



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: Marc Elrich

Current Occupation: Montgomery County Councilmember

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.

I recently released a First 90 Days Financial To-Do List (see https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/85316b_ea21fcf0d5bd474dbf9491cd4f0db344.pdf) - it explains in detail how I plan to improve agency responsiveness, outreach, and the quality of our constituent services, as well as how I would strengthen the county’s fiscal outlook. In short, I would begin a structural review of county departments in partnership with county unions (who have endorsed me) to change the way the county approaches vacancies, implement a labor-management partnership called gainsharing (in which both parties agree on targets for improving performance and reducing cost and everyone receives a share of the savings generated), and launch a business process improvement system called Lean, which other cities and counties are using to make their services more efficient.

I will also strengthen our constituent service culture by implementing standards for timeliness and completeness of our responses to service requests. I would look at the 311 system to see if it can be improved. I have talked to many constituents who find it, and our web pages, hard to navigate and it shouldn’t be that way.

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



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Yes - I believe much of my agenda would strengthen the opportunities and rights of Caribbean immigrants in Montgomery County. My leadership in raising the county's minimum wage twice and in passing tenant rights legislation are two examples, as low wages and unaffordable housing affect the Caribbean immigrant community. I want to preserve and protect existing affordable housing and increase requirements to provide more affordable housing, and I also want to help tenants move from renting to homeownership, which would further help Caribbean immigrants access affordable housing in the county.

It always has been a central part of my mission to fight for social and economic justice for all communities, including immigrant communities, and I have been endorsed by immigrant-advocacy organization CASA in Action. If elected, you can always count on me to listen to and speak out on behalf of the Caribbean community.

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

I will work with the small business community to help identify where they see roadblocks so we can address them. You know the problems better than I, so before I create a list, I want affected communities to be part of creating that list.

That said, I've supported changes to the county's procurement regulations to ensure that small businesses can compete fairly for county contracts - a policy change that would affect smaller Caribbean-owned businesses. We also need to make every effort, working with community liaisons and others, to convey announcements and deadlines for participation in a timely fashion. I intend to take a close look at our non-competitive contracts, too; it is important to have a level playing field for small businesses and other businesses.

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?

Montgomery County's policies are already consistent with those of a sanctuary jurisdiction. Our police do not take custody of people based on legal status and do not inquire about legal status during investigations or arrests. We do not enforce federal immigration laws, and we do not cooperate with ICE unless a person is in the prison system for a serious crime. Undocumented residents also already have access to county services, except in cases where federal law denies them access. The County Council is also poised to support funding for legal defense assistance for individuals facing deportation.

I am a longtime champion of efforts to make this county a welcoming place for immigrants and will continue speak out on behalf of DREAMers and others with temporary protected status. I would also look forward to working with immigrant rights advocates, as I have done throughout my career, to determine



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what else can be done. I believe I was endorsed by CASA In Action partly because of my longstanding commitment to and work for all immigrant communities.

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

I have consistently spoken out about the need to help small businesses. My staff and I have worked with small businesses in Wheaton, Silver Spring, and elsewhere when they have been impacted by development and by inappropriate regulations. Nevertheless, I think more needs to be done to help small businesses. We need to be sure we are reaching out to and have good ongoing communications with immigrant-community-owned businesses via liaisons and in other ways. I will support adding economic development staff focused on small businesses and outreach back to the Regional Services Centers, which were lost with the creation of the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC). We need a more direct connection to community businesses than we currently have. We also need to rethink government operations so that we're more responsive, especially to small businesses and residents, and I have a plan to improve our responsiveness, which I also discuss in my answer to question #1.

I would also support broader development of incubators to help foster small business development. I've seen very substantial projects in Baltimore that help people with product concepts develop skills needed to produce their products, provide machinery that can be used in the manufacturing process, and help develop business skills that are necessary for actually running a business. We can and should look at what other jurisdictions are doing to support small businesses, identifying sources of support for small business operations.

People talk a lot about how important small business is, but our current county programs skew toward large corporations that already have adequate resources. Small businesses are an essential part of our community: small business owners tend to live in the community where they work, spend their money there, and hire locally. I am also interested in ways to encourage worker-owned businesses and cooperatives. We have a lot of aging businesspeople who will be leaving their businesses, often simply shutting down when they retire. We should look to provide opportunities for employees of those businesses to purchase the business from the current owner - it would be a plus for the owner and a plus for the employees.

While there's much that we do right, I believe we can and should make Montgomery County a more attractive location for businesses to start and thrive by ensuring that we have high-quality schools, vibrant neighborhoods, adequate infrastructure, and responsive government. I would implement the bus rapid transit (BRT) system I designed to address many of our county's worst transportation bottlenecks, which are a concern to many businesses looking to come here. If built right, BRT will become a truly rapid transportation option that connects homes and workplaces far better than our current system.



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Lastly, I want to introduce a racial and gender equity lens into county decisionmaking, and in the realm of small businesses, that means evaluating how our contracting and procurement practices are impacting small businesses owned by women and people of color, including Caribbean-owned small businesses.

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?

I think we need to look to the members of the Caribbean business community and the broader Caribbean community to hear their ideas for how we can strengthen business, social, and cultural relations and exchanges, and I would welcome the opportunity to do that as County Executive. It would be worthwhile to see if there are links that we could foster between the county and potential Caribbean trade partners.

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

I would have a Caribbean liaison in the government - while there are Caribbeans in the Community Affairs Office, we should have a distinct Caribbean representative, not one that is shared. That liaison would help make sure that the Caribbean community in Montgomery County has ample access to services and resources. The mandate of the Caribbean American Advisory Group also says that it should have only one representative of each country, but this mandate has not been followed, and it should be.

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?

I was a teacher for 17 years at Rolling Terrace Elementary School and many of my students were immigrants, so making sure that we have well-trained, culturally competent, and sensitive teachers is very important to me. I would also like to look into programs that place high school students on a track to the Montgomery College/ Universities of Shady Grove teaching programs and let them earn a teaching certificate at no cost if they use that degree to work in our county. Such a program will help build a pipeline of immigrant teachers who will better understand the challenges that immigrant students face and also reflect the diversity of the county.

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



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I strongly support The Senior Initiative, which has enabled the county to support a broad array of services critical for our seniors. As your next County Executive, I would continue to prioritize funding for existing programming. I would also push for increasing our capacity in issues of housing, employment, health, and transportation. While the county already does a great deal, not everything is at the scale that matches community needs.

As you may know, the coming budget is based on assumptions of reduced revenues, and the County Executive has instructed departments to reduce expenditures accordingly. Even beyond this coming year revenues will be constrained, and needs are only going to rise. I will work to ensure that essential services for seniors' quality of life are maintained, including culturally sensitive programming. I believe my financial plan, referenced above, would help ensure that we address the needs of our seniors.

I have also supported a program the county recently initiated to provide monitoring and follow-up services to seniors who have called ambulances when less intensive assistance may have addressed their medical conditions and/or medication requirements. As a result of this creative program, seniors are getting more personal attention more frequently and the county has seen reduced calls for ambulances - the program has both improved services and helped the county control costs.

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

One concern is the opportunity gap, which affects all cultures, including the cultural region of the Caribbean. That gap hasn't changed much over the past several decades. I want to close the gap, while continuing to improve educational quality for all students. As a former teacher, I know the importance of an "inside/outside" approach that builds both stronger schools and stronger communities by emphasizing cultural competency, expanding early childhood education, adequately funding schools, and addressing the biggest barriers to many students' success - poverty and inequality.

Another concern is job growth, and I intend to create jobs by improving the quality of life, promoting economic development, and ensuring responsive government. Study after study shows that quality of life is the most important driver of economic growth, yet the county too often prioritizes developer profits over what residents want in their communities. I am the only candidate who is not taking and has never taken money from developers - ensuring my independence to make decisions that are in the best interests of our residents - and I will continue to focus on good schools, strong communities, reduced traffic congestion, better transit alternatives, and parks and recreation facilities. I will also, as noted above, help people start and grow their own businesses by creating a robust variety of incubators that are culturally inclusive, ensure that the regulatory environment is sensible, fair and efficient, and promote employee ownership of businesses.

A third concern is that the county government is not as strategic an organization as it can be; as noted above, I plan to rethink county government operations to make them more efficient and equitable. County revenue projections indicate that we'll have real budget constraints in the coming years, so I will partner



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with labor unions to pivot people and resources to better meet county needs. As also noted above, I will implement a racial and gender equity lens into Montgomery County decision-making - this lens would apply to staffing (in fact, my campaign pays our interns \$15 an hour because the usual unpaid internships often lock women and people of color out of that important political experience), to zoning decisions, to policing, and much more.