis management model operating now.

*How will you leverage and utilize the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce as a resource should you be elected?*

It is my intention to partner with all stakeholders in Muskegon County, including the business community. The current sitting commissioner has brought discord and divisiveness during his tenure on the County Board. His anti-government, anti-immigrant platform has put Muskegon County in a bad light and is making our home unattractive to new businesses and residents. I have witnessed, time and again, businesses and constituents come together to achieve goals and be helpful neighbors. It is one of the most amazing things about the community we have in this county. I intend be a unifier, because I know we are stronger united than we are divided. I intend to represent the interests of all residents, businesses, and organizations in Muskegon County by making decisions that are based on facts and good governance instead of promoting a personal agenda.

*If elected, what are your top 3 priorities?*

The number one priority for Muskegon County right now is the financial management of County. According to Bridge Magazine (February 20, 2018) Muskegon County ranked 79<sup>th</sup> out

of 83 counties in Michigan for financial health two years ago. More recently the County Board had to bond to pay off a settlement (5.5 million) of a lawsuit brought by a private IT Company. The case was exacerbated by comments made by Board members accusing the company owner of fraud. This is unacceptable and questionable use of the county bonding authority. Current concerns over deaths in the jail could result in additional lawsuits and the careful management of the county response is essential in minimizing any liability to the county.

As a trained Social Worker, my second priority is the preservation and possible expansion of public health services for Muskegon County. It is well documented that Muskegon County residents rank dead last for positive health outcomes in the state. This is why Muskegon County was one of five communities in the United States to be selected as part of a Wellville Grant (1 in 21) to collect data and implement programs designed to promote a healthier Muskegon. Unfortunately the program has floundered under current leadership and the County needs to take a leadership role in the delivery of quality health services and programs.

My third priority is to increase transparency and public participation in county government. Live streaming the meetings has been an improvement but is, at times, unreliable and not conducive to public participation. Regular County Commission meetings must be held at a time that any interested resident can attend. Too many decisions are being made without proper public input and therefore people are constantly reacting instead of being invited to be part of the solution. As we move forward in these uncertain times, accessibility to the governmental process, openness and transparency are essential in rebuilding trust between the County Board and the residents they represent.

*Is there anything else you would like to share?*

Thank you for your interest in my candidacy and I look forward to working with you in the future.