



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 Wednesday, October 24, 2018.
Responses will be shared with C-PAC’s membership and the Caribbean-American Community.

Office Sought: DC Council (At-large)

Candidate’s Name: Elissa Silverman

Current Occupation: At-large Councilmember

Party: Independent

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.

The District needs to take more of a “customer service” approach to agency responsiveness and constituent services. District employees at agencies that interface with the public should all be trained to treat constituents and residents as customers who pay their salaries. We need to be sure that leadership at all agencies actively encourage their staff to

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

I am focused on making DC an equitable, just city. That means for Caribbean-Americans that they can have high-performing schools no matter what ward they live in, be able to afford a home, and run their business without unnecessary regulation.

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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We need to reform DCRA to make permitting simpler and reduce red tape that prevents small businesses, particularly those that are minority, women, veteran, and Caribbean owned, from succeeding. We also need to do a better job training our young people and job seekers for the concrete job skills our employers need.

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

I fully support the District's status as a sanctuary city. I also believe that our local police department should not aid the federal Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) in deporting D.C. residents, regardless of documentation status.

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.

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 be sure that the CBE program is not abused so that minority owned small businesses, including Caribbean-owned businesses, can be the main contractors on large contracts and not simply sub-contractors.

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?

One of the main reasons that I supported a compromise on Initiative 77 repeal is out of concern for D.C. residents who may be working as tipped workers while also facing an uncertain immigration status- whether they may be Dreamers, TPS recipients, or undocumented. Many of our residents who are most vulnerable to wage theft are "indirectly" tipped workers like busers, barbacks, foodruners, or workers that many customers might not realize rely on tips, like salon workers and parking attendants. They are vulnerable both because of the complexity of the tipped system, which some bad employers take advantage of, and because many of these workers are immigrants who may be afraid to come forward and complain, especially with the Trump



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administration just down the street. I support ensuring that all D.C. residents are paid a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, regardless of immigration status.

Also, as stated previously, I also fully support D.C.'s status as a sanctuary city and do not believe that the Metropolitan Police Department should participate in or otherwise support federal immigration enforcement actions.

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?

First, I believe that improving our school system is a question of priorities. We know that many of our DCPS students are living in poverty, and as a result many experience food or housing insecurity. These circumstances and others make it extremely difficult for students to learn to their full potential. We must invest money in the resources, including wraparound services like guidance counselors, necessary to ensure that teachers can teach and students can learn when they are in the classroom.

We also need a leadership culture in our school system that allows teachers, students, parents, and administrators to be honest about the obstacles they face. Too often, honesty in our school system is discouraged in favor of politically convenient statistics.

We also need to think about the policies outside of schools that could have a positive impact inside of schools. By fully funding universal childcare, we could start to close the achievement gap by making sure all children have access to high quality affordable childcare. Universal childcare would also allow more older siblings to get to their classes on time and not have to worry about getting their siblings to class.

Finally, I believe that politicians should not play an active role in determining curriculum and that we need to support and defer to the professionals in our schools, especially teachers, on what the needs are in the classroom. That's why I'm proud to have the support of the Washington Teacher's Union.

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?



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On the Council, I'm proud to have prioritized funding rental assistance for seniors to stay in their homes.

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

Across the board, I think that the District government needs to be more strategic in our priorities and how we invest our taxpayer dollars. This is especially true in the areas that I consider to be most important for our residents- housing, education, and workforce development.

We spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year on workforce development, but we don't see the results you would expect from such a substantial investment. We need to be sure that our job seekers are being provided the skills they need to get the great jobs available in our region- in construction, healthcare, and more. Specifically, I think we should use our community college to make sure we're training DC residents for permanent jobs in healthcare like RNs, phlebotomists, and medical records technicians. This will help us build pipelines into good paying jobs for our residents.

In housing, we build too many studios and one bedrooms and not enough affordable housing for our families who are already living here. We don't utilize strong laws that are already on the books, like the District Opportunity to Purchase Act, which allows the D.C. government to intervene to preserve affordable housing by pairing residents with a nonprofit developer.

I want to use our taxpayer dollars strategically to ensure that the District is an affordable, equitable, and just city for all our residents.