

**2024 Pierce County Democrats Endorsement Questionnaire  
-Attorney General-**

**Candidate Name:** Manka Dhingra

**Position sought:** Attorney General

**Date submitted:** February 25, 2024

For judicial endorsements, the Pierce County Democratic Central Committee (PCDCC) seeks to endorse well-qualified candidates with the education, experience, ability, and temperament to reach just decisions in the cases brought before them, who will also work to make the justice system more understandable, accessible, and equitable for all. The Endorsements Committee screens candidates and then makes endorsement recommendations to the PCDCC.

The PCDCC may withdraw endorsement of any candidate if they determine the candidate has acted in conflict with the answers provided during the screening.

\*You may respond N/A (not applicable) if appropriate. Expand or decrease space as needed.

**Questions**

**1. Why are you running for this position?**

Our next AG must be both a good litigator and a proven fighter with a demonstrated track record of standing up for what is right. I've spent my career fighting for the people of WA as an advocate, prosecutor, and Senator. No one will fight harder than I will for immigrants, refugees, women, LGBTQIA individuals, workers, a livable planet, and safe communities.

As AG, my priority will be to protect people and institutions from the increasing and persistent threats from the US Supreme Court, Republicans, and Trump. Washingtonians will need someone who understands the depth of harm caused by their attacks on reproductive rights and on our diverse communities. As a mother and a woman of color, I intimately understand.

I will prioritize consumer protection and ensure our laws keep up with technology and the sophisticated manner in which all of us are targeted for fraud. We need education and outreach into communities so that all Washingtonians know their rights and the role the AG can play in protecting them. This commitment to justice, proven leadership, and a history of delivering on the toughest issues, is what I bring to this job, and I would be honored to have your support.

**2. What are your qualifications for seeking this office, and what was the nature of your legal background and experience?**

I have been a Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney with King County for over 20 years, since January 2000. I have worked on domestic violence, sexual assault and gun violence crimes in addition to creating the first in the nation Therapeutic Alternative Unit. As Chair of that unit, I supervised the Regional Mental Health Court, helped create our Veterans Court, and the Community Assessment and Referral for Diversion program. I helped create the 40-hour crisis intervention training for law enforcement and was a trainer at the Criminal Justice

Training Commission for over a decade. In my professional capacity, I have also served as a member of the Shoreline Police Department's Advisory Group for Response Awareness De-escalation and Referral (RADAR) and participated in the Seattle Police Department's Muslim, Sikh, and Arab Advisory Council to address hate crime in our communities. I led the Coordinated Crisis Intervention Response meetings, where I collaborated with all King County law enforcement officers to find creative solutions and coordinate responses to help individuals with mental illness.

Before becoming a prosecutor, I interned with the State Attorney General's Office in their Criminal Division, assisting with Sexually Violent Predator cases and also clerked for Justice Barbara Madsen at the Washington State Supreme Court from September 1997 to June 1998.

I hold a JD from the University of Washington School of Law.

I Chair the Senate Law & Justice Committee and Chair the Senate Facilities and Operations Committee as well as am a member of the Senate Healthcare and Long-Term Care Committee and Ways and Means.

I have run 2 non-profits – Chaya and NAMI Eastside. As the founding member of Chaya, I created all the systems for management and training for the entire organization. This included training for volunteers, employees, advocates, and board members. I led the transition from our first executive director to the expansion of the NAMI Eastside office. I have also trained multiple other non-profits on board development and strategic planning.

#### Task Forces:

WA State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force  
Criminal Sentencing Task Force  
Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Statewide Coordinating Committee  
Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force  
Poverty Reduction Work Group  
Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory Committee  
Crisis Response Improvement Strategy (CRIS) Committee  
Crisis Response Improvement Strategy (CRIS) Steering Committee  
Behavioral Health Recovery System Transformation Task Force (Co-Chair)  
Washington State Task Force Against the Trafficking of Persons  
Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) Work Group  
Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) Best Practices Advisory Council  
Sexual Assault Coordinated Community Response Task Force  
Eyewitness Evidence Work Group  
Informant Reliability Work Group  
Jury Diversity Task Force  
Office of Equity Task Force  
Select Committee on Quality Improvement at State Hospitals

#### Awards:

Jacob K Javits Public Service Award, the highest award given to a public servant by the American Psychiatric Association Jun 2022  
Behavioral Health Champion, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) – Washington · Jan 2021  
Champion for Kids', Washington Digital Public Schools Alliance · Jan 2019  
Legislator of the Year, The Washington Council of Police & Sheriffs (WACOPS) · Jan 2019  
Nursing Champion, Washington State Nursing Association · Jan 2019  
Behavioral Health Champion, NAMI – Washington · Jan 2019

Social Justice Champion, SEIU 775 · Jan 2019

Rynas Advocacy Award, The highest award for exceptional service for those with serious mental illness, Nami Eastside · Jan 2017

Golden Acorn Award in recognition of her dedication and service to children and youth, Redmond Elementary School PTA · Jan 2013

Randy Revelle Award for Mental Health Advocacy, for a lifetime advocacy on behalf of the mentally ill. Washington Psychiatric Association · Jan 2010

**3. If your past legal practice emphasized one area of law, how will you prepare to argue other areas of dispute?**

Given our national politics, it is critical that our next Attorney General come into the office ready to protect Washingtonians. Given my legislative, prosecutorial, and political experience as well as my current close ties to the Attorney General's office, I will not need to learn how to do this job. I will be ready to defend our rights and address our state's diverse issues as soon as I am elected.

I'm excited to take this next step in my legal and advocacy career, continuing to work for all the people of Washington. Government has to work for people, and I want to make sure all people understand the role the Attorney General's office can play in protecting them. This fight for justice, for standing up for people, delivering real change to improve people's lives, is what motivates me to be your next Attorney General.

**4. What are the most important issues you see facing you as attorney General?**

MAGA extremists are intent on rolling back reproductive rights, worker rights, protection from gun violence, environmental protections & continued attacks on immigrants, refugees, & LGBTQIA individuals.

AG Ferguson has set the standard for cooperating with colleagues and stakeholders across the country to effectively stand up against those attacks and protect our values.

I've been honored to partner with the AG's office and other legislators and elected officials across our country in coordinating on access to abortion care, gender affirming care, voting rights, privacy, drug policy and cost transparency. I was honored to have been invited to the White House to present one of my signature bills, My Health My Data, to other national leaders.

As our next Attorney General, I'll continue to stand up for what is right and collaborate with local, regional, and national leaders to get the job done.

**5. Why should the Pierce County Democratic Party support you for this position?**

As an immigrant and woman of color, I have spent my career working on issues of race, gender, and equity. In our schools, places of work, and communities, every Washingtonian should have access to the same opportunities and ability to succeed.

As a State Senator, I was proud to sponsor legislation creating our state's first-ever statewide Office of Equity and have led on wage equity, worker protections and accommodations, affordable and accessible child care, and comprehensive reproductive rights for all.

I also worked to ensure that every piece of legislation should be viewed from the lens of how it may adversely impact marginalized communities or have unintended consequences for those communities.

I would bring that same perspective to the AG's office, where, when elected, I will be the first immigrant, the first person of color, and only the second woman to hold the position. I take the role very seriously and will work tirelessly to prevent discrimination in its many forms and ensure that all Washingtonians have equitable access to justice and opportunity.

**6. How have you demonstrated Democratic Party values?**

I have been a democrat my whole life. I believe government has a critical role to play in helping people end the cycle of poverty, intergenerational trauma and provide them the resources to be successful. As an advocate and legislature I have spent my life fighting for marginalized communities.

I helped create the first in the nation statewide Office of Equity to ensure everyone can access governmental resources and services. Given my decades of experience working with survivors of violence and standing up for the most marginalized in our community, I am very proud of having worked on providing some of the best legal protections for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking by updating and modernizing our civil protection laws, and removing guns from perpetrators of violence and enhancing access to services.

When I was elected, I realized that the legislature did not have an HR office, code of conduct, or infrastructure to help employees. I have chaired the Senate Facilities and Operations Committee where I have led in establishing an HR office, including hiring a DEI officer, establishing policies and procedures for hiring practices, updating resume reviews and establishing systems to ensure employees have input and agency in how their workplace functions.

I have been humbled to have won numerous awards for my work, including the President's award from the NAACP for what they called "spirit of excellence in leadership with an extraordinary passion for justice and equity for all."

**7. Please list your key endorsements:**

In my current campaign, I have received early endorsements from 28th LD Democrats; Fire Fighters and WA Fire Chiefs; labor unions; EMILY's List; WA Federation of Democratic Women; State Senators Yasmin Trudeau, Emily Randall, Claudia Kauffman; State Representatives Melanie Morgan, Mari Leavitt, and Sharlett Mena; Pierce County Councilmember Derek Young; Tacoma Port Commissioner Kristin Ang; former Tacoma Councilmember Keith Blocker, and many more! A complete list can be found at [electmanka.com](http://electmanka.com)

**8. Provide ratings from any Bar Associations, either in this election or a prior one.**

N/A

**9. Has any professional or disciplinary body made a finding that you violated any rule or code of professional conduct? If so, please provide a full explanation.**

No.

**10. To what Bar groups or sections do you belong now or have belonged to in the past?**

I have been a member of the Washington State Bar Association since 1999. I was a founder of and now a member of the South Asian Bar Association since 1998.

**11. How have you supported pro bono or low-cost legal services?**

I started my pro bono services while in law school where I volunteered for Northwest Immigrant Rights Project helping asylum seekers fill out their legal applications. As the founder and victim advocate at API Chaya I created all the incorporation and governing documents in addition to providing direct services to the survivors in accessing protection orders, parenting plans and divorce.

As a legislator I have been instrumental in expanding access to our legal system by supporting budgets and expanded responsibility to Office of Civil Legal Aid, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, Office of Public Defense, Sexual Violence Law Center and providing resources for tenants, survivors of violence and immigrants.

**12. Do you have a legal philosophy? If so, please describe:**

I believe laws need to be interpreted to effectuate their intent and not to protect liability for agencies. People, organizations and businesses need to be held accountable for the harm that they cause so that their actions don't become the cost of doing business.

In every position I have held, I lead with my values:

- Community – building connections, respecting the difference and value of others,
- Compassion – having understanding and empathy for others
- Responsibility – taking accountability for decision and actions
- Honesty – being fair and truthful
- Integrity – maintaining moral and ethical standards

As Attorney General, I will work every day to uplift those most marginalized in our society and ensure our government is working for and protecting the most vulnerable among us.

I envision a State of Washington with strong communities: where individuals have social equality, organizations and communities have economic growth opportunities, and there is stewardship of the environment.

**13. How will being Attorney General be different than being an attorney?**

The primary responsibility of the Office of the Attorney General is to provide statewide leadership on issues that impact all of our lives, excellent, independent, ethical legal services to the State of Washington and protect the rights of its people. The Attorney General has to be a strategic leader with a long term vision that uplifts and benefits Washingtonians.

I have a proven record of being a thought leader on issues of consumer protection, privacy, worker rights, access to healthcare, protecting LGBTQIA rights, immigrants and so much more. Very early on in my career, I was told the only thing you truly own in your life is your reputation. I am proud to have the reputation for working on tough issues, I am proud to have the reputation for delivering results and I am proud to have the reputation of being a champion for working people. These are the leadership qualities we need in a statewide office.

**IF ELECTED TO THIS POSITION.....**

**14. How would you educate and inform the public about the justice system?**

Seeking out community and listening is how I would educate and inform the public about the role of the AGO. Consumer protection is a core and critical function of the AGO. Protecting consumers from fraud, price gouging, cyberattacks, monopolistic mergers, and other unethical practices is increasingly important, especially in the arena of healthcare. I'm proud of the work I have done as Chair of the Senate Law and Justice Committee to advance and improve consumer protection laws— setting a foundation for stronger AG enforcement.

However, effective enforcement can only occur when the community knows what the AG's office does and what their rights are. People whose names sound like mine are often targeted in ways that mainstream America is not. It is imperative that the AG's office provides education and outreach into communities so they know what their rights are and the role the attorney general can play in protecting them. When we reach out to our communities and provide them with reliable information and support, the AG's office can contribute to a more equitable society. I am that attorney general who will work with the Governor's office, the agencies and the legislature to ensure we have the laws, resources and the will to uplift and help individuals.

The public has to feel that government is approachable, that leaders will show up and listen. The biggest compliment I have received consistently is that I go to where the people are instead of expecting them to come to me. Over and over again, people have told me that I am approachable and accessible and that is the kind of leadership we need in government to ensure that the Attorney General is truly the people's attorney.

**15. What is your knowledge of the citizens and departments you represent?**

Government's role is to help people and not be focused on protecting itself from lawsuits, yet over and over again, we have seen laws being interpreted to provide agencies legal cover instead of focusing on individual success. I am committed to ensuring that the government works to address the issues that contribute to intergenerational poverty. This commitment to justice, proven leadership, and a history of delivering on the toughest issues is what I bring to this job.

I started my legal career in the Attorney General's Office, have worked consistently with the Department of Corrections, Department of Social and Health Services, Health Care Authority, Department of Children, Youth and Families, Commerce, Labor and Industries and so many more both as a prosecutor and as a Senator. The work I have done with criminal justice reform, poverty reduction, mental health, substance use disorder, access to healthcare, trafficking of children, dependency issues, working with survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault have given me an in-depth look at how these agencies and departments work. Given my extensive work in these areas I have a preexisting relationship and trust with the stakeholders, especially impacted families. As an elected official I have traveled all across the state and spoken about these policies to Washingtonians from all backgrounds. My advocacy, my professional and elected experience has given me a solid understanding of the work ahead of us.

**16. Do you believe the justice system produces different results for different demographics? If so, what would you do to remedy that problem?**

Absolutely. Historical and institutional racism continues to play a huge role in the disparities we currently see in our society. My work with the Poverty Reduction Taskforce has been about changing the culture of government on how it shows up for the people who need resources and support the most. Successful children become successful adults and the biggest reform we can make is to ensure each and every child is set up for success from the day they are born.

It is critical to me that as Attorney General, I address the discrimination in our justice system, and that starts with who's in office. The diversity of Washington is not reflected in our government. In 2017, my landmark State Senate win doubled the women of color in the Senate, in addition to flipping the majority from red to blue.

I've been the 'First' in everything I've done. If elected, I'll be the first immigrant, first person of color, and only second woman to hold this position.

But DEI is not only about showing up, it's about doing the work. I have spent my career working on issues of race, gender and equity in our schools, places of work, and communities. I am motivated every day to help improve the lives of all Washingtonians, regardless of what you look like, how you identify, or where you come from. As our next Attorney General, I'll keep fighting— through official action and using my voice as a woman, immigrant, and mom. Challenging injustices and keeping our families and communities safe have always been my north star, and with the support of the people of our great state, I'll continue this work.

**17. How would you approach any caseload or court congestion issues?**

As a prosecuting attorney, especially one during the great recession, I know first hand what limited resources can do to those most impacted and marginalized. Not every solution however needs a court remedy. I have a long track record of bringing people together and solving problems. I will always fight for sufficient funding towards our justice system, but I will always look for other solutions including dispute resolution, mediation, facilitated negotiations and restorative justice practices.

**18. Is there anything else you would like to share with the Committee?**

Thank you for considering an endorsement of my campaign for Attorney General! I firmly believe that when democracy awakens, justice wins. With my 2017 campaign, I saw the whole state come together to work on my campaign to flip our state senate and turn our state blue. I played an instrumental role in so many of the policies where WA is a national leader and with your support, I will work tirelessly, as I have throughout my career, to champion our Democratic values and protect every Washingtonian's access to justice, opportunity, freedom, security, and privacy.