



# The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

1015 18th Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C., 20036 | 202-349-1498  
| [www.CaribbeanPac.org](http://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](mailto:cpac.dmv@gmail.com) by Friday, April 13, 2018.  
Responses will be shared with C-PAC's membership.

**Office Sought: DC Council Chair**

**Candidate's Name: Ed Lazere**

**Current Occupation: Executive Director, DC Fiscal Policy Institute (on leave during campaign)**

**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 and the quality of the District's constituent services.

I am committed to using the DC Council's oversight capacity to hold DC agencies accountable to serving DC residents well. Unlike most state legislatures, the Council has no entity dedicated to play a policy research and evaluation role. This is important to assessing mayoral policy proposals and to overseeing implementation of key services. I will create a central policy shop to support the work of all 13 Councilmembers.

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

I believe it is important to support all ethnic and immigrant communities, including the Caribbean-American community. As someone married to a Caribbean woman (my wife's family is from Guyana), I believe it is especially important to support and uplift the cultural contributions of DC's Caribbean community. As described in answers below, this includes supporting a strong education system, small businesses, and immigrants. I particularly want to make sure the District's supports DC's Caribbean-American cultural heritage. I have fond memories of Georgia Avenue day and feel that its loss leaves a hole in DC's cultural celebrations.

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?



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Small businesses are the lifeblood of any community and should be supported. I will support small, locally owned businesses, through a property tax credit for small businesses, to help them cope with DC's rising commercial rents that only national chains can pay.

I also will work ways to improve access to capital for small businesses in DC, such as using some of DC's very large fund balance to offer micro-loans.

Wide wealth inequities mean too many Black and Brown residents lack resources to start a businesses. And existing small businesses in gentrifying neighborhoods, many owned by people of color, are at risk of getting pushed out. I will work to support existing businesses and emerging business owners.

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

I will work to protect immigrants facing threats from the federal government, including more funding to defend the legal rights of immigrants and active resistance against ICE deportation efforts. I support extending voting rights to non-citizen permanent residents, as a way of increasing their voice in local affairs.

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. The District needs to embrace and support the full range of its cultural diversity.

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?

We need to make sure that DC's CBE program is not taken advantage of by larger businesses that create un-authentic partnerships with small businesses to use the benefits of this program. This includes making sure that small businesses play a large role in any such partnership, and that there is clear evidence that the small business will see lasting gains in its capacity and ability to succeed as a result of this partnership.

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?

The District's vibrant economy and culture is in no small measure due to the many immigrants that call this area their home. We are proud to be one of the most multicultural and multilingual



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cities in the nation. We should stand together to oppose the recent hostile actions by the Trump administration that are threatening immigrant communities.

I will work to protect immigrants facing threats from the federal government, including more funding to defend the legal rights of immigrants and active resistance against ICE deportation efforts.

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?

Our children deserve schools that will let them reach their full potential, no matter which zipcode they live in. We need a Council Chair who demands transparency and accountability, so we can leave the scandals behind and instead focus on giving all students a high-quality education and addressing DC's tremendous education inequities.

I chaired a 2012 Public Education Finance Reform Commission that led to sweeping improvements in how DC's are funded -- calling for better funding for all schools as well as targeted additional funding to help students facing challenges like poverty. And I've helped lead advocacy efforts resulting in substantial increases in resources for schools through the DC budget process.

To make sure that getting a good education doesn't depend on winning the school lottery, as Council Chair, I will:

**Improve Accountability:** I will work for ways to improve transparency, data access, and oversight of both DCPS and public charter schools. This will enable parents, the Council and other stakeholders to have the information they need to hold leaders accountable for improving schools.

**Give All Schools the Resources They Need:** I will call for a regular review of what DC Public Schools and Public Charter Schools really need to succeed, and then fight for that funding.

**Take on Achievement Inequities:** I will work to protect "at-risk" funds for high-poverty schools, so these can provide services to address the challenges low-income students face. And I will work to make sure every DC school has a mental health professional whose only job is to support children.

**Expand Language Opportunities for All Students.** I will support the Language Access for Education Act so residents are no longer denied an adequate education and access to information on DC services in the language they need. I will also support the expansion of Language Immersion programs in our schools, an increasingly popular school model that promotes diversity, inclusion and understanding.



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**Universal Summer and After-School:** I will work to make sure every child has access to exciting and meaningful after school and summer enrichment opportunities.

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?

DC should do everything it can to address the needs of older residents. Too many seniors in DC live in isolation, in part due to limited transportation options. And low fixed incomes can result in high risk of hunger and housing that is unaffordable.

As Council Chair, I will:

**Reach Out to Isolated Seniors:** I support Improving outreach to seniors who are isolated to inform them of available services and connect them.

**Support Transportation for Seniors:** I will work to strengthen transportation options, such as Seabury Connector, to help seniors get to appointments and senior wellness centers.

**Fight Senior Hunger:** One in six older DC residents is at risk of hunger. I will work to Invest in food security for seniors, including home-delivered meals and meals at senior centers

**Improve Health and Well-being of Seniors in Their Homes:** I will work to improve access to in-home services through DC's Medicaid waiver (EPD), which allows seniors to live independently in the community and not in institutions.

**Support Affordable Housing:** Like other groups. affordable housing is a growing challenge for many seniors. In addition to strengthening rent control, I will work to ensure that DC's housing programs support housing devoted to seniors, particularly LGBTQ seniors.

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

Priority One: Create More Affordable Housing -- The loss of affordable housing has contributed to displacement of Black and Brown residents and has put extreme stress on thousands of DC households. Because the lack of stable housing affects so many other things -- mental health, child development, job opportunities, and more -- the loss of affordable housing is the single largest challenge to DC's future and to addressing economic and racial inequities. As described below, I commit to doubling DC's affordable housing programs and to fully meeting the affordable housing need of our lowest income families over 10 years.



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Priority Two: Ending Homelessness -- DC has a plan to make homelessness “rare, brief, and non-recurring.” Yet our leaders have not found the will to implement it. So we see a growing number of residents experiencing homelessness, and it is now common to pass by someone whose home is a tent. We need to stop making excuses for not ending homelessness. I would use the bully pulpit of the Council Chair to encourage the mayor to fully fund the Homeward DC plan, and if the mayor doesn't, I commit the Council to doing so.

Priority Three: Children -- The graduation scandal will not be solved by firing administrators and enforcing attendance policies. Instead, we need to address the challenges our children face, starting well before high school. As Council Chair, I would invest in high-quality child care, afterschool and summer enrichment opportunities, mental health professionals in all schools, and ensuring funds intended for high-poverty schools are available to support students. We need to support our children's educational success instead of erecting barriers to achievement that punish them when they are struggling.