



## 2022 Nominating Committee Candidate Statements

Thank you to the following self-nominated candidates for volunteering to be on the Nominating Committee!

### **Trina Bilal (Class of 2025 Parent)**

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#### **Why do you want to serve on the Nominating Committee?**

I would like to help TJHSST recruit and select a passionate, dedicated, and dynamic slate of PTSA candidates who are focused on cultivating enriching and engaging activities/programs that further enhance the educational and cultural experiences of TJ students, parents, and teachers.

#### **Brief Bio (tell us who you are, what experience you have if any with PTSAs or other volunteer or related experience)**

My name is Trina Bilal. My son, Kaiwan "Kai" Bilal is a freshman at TJHSST. I have an extensive amount of experience with PTSAs as I've been very active in supporting my son's elementary, middle, and high school PTSAs. Additionally, I support a plethora of volunteer organizations focused on advancing STEM education and collegiate research and development initiatives targeted towards underrepresented communities via professional and personal affiliations.

### **Cherry Li (Class of 2023 Parent)**

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#### **Why do you want to serve on the Nominating Committee?**

Because I care for the wellbeing of this community, and I wish to contribute my strengths and perspective in selecting the new board. I have a vision for a PTSA that goes beyond the political convictions of the parents, with a focus to foster a safe environment where the whole community can thrive, be it the students, teachers and administrators.

**Brief Bio (tell us who you are, what experience you have if any with PTSA's or other volunteer or related experience)**

Like many immigrants in northern Virginia, I came to the US to obtain my advanced degree and eventually became a proud US citizen, supporting biomedical research. I had moved to Fairfax County when my son was in first grade and I saw first hand that the intellectual needs of gifted children are not met in public schools, even in the Advanced Academic Program. On the other hand, when my son was admitted by TJ, a school designated for gifted education, I was ambivalent because TJ has a reputation of being unhealthy for the mental and emotional states of its students. In an effort to change that, I had co-organized a parenting workshop at TJ with the then PTSA parent support committee, to raise awareness of the social and emotional needs of developing adolescents. In June last year I had discovered that the TJPTSA was rendered dysfunctional in the wake of the controversial admission policy reform. I believed in the mission of TJPTSA and started a petition to save our PTSA with a few other parents. Since then I have taken all the opportunities to help heal this community. I had joined TJAB with the hope that TJAB would fill the void of community building; I helped with PTSA election to put PTSA back on track, and I helped with organizing the first in person event in school in 2 years, the Lunar New Year celebration, which showcased our community spirit and unity. I'm a firm believer of compassion in dealing with the challenges our community is facing, and I will help elect a board that reflects that value.

**Karen Monaco (Class of 2025 Parent)**

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**Why do you want to serve on the Nominating Committee?**

I believe I offer a diverse perspective and will add value to the process.

**Brief Bio (tell us who you are, what experience you have if any with PTSA's or other volunteer or related experience)**

Hello. My name is Karen Monaco. I am a fifth-generation Arlingtonian with 15 years of public school educational advocacy experience. Like so many of the parents I meet at TJ, I am committed to a culturally and socio-economically inclusive environment welcoming to all and based on mutual respect. I work as a Risk Management Consultant. I am experienced in Results-Based Facilitation (RBF), which I believe is a valuable skill for this nominating committee. I also volunteer as a trained facilitator for Challenging Racism - an organization that provides facilitation for any group where race or topics related to race are likely to arise. I have two children, both of whom are in High School. I have served on the Executive Committees of two PTA organizations. I have volunteered for several TJ PTSA activities, including Thanksgiving Teacher & Staff Appreciation and the Counselor Appreciation Tea. This year, with the help of the PTSA

Diversity Committee, I organized the first Black History Month celebration at TJHS in seven years. My daughter is in the class of 2025.

### **Renee Rodriguez (Class of 2023 Parent)**

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#### **Why do you want to serve on the Nominating Committee?**

This is my third year as an active volunteer in the TJPTSA and I am committed to continuing the organization's role in community building at TJ. Having worked with three different EC's over my years as a TJ parent and PTSA volunteer, I know how important the Executive Committee is in steering the PTSA's work of supporting students, teachers and parents. I think my multi-year experience, significant volunteer hours, and my ability to work well with people, equips me with a good skill set to help guide the nominating process.

#### **Brief Bio (tell us who you are, what experience you have if any with PTSAs or other volunteer or related experience)**

I am a parent of a current TJ junior as well as a daughter who is a freshman at Madison High School. Currently, I am a stay-at-home mom and volunteer. I have been an active member of the TJPTSA for three years including: working on the Health & Wellness Committee (2019-2022), writing for the TJ newsletter (2020), organizing the 'We Are One TJ' Virtual 5K (2021), co-organizing the Class of 2023/24 Year End Picnic (2021), co-organizing the PTSA regional welcome parties (2021), as a member of the TJ Mental Health Coalition (2021-2022), and co-organizing the Mardi Gras Celebration (2022). I am also a parent representative on the TJ Challenge Success team. Prior to my time at TJ, I ran the book fair at our elementary school for five years and served on the board of our primary school PTA in the UK. In my community, I am an active volunteer at Historic Vienna's Freeman House. In addition to my volunteer work, I spent 13 years working on Capitol Hill as congressional press secretary and policy analyst, and as a federal affairs specialist for the state of New York.

**Vinnie (Vaishnavi) Sawant (Class of 2025 Parent)**

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**Why do you want to serve on the Nominating Committee?**

I would like to volunteer for PTSA. I feel as a part of the Nominating Committee it is very important to screen the incoming PTSA Board members who are ethical, sincere and hardworking for the TJHSST community.

**Brief Bio (tell us who you are, what experience you have if any with PTSAs or other volunteer or related experience)**

Hello,

I'm a parent of a student in the TJHSST Class of 2025. I'm a Speech Language Pathologist by profession and working at the Fairfax County Health Department. I've been volunteering since my kids were in elementary school. I was the Nomination chair for RCMS PTA Board in 2019-2020. I'm currently VP of Communications and Events at Rachel Carson Middle School for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. If given an opportunity, it would be my pleasure to serve on the Nominating committee and work as a team to nominate PTSA Board.

Thank you,

Vinnie Sawant