



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

1015 18th Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C., 20036 | 202-349-1498 | www.CaribbeanPac.org

Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC) Montgomery County, Maryland – 2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Please return the completed form via email to cpac.dmv@gmail.com by Friday, April 13, 2018.
Responses will be shared with C-PAC’s membership.

Office Sought: Montgomery County Executive
Candidate’s Name: Roger Berliner
Current Occupation: Montgomery County Councilmember, District 1
Party: Democrat
Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website):
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1. Please explain your plan or approach to improve agency responsiveness, outreach, and the quality of the Montgomery County’s constituent services.

One of the benefits of serving as a “district” councilmember is the focus on “constituent services.” When the Washington Post endorsed me last time, they highlighted my reputation for providing superb constituent services. I am committed to providing superb constituent services for ALL of our community. One of the challenges of having one of the most diverse communities in the world is to make sure we are being responsive to every community. That means being culturally competent and having language translations services. And it means going out into the community. I will be out in the community, your community. I have great respect for the Caribbean community. I have spent time in the Caribbean. The Caribbean people are some of the nicest people on the planet. I will be responsive to your needs.

2. Are there any legislative or policy proposals, which you support that would strengthen the opportunities and rights of Caribbean immigrants in Montgomery County?

If I have the privilege of serving as the next County Executive of Montgomery County, the foundation of my work will revolve around expanding inclusion and diversity in our government and county. I would support measures that enhance engagement and channels of communication with our immigrant communities and I will pursue policies that expand our international ties with the Caribbean, create business/economic opportunities and



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career training opportunities for the Caribbean immigrant community, leadership opportunities, government advisory opportunities and policies that protect the rights of individuals from actions at the federal level.

3. What do you intend to do to strengthen small business access to government contracts?

As County Executive, I will work to strengthen outreach programs to publicize business opportunities widely to minority communities. I will also work to make sure that the County maintains a comprehensive list of qualified minority businesses and will proactively invite minority vendors to apply.

4. What policies will you support to address the challenges facing DREAMers, the administration's suspension of temporary protective status for many County residents, and the threats facing sanctuary communities?

I have always been a champion of DREAMers and I am deeply disturbed by the actions being pursued at the federal level with respect to immigrants in our nation whether it be the current administration's views on DACA or ending TPS for certain groups, many of which call Montgomery County home. The Trump administration's position on DACA and TPS will harm many families in our county, many of whom know no other home than Montgomery County and the U.S. and others who have spent many years here and choose to call our nation their home rather than their country of origin.

I was proud to co-sponsor two Council resolutions which voiced support for extending TPS, creating a pathway to citizenship for TPS and DACA recipients and opposing a citizenship question on the 2020 census. I was also proud to support a Council resolution that denounced hate speech, anti-immigrant activity and bias and reaffirmed community trust and safety in 2016.

In our county, our police does not act as immigration enforcement officials, and we don't honor detainer requests from ICE. We do, however, cooperate on matters that involve public safety, for instance, if ICE calls us about someone who has committed a crime in our county, we do inform ICE. We don't hold individuals longer than they need to be held. An individual's information is not referred to ICE if they are pulled over or arrested, and our police does not ask about citizenship or immigration status. Our police does not work for the federal government. They work for our county and we have strong values to protect our communities. This is the Montgomery County way and I would continue to support policies that protect our diverse communities.



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5. How will you support the viability and competitiveness of the Maryland's small, minority, veteran, women, and especially Caribbean-owned business?

I have always believed that our county needs to play a direct and aggressive role in making sure that our many communities have the resources necessary to succeed with their businesses, while also streamlining the way our businesses can do their work in our county. Over the years, I have worked hard to assist our small business community and I hope to build upon that work. I was the lead in creating the position of the Montgomery County Chief Innovation Officer, Small Business Navigator and a Business Solutions Group to help our small business community navigate through government processes and regulations. I also was one of the lead sponsors of a law which created a micro-loan program in our county that gives access to necessary seed capital to our immigrant owned small businesses to help them prosper and grow their businesses.

As stated earlier, my main focus will be on transparency and open communication with minority, women, small and veteran owned businesses. Key to this is proper outreach and I will work with key stakeholders in our diverse communities, such as the Caribbean community, to make sure opportunities to do, expand and garner resources for businesses in the County is properly disseminated. I will also make sure to enforce equity in business opportunities to make sure all businesses have equal opportunities to compete and obtain what they need to grow and prosper. Increasing our prosperity is a cornerstone for my campaign and this cannot happen if our business community does not have the tools to move forward in as efficient a manner as possible.

My vision for our county will seek to empower our Caribbean owned small businesses and strengthen the business climate for them in our county.

6. The Caribbean is a strong trading partner with the U.S., and there are opportunities to create economic benefits for both Maryland and Caribbean residents. How do you support strengthening business, social and cultural relations and exchanges between County residents and the Caribbean?

In 2016, I was proud to be on the County delegation that went on a historic trade mission to Cuba, and that experience, in addition to my travels to the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Jamaica, has been one of the key components which has solidified my commitment to enhance our relations between our county and the Caribbean.



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Our county has a wonderful program known as the Sister Cities program. Working with our Office of Community Partnerships, Caribbean community liaison, Caribbean-American Advisory Group, Sister Cities program and Caribbean community leaders, I will explore the opportunity to establish a sister city in at least one of the locations in the Caribbean. The Caribbean American community is an important part of our county, with 5% of the County's total immigrant population representing the Caribbean alone, and I believe that our international ties must represent that relationship.

7. What specific actions have you taken or will you take to support the Caribbean-American community in the Montgomery County?

As Council President, I was proud to recognize the contributions of the Caribbean-American community by attending the Caribbean-American Heritage Month celebration last June and presenting a joint proclamation on behalf of the County Council and the County Executive.

As County Executive, I will work to enhance representation of the Caribbean-American community in County government. Our government has a Caribbean-American Advisory Group under the Office of Community Partnerships and I will make sure that each and every one of our individual Caribbean communities will have a representative in that group. I will also work to create opportunities for rotating leadership in that group with Chairs and Vice-Chairs serving one year each, and then Vice-Chair becoming Chair and a new Vice-Chair being appointed. I will also work to make sure that Caribbean organizations receive grants from the County so that they have the resources necessary to do their work. I will also ensure that my administration has leaders from the Caribbean community, which I will achieve through my desire to create a transition advisory board, after election. Additionally, I will work hard toward protecting the rights of our Caribbean immigrant community, creating and empowering Caribbean businesses and will seek to create more awareness of and promote the importance of the many Caribbean-American cultures and traditions in our county.

I will also work to establish more cultural competency and understanding about the many Caribbean communities in all facets of our county.

8. Over 3,000 children of immigrants enter Maryland schools every year. Many of them are children of color with cultural idiosyncrasies and language accents or differences, which earn them labels such as "troublesome" or as having ADHD or other disorders. Still others end up in the juvenile justice system. What are your plans to ensure that we have a cadre of well-trained, culturally competent and sensitive teachers who understand and are willing to help these children succeed in school?



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Our public school system is one of the finest in the country, thanks in large part to our dedicated teachers. And we face many challenges: cultural competency, an achievement gap that must be closed; poverty that affects a growing number of our students; increasing opportunities for parental involvement. These aren't simple challenges and they won't be solved with simple approaches.

Cultural competency is a crucial factor that must continue to be addressed. We take great pride in our extraordinary diversity – 170 different cultures, 140 different languages. But knowing how to effectively reach children who come from such different backgrounds is not easy. And if you can't reach them, you can't teach them well. More training, more understanding of the strengths of the culture from which these children come from, will produce more positive results.

Under a Berliner administration, I will work to provide the necessary funds for MCPS to continue expanding restorative justice programs, which work to reduce the disparities in the rate of suspensions that can contribute to the 'schools-to-prison pipeline.'

I also believe that the achievement gap is the county's foremost educational challenge. It has festered for far too long. Our challenges have grown with the addition of many students for whom English is a second language. We need to double down on our commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to succeed in our county. While there may be no single means to address this issue, getting our kids in school early is generally considered to be the most important and cost-effective step we can take. I am proud that the budget passed during my term as Montgomery County Council President last year included more than \$4.5 million for early childhood learning. Under a Berliner administration, we would make more progress towards high quality universal pre-K. Additionally, I would work to increase funding for summer achievement programs, such as the BELL Program, which aim to reduce the "summer slide" that leaves low-income students behind once the school year begins again.

Providing wrap around services is also a critical factor. Our county's support for the school system extends beyond the MCPS budget. We need to attend to the needs of our children in and out of school. And if we do, the odds are our children will do better in the classroom. The budget we passed last year included \$65 million for a variety of programs, including making our schools safe, providing after school recreational and learning



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opportunities, school based health programs, and library support. If elected County Executive, I will work to expand our offerings of STEM programs and make sure that all of our kids are encouraged to participate. In doing so, we will not only be serving the needs of our kids, but we will be serving the needs of our local economy. What innovation companies are looking for more than almost anything else is a “pipeline of talent”. We would be well served on many levels to ensure that we provide such a pipeline.

9. What initiatives will you champion or support to strengthen services and programs for Montgomery County’s senior citizens?

Seniors have always been a central for the work that I have done on the County Council. I sponsored legislation that would allow seniors to defer paying any increase on property taxes and a bill that requires our county to consider affordable housing on county property, which resulted in hundreds of senior affordable apartments next to the Silver Spring Library. I would continue to support activities that make Montgomery County an age friendly community and will work with the Commission on Aging to implement programs and services that contribute to this. I will work to make sure that our seniors have the opportunity to mentor our kids and I would establish a mechanism to help them mentor future business owners as well.

I would also build on my record of allowing seniors on a fixed income to defer any increases on property taxes until they sell their home. I have always been a staunch advocate for senior tax credits, helping seniors age in place, and I have been a resolute voice in the battle against financial scams aimed at seniors, which can drain precious resources in an instant. I have also fought against PEPCO and WSSC rate increases and to make Ride On free for seniors. I am also a big proponent of senior villages and communities that can provide assistance/support to seniors. I will also continue to make Ride On free for all seniors and establish stronger coordination for transportation efforts for seniors with transportation providers. I have led the effort to put a surcharge on Uber and Lyft to fund senior transportation programs and have urged our county to explore “micro-transit” to get people to and from public transportation.

10. What issues are you most concerned about in your run for political office?

1) Devoting more resources and working collaboratively with our education leaders to support education from cradle to career, including expanding pre-K to all Title I schools, providing and obtaining more school construction dollars, expanding both STEM and vocational job training opportunities, increasing early child care, addressing school overcrowding and working towards a K-Job education system that seamlessly integrates MCPS and Montgomery College, including the provision of technical skills.



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2) Increasing prosperity in our county, a more broadly shared prosperity, by attracting and retaining strong businesses and good-paying jobs to our county, creating vibrant urban nodes and doubling down on our workforce development efforts. This is the most sustainable way to grow our tax base, which then can be used to fund our budget priorities, including the school system; and

3) Reduce congestion in our county by (1) committing to a world class transit system that includes Metro and getting it back on track, the Purple Line, the Corridor Cities Transitway and a countywide Rapid Transit System; (2) major investments in our roads such as 270 all the way to and over the American Legion Bridge; and (3) state of the art traffic signalization that can reduce travel times by 10-15%.