



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) District of Columbia – 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: DC Council, Ward 6
Candidate’s Name: Charles Allen
Current Occupation: DC Councilmember, Ward 6
Party: Democratic

Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website):

Re-elect Charles Allen for Ward 6
1530 D Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
202-210-5192
charles@charlesallen2018.com
<http://www.charlesallen2018.com/>

1. Please explain your plan or approach to improve agency responsiveness and the quality of the District’s constituent services.

Responsive and effective constituent services are essential to making the District a great place to live, work, and play. As a Councilmember, my role is to set high expectations for all of our District government agencies, and then hold agency directors to them through the Council’s oversight process.

In addition to Council oversight, my constituent services team meets regularly with their counterparts in other Councilmember offices and the Mayor’s Office of Community Relations, sharing strategies and experiences to ensure that we are collectively pushing agencies to improve responsiveness to our residents.

I hold weekly Community Office Hours in neighborhoods across Ward 6 to ensure residents can reach me directly with their concerns, and my Constituent Services team helps hundreds of residents every month who contact my office by phone, email, social media, and in person to seek help with city services. We work hard to tackle each individual problem while also looking for trends and patterns that point to larger policy or budget concerns that can be addressed through oversight or legislation.



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

2. What specific actions have you initiated or will you take to support the Caribbean-American community in Washington, D.C.?

I believe three key areas are critical to moving the District forward and supporting the Caribbean-American community in DC: adding more affordable housing, ensuring every neighborhood has great public schools, and creating a safe and just city.

As Councilmember, I have worked to create and protect affordable housing, and Ward 6 is leading the way District-wide: We have added 1,300 new homes in the last 3 years and there are 1,700 more on the way -- but it's still not enough. I am working to move aggressively with every tool in our toolbox, from leveraging financing and creating requirements for projects using DC land or money, to amending the Comprehensive Plan to make affordable housing the priority. I have focused on adding family-style, multi-bedroom, homes and have led this effort for projects on H Street and in Southwest. This fiscal year, I passed and funded legislation that provides a right to counsel in eviction cases -- this "civil Gideon" is essential to protect the vast majority of tenants who have previously gone without representation.

On the education front, I have committed to seeing Ward 6 schools receive the funding necessary to modernize aging and outdated buildings and facilities. I have fought for much-needed resources for our students and educators. When the Mayor didn't fund education appropriately last year, I was at the forefront finding ways to double the resources going to our students and classrooms. I supported the elimination of suspensions and expulsion from pre-Kindergarten and voted in favor of the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act, which overhauls school discipline practices -- both bills are efforts to address significant racial disparities in school discipline outcomes. We know that the use of exclusionary discipline disproportionately affects our students of color and contributes to both the achievement gap and the school-to-prison pipeline.

A related issue is criminal justice reform and as chair of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, I am working on the most significant reform of our youth laws in more than 30 years. I will also be providing oversight of the ongoing implementation of the NEAR Act, which was fully funded in the current fiscal year. The NEAR Act represents a critical shift in how the District has historically approached public safety and violent crime. I believe in this health- and social services-based model for preventing and intervening in crime. We also need to rethink how we approach record sealing and



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

expungement. Carrying a criminal history doesn't just close a door, it locks it. Over 8,000 of our DC neighbors are carrying a criminal history for which they were never convicted nor even charged. The arrest itself creates a history that serves as a barrier. And not surprisingly, the burden of these criminal histories is carried disproportionately by black residents and communities of color. That's why I'm leading the effort at Council to reform and expand access to automatically seal and expunge several convictions, charges, or arrests, and create a pathway for residents to clear their record more quickly and more easily once their time is served for other offenses to help them return successfully. This work will open doors for our neighbors in employment, housing, and more, clearing the way for success.

3. Unfortunately, throughout the City many Caribbean-owned businesses closed in recent years. How will you support the viability and competitiveness of the City's small, minority, veteran, women, and especially Caribbean-owned businesses?

I support reviewing the Certified Business Enterprise program to ensure our small and local businesses have the opportunity to success and compete in the District's marketplace. In my first year office, I also created the Made in DC program, to highlight and promote the efforts of our local entrepreneurs.

4. What policy actions would you propose or support to improve the opportunities and rights of Caribbean immigrants in the District of Columbia?

I strongly support Mayor Muriel Bowser's reaffirmation of the District as a Sanctuary City, ensuring DC remains a place where all are welcome and can live their lives without fear of deportation. I also support the Mayor's Immigrant Justice Legal Services (IJLS) grant program to assist residents with renewing DACA applications and work permits, preparing asylum applications, and other legal needs.

I also co-introduced the Council's Language Access for Education Amendment Act and have advocated for it to be advanced. I have made personal requests to the Chairman of the Council in support of this legislation and will continue to do so.



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

5. The City's Caribbean Community is the only immigrant community without an Office to address and support community affairs and services. Would you support the creation of such an office?

Yes, I would support the creation of such an office and would welcome the community's input on the role of the office and its mission.

6. How do you plan to help strengthen the Certified Business Enterprise (CBE) program since larger business take advantage of many small businesses, including Caribbean-owned ones, with whom they partner under this program?

There are a number of challenges and issues facing the CBE program. Agencies may waive CBE requirements if there is a "lack of capacity" in the CBE pool. In order to improve the opportunities to compete, we need a better understanding of how agencies view capacity. The Council financed an examination of this specific CBE challenge -- the purported "lack of capacity" issues facing the CBE program -- that can keep CBEs from participating in District contracts. That report is forthcoming. Using the oversight role of the Council, we need to push for more consistent enforcement of laws that hold contractors accountable. This year, the Office of Contracting and Procurement launched its Ombudsman office, which was designed to provide a more efficient way for subcontractors to communicate issues. This office, along with recent changes to the District's procurement law that will ensure subcontractors can use alternative dispute resolution in conflicts with primary contractors, are initial steps in improving the process.

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

I support DREAMers and the District's role as a sanctuary city. I also support the Immigrant Justice Legal Services grant program, which provides grants to organizations serving our immigrant population on a number of issues, from "know your rights" legal briefings to asylum applications.



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

8. What concrete steps will you take to improve the District of Columbia's Public School system – including facilities and equipment, teacher treatment, relationships with parents, as well as education standards and test scores in all wards of the City?

As a member of the Education Committee, I have worked to ensure that every child in the District can attend a high quality neighborhood public school. In Ward 6, neighborhood schools are growing and thriving. While other communities have faced closures, Ward 6 is one of few wards in the city where we have opened new DCPS schools. That success is due to the hard work of parents, educators, and community leaders to provide high quality education that has earned the confidence of parents. Work remains to maintain and build upon that confidence so that parents see the full path of quality public school education – from pre-K through high school graduation. An important step toward ensuring parents have that confidence is modernizing our school buildings. Our educators and students deserve top quality facilities that reflect the great work going on inside them. Since taking office in 2015, I have added over \$200 million in modernization funds for Ward 6 neighborhood schools, and accelerated numerous projects that had previously been delayed and pushed back. I strongly supported the new Washington Teachers Union contract with DC Public Schools, the first in nearly five years, giving our educators a well deserved pay raise for this fiscal year and next, as well as a retroactive raise for fiscal year 2017 -- over \$110 million in additional salaries from FY17-FY21, a substantial and much-needed investment.

As a member of the Education Committee, I have fought for additional operating and capital dollars for education, worked to restore cuts to important programs like OSSE's early literacy grants and community schools incentives, and provided strong oversight of public education policies and spending, as well as related legislation. I have also worked with my Council colleagues to perform strong oversight of our public schools. As demonstrated just last year with the issue of lead in drinking water at several of our schools, it was Council oversight that I helped lead, with colleagues David Grosso and Mary Cheh, that uncovered many of the problems and led to reforms in the way drinking water in schools is tested, filtered, and monitored. That oversight role continues every day as I advocate for Ward 6 parents and Ward 6 school communities, whether it's related to school discipline concerns, special education challenges, facilities conditions, or school budgets. In another example of effective oversight, it was the Council that shined a light on the problems with school food contracting in DCPS and the need to provide DC children with healthy, nutritious meals at school. As more information is discovered about the graduation and attendance irregularities, the



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

Council will again need to exercise robust and strong oversight to ask the hard questions about where our schools are falling short.

9. In Washington, D.C., many seniors seek to age in their homes and/or communities. What efforts will you take to improve access of services and the quality of programs for the City's senior citizens?

This is an area that has been a priority for me during my first term. I authored the Safe at Home Act, which helps low-income seniors and persons with disabilities stay in their homes by providing grants to modify their homes to accommodate aging or disability -- including installing grab bars and creating accessible kitchens and bathrooms. I also advocated strongly for maintaining and increasing operating hours at our senior centers, which can be critical connections for our seniors. I have worked to improve transit and transportation services that many seniors rely on to continue living independently. Last year, I used my position as Chair of the Access for All committee of the Transportation Planning Board to lead a broad coalition of residents and vulnerable communities to publicly criticize the WMATA Board's decisions to increase fares disproportionately on bus trips, and worked with the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development to restore cuts to the Transport DC program. I will continue to be a leading voice for more equitable and accessible transit choices for seniors and all DC residents.

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

Four years ago, I ran on the commitment to make sure Ward 6 neighborhoods are places our residents can always call home. We're leading the way on affordable housing, education, small business growth, and more. I am running for re-election because there is still work to do to ensure neighbors can continue to call Ward 6 home. Three key priority areas are affordable housing, education, and criminal justice reform.

1. Affordable Housing: Ward 6 is leading the way on affordable housing. We have added 1,300 new affordable homes in the last 3 years and there are 1,700 more on the way, but more is needed. I am working to move aggressively with every tool in our toolbox, from leveraging financing and creating requirements for projects using DC land or money, to amending the Comprehensive Plan to make affordable housing the priority. I have focused on adding family-style, multi-



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

bedroom homes and have led this effort for projects on H Street, in Hill East, and in Southwest. This fiscal year, I launched funding for landmark legislation that provides a new right to counsel in eviction cases. This “Civil Gideon” program is one of the first in the nation and is essential to protect the vast majority of low-income tenants who have previously gone without representation while facing eviction proceedings from landlords who almost always have an attorney representing their interests.

2. Education: I have worked to put Ward 6 school modernizations back on track, adding more than \$200 million in funding to modernize aging and outdated buildings and facilities. I have fought for much-needed resources for our students and educators. When the Mayor didn’t fund education appropriately last year, I was at the forefront finding ways to double the resources going to our students and classrooms. I co-authored the elimination of suspensions and expulsion from pre-Kindergarten and co-sponsored the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act, which overhauls school discipline practices -- both bills are efforts to address significant racial disparities in school discipline outcomes. We know that the use of exclusionary discipline disproportionately affects our students of color and contributes to both the achievement gap and the school-to-prison pipeline. I have also worked to close the achievement gap in our public schools by supporting early literacy programs, including creating the DC Public Library’s Books From Birth Program. The first bill I introduced as a Councilmember was to create Books From Birth in an effort to close the word gap for children who may have no other access to books in the home before beginning school. In the two years DC Public Library has had the program up and running, we’ve delivered almost 450,000 books to children from birth to age 5 across the District, with 83% of kids in target neighborhoods enrolled, and the program continuing to grow by 5% per month. As more and more children “graduate” from Books From Birth into our schools, I expect this investment in early literacy will lay the foundation for higher achievement by the students who might otherwise have not had access to books at home.
3. Criminal justice reform: As chair of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, I am working on the most significant reform of our youth laws in more than 30 years. I also provide oversight of the ongoing implementation of the NEAR Act, which I successfully fully funded in my first year chairing this committee. The NEAR Act represents a critical shift in how the District has



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

historically approached public safety and violent crime. I believe in this health- and social services-based model for preventing and intervening in crime. We also need to rethink how we approach record sealing and expungement. Carrying a criminal history doesn't just close a door, it locks it. More than 8,000 of our DC neighbors are carrying a criminal history for which they were never convicted nor even charged. The arrest itself creates a history that serves as a barrier. And not surprisingly, the burden of these criminal histories are carried disproportionately by black residents and communities of color. That's why I'm leading the effort at Council to reform and expand access to automatically seal and expunge several convictions, charges, or arrests, and create a pathway for residents to clear their record more quickly and more easily once their time is served for other offenses to help them re-enter successfully. This work will open doors for our neighbors in employment, housing, and more, clearing the way for success.

While these are three primary focus areas, I remain committed to other efforts as well, including job creation through small business growth; implementation of Paid Family Leave; and expanding democracy by authoring Automatic Voter Registration, Fair Elections, and Youth Voter expansions.