



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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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: Lisa Hunter

Current Occupation: Healthcare Consultant

Party: Democratic Party

Campaign contact information: lisaforward6@gmail.com / www.lisaforward6.com

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Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Caribbean-American Political Action Committee questionnaire. **I am especially excited and proud to have this opportunity, because one of the great influences in my life was my time living in the Caribbean, in Guyana as a member of the Peace Corps, teaching literacy in Charity.** I remain in regular touch with my host family because they have truly become a part of my family. I witnessed firsthand the hurdles they faced, but also their resiliency, kindness, and generosity. They taught me so much, and I carry those lessons with me every day.

I was raised in a mixed-race household by my first-generation Jewish father and my Mexican-American mother. They both overcame long odds to achieve success, and create opportunity for myself and my brother. Along the way, they taught us the importance of social justice, and instilled in us the belief that it was our obligation to give back; to lift and support others because we are standing on the shoulders of those who did the same for us. I look back now and am so humbled to have learned those lessons from my parents, and so proud to know that they have faith in me to live them and pass them along to my own daughter.

I am also humbled to have this opportunity to run, which is a privilege that most people in our community do not have the time or resources to do. I am proud to know that if I am elected I would be the first Latinx to serve on the DC Council, something that is long overdue. **If 2016 taught us anything, it is that we as a community must do even more to stand up for each other, speak out when we see injustice, organize in support of progressive causes and candidates, and run for office when we know our representatives are falling short. That is why I decided to run. I am not a politician, I am a progressive, working mom who is sick of watching our current leaders talk a good game, then take votes that leave too many of our neighbors behind and pay no political price for it.**

I have spent enough time watching the incumbent cut taxes for corporations and the ultra-wealthy while voting against funding for affordable housing; I have watched him vote to make it



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harder for homeless neighbors to access shelters; vote against eliminating the tipped minimum wage; and ignore entire communities in our Ward, even as they are being displaced, simply because they do not make political donations. I also faced my own personal battle as a constituent, when my husband and I tried to have Spanish-language no parking signs removed from our neighborhood. They were not placed by the city, but by neighbors who wanted to target Latino workers and keep them from using public street parking. Simply put, the signs were discriminatory, and they needed to be removed. Yet, my councilmember did nothing, so we had to remove them ourselves. It was then that I truly learned who he was, and seeing it firsthand was a big reason I decided to enter this race, even if my chances were slim. **No matter the odds, a fight on behalf of our vulnerable neighbors is a fight worth having.**

I have built my career by serving others. Before moving to DC, I helped protect immigrants in Los Angeles from unscrupulous employers as a Legal Fellow with Bet Tzedek, taught literacy to Guyanese youth as a Peace Corps Volunteer, worked as a field organizer on the Obama campaign in 2008, and followed President Obama to DC after his election hoping to make a difference and serve the public. Nearly a decade later, this city has given me everything: a career, an education, great friends, a family, a dog, and a home. Then, in 2016, my husband and I became proud parents to our daughter Julia Justicia (“JJ”).

But even in a progressive city like ours, I see a troubling lack of empathy, accountability, transparency, and compassion in our DC Council. **Simply put, the status quo is not ok, and too many of our neighbors literally cannot afford another four years of this.** If elected, I commit to holding true to our shared values, and continuing to stand up for vulnerable communities. I’m not in this for myself. I’m in it for my neighbors.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my response, for your consideration, and for all the work you do on behalf of people who are so truly deserving of our help.

With gratitude,

Lisa Hunter

Candidate for DC Council, Ward 6



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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 recently wrote about a story a local advocate told me, about a woman seeking to work in a salon in DC. The woman was working to comply with local regulations and secure appropriate licensure, but none of the DC agencies she was required to interface with could provide her with the language assistance she needed. The process was confusing and cumbersome, and like many of us, the woman was unable to navigate it without assistance from her government. But her government did not provide her with the assistance she needed. Three months later, the local advocate ran into this woman again. She was at a church, eating a free meal. Having been unable to secure approval to work in the salon, the woman was homeless.

When I heard this story, it broke my heart. The role of our city's agencies and our representatives on the DC Council is to lift people up, and in this case, they did just the opposite. This is why we must demand nothing less than an accountable, transparent, efficient government that is responsive to all of our neighbors. This starts with constituent services, and it is the role of our councilmembers to find solutions and interface with agencies on our behalf when there is a problem that needs to be solved. This isn't what we get from our current leadership; **the most common response to a request is "I'll look into it," and if you live in Ward 6, you likely have multiple such requests outstanding, sometimes years after they were made. It's unacceptable.**

In order to make our government work for its people, I will not only prioritize constituent services for the residents of Ward 6, I will commit to interfacing with them, in person, at agencies such as DCRA, DOH and other places that pose regular problems for our residents. If elected, I plan to hold regular office hours at these agencies, because constituent problems are a councilmember's problems. I commit to making constituent problems my problems, and helping to solve them in person. It's easy to forward emails along and hope someone else deals with the problem, as our current councilmember is known to do, but real leadership requires showing up. There is no excuse for inaction on the part of agencies, whose budgets are approved by the DC Council. It is time to exercise the full authority of the legislative branch and demand accountability and performance through rigorous oversight and aggressive follow-up.

In addition to improving our basic services for all neighbors, **I would like to pay specific attention to fixing the shortcomings of our current language access services.** The DC Language Access Act was introduced in 2004, and passed over ten years ago. Since that time, immigrants have made up approximately one third of DC's population growth. Our city's immigrant communities and limited- or non-English proficient (LEP/NEP) speakers are deserving of, and indeed entitled to, government services, yet our Council has not



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prioritized much-needed reforms. Although legislation that would strengthen the law and ensure that it actually achieves its goals has been introduced on multiple occasions since 2014, the DC Council has failed to act, leaving vulnerable members of our community without access to critical services. According to the most recent compliance report issued by the DC Office on Human Rights, places like the Department of Health, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Metropolitan Police Department, the Office of Contracting and Procurement, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education fell short in meeting the preparedness, accessibility, and quality standards required to serve the needs of our LEP/NEP populations. This is absolutely unacceptable. We can do better, just as progressive cities throughout the country already have. New York has an entire Translation and Interpretation Unit integrated into their Department of Education, dedicated to identifying and addressing language barriers in schools. San Francisco offers translation services in over one hundred languages for all web-facing content, including their law enforcement and judicial web pages, and provides additional services by phone and in-person as needed. There is nothing stopping DC from implementing these same services and requiring additional language training and services be made available across our police department, agencies, schools, and court system. **It's an investment that will make city services more accessible for many of our neighbors who need them most. If I am elected, this will be one of my top priorities.]**

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

[Providing the Caribbean-American community, and all minority communities in DC, with the support they deserve requires a comprehensive look at housing, education and economic policies across the city. **I believe we start by making sure city services are accessible to everyone, and that starts with fixing our language access shortfalls, as outlined above.** According to the most recent Census data, over a quarter of DC-area homes speak a language other than English as the primary language in their home, a number that is well above the national average. This is true for many of our Caribbean-American families, and the city is failing to meet the needs of our limited- or non-English proficient neighbors.

I recently wrote a piece for my website about language access issues and I hope you will take a moment to read it, available [in English here](#), and [in Spanish here](#). I will push for an immediate markup and passage of the Language Access for Education Act. The number of residents in DC for whom English is not a first language continues to rise, yet DC lags behind most progressive cities in the nation with respect to accessibility to government services. **As a Latina, this bothers me at a very personal level, and my own personal interactions with my opponent as a constituent have me convinced that he is not the person to help us move forward as a community.** At a minimum, we should be ensuring



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that children in our schools for whom English is not a first language are given the tools and resources to be successful, including translations of essential information and other materials that will contribute to their success.

I would also propose an amendment to the Language Access for Education Act that would lower the thresholds that trigger the presence of a school language liaison from what has currently been proposed. A school could conceivably fail to meet the 5 percent or 500-student threshold and still be the only educational resource for a substantial number of children who will need assistance in order to succeed in school. We cannot allow shortcomings in existing policies to create opportunity gaps in our schools. I would suggest a method through which all students can be provided targeted support based on demonstrated need, without respect to whether their school meets a designated threshold. Our schools are unique, and our policies need to reflect that. The ability of a student to access needed services should not be limited by a shortage of staff or resources based on pre-set numbers, so any reforms must include mandatory dedicated funding that is flexible enough to meet the needs of every school, and adjust with an increase in funding or personnel if that is found to not be the case.

Beyond language access, I recognize that the Caribbean-American community faces the challenges imposed by a city that has become increasingly unaffordable, particularly when it comes to housing security. I have proposed several policy changes that I believe would help us begin to truly address our affordable housing shortage, and allow us to achieve, and even exceed, a target increase of 26,000 affordable housing units by 2020. First, we need to redefine “affordable.” The prevailing view of the Council is that building units that meet the current definition of affordability is alleviating our affordable housing crisis, and that is not the case. For housing to be truly affordable, it needs to be affordable to those who need it most. Eighty percent of area median income (AMI) is not affordable for too many of our neighbors, particularly single parents, or those struggling to find work. Second, we must streamline access to funding, and make sure those developers who are building truly affordable housing have timely access to funding and assistance from the city. Third, we must make clear to developers that our taxpayer subsidies are no longer available for their commercial developments. I believe the last decade of development in this city shows that commercial developers do not need our assistance. DC is a great place to live and work, and that’s why commercial developers are here. We should be subsidizing only those projects that contain an adequate percentage of truly affordable housing, and it’s time we have a discussion about what truly affordable housing looks like. It’s also time that we demand developers create affordable housing units that are fully integrated into the development, with the same finishes and materials, so our neighbors are not being told upon arrival to their new home that their community considers them to be lesser than their neighbors. In addition, the Mayor and DC Council must make greater investments in



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our housing programs to help residents obtain – and remain in – housing. In this regard, I align closely with the DC Fair Budget Coalition’s vision for addressing housing security. My approach starts with meeting the affordable housing need of our extremely-low-income (0-30% AMI) residents. This includes allocating \$313 million in programs run by DC Housing Authority to create new housing and provide Local Rent Supplement Program vouchers. To help residents remain in their homes (or move, if needed), we ought to allocate \$12 million to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which helps provide back rent for people facing evictions. Lastly, it is time to reverse the recent cuts to the corporate and estate tax rates and direct that revenue to our homelessness and affordable housing crises. That our DC Council would take votes to help a few hundred ultra-wealthy DC residents when we have not committed funding to provide everyone in our city with a safe place to sleep at night is a moral failure, and it’s time we make it right.

I would also push for strong enforcement of our labor laws, to make sure workers are protected and small businesses are not taken advantage of by large companies who are able to dodge the rules and create an un-level playing field which allows them to thrive at the expense of our local small businesses. DC has some of the toughest labor laws in the country, but we fall short in a very critical way: enforcement. We know that the Department of Employment Services receives a constant stream of labor law complaints, and that the Office of the Attorney General does not have the funds nor the investigators to keep pace. As a result, unscrupulous employers take advantage of workers, fail to comply with local hiring laws, and, in some instances, point fingers at competitors in an effort to distract overextended investigators and divert attention from their own violations. I have met too many workers who tell me they are being taken advantage of by their employer, and most of them have been Persons of Color. This is unacceptable, and we need to do better. DC must immediately invest more in oversight and investigations to protect our workers, especially as the city’s many development projects surge ahead.

It’s a matter of public record that our Ward 6 councilmember has taken tens of thousands of dollars in campaign donations from developer interests. As such, it’s no coincidence that Ward 6 is home to the most pervasive and expansive development projects in the city. The Wharf is a glaring example: DC gave \$300 million in subsidies to commercial developers without ensuring that their projects provided much-needed affordable housing, or good-quality jobs that pay a living wage to DC residents. As a taxpayer, I am appalled by leaders who vote to subsidize such significant projects without determining whether financial support was necessary in the first place. Especially when it comes at the expense of our most vulnerable neighbors.

The DC Council allowed the Wharf developer, who also happens to be one of Mr. Allen’s max donors, to meet only 10 percent of affordability standards for newly built housing



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units, down from the 30-percent standard initially set. Labor unions and local residents are furious at this boondoggle, and they should be. According to the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, union agreements would have resulted in more than \$13.2 million in higher earnings for construction workers, hotel workers, and office cleaners. The workers would also have received healthcare and retirement benefits. Instead, my opponent appeased corporate interests and failed to ensure that every dollar of taxpayer money is spent wisely. **At a time when corporate greed is pervasive, and when our confidence in the integrity of our government institutions and elected officials is low, we deserve better.]**

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 believe we have a moral obligation to make sure the commercial development in DC does not come at the expense of the homes and businesses of our residents, or the history of our city. This means making opportunities available for all of our small business owners, not just those with political connections. We start by making our government contracting, permitting, licensure and loan programs work for everyone, not just those with friends in government or money to pay for expedited review. Too often, our archaic and opaque agency processes close out business owners with limited resources, because they are unable to navigate the bureaucracy on their own and end up suffering as a result. Of course, these same processes are perfectly navigable for large developers, and the local business and restaurant groups with the time and resources to pay for favors on the DC Council, and often hire former city employees to help them navigate our confusing system. If we commit to making these processes work for everyone, we will have started the process of leveling the playing field, so small, minority, women and veteran-owned business can continue to compete, and thrive, in our city.

We also must do more to invest in small businesses by building on the work the DC Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking (DISB) is able to do through the DC Small Business Lending & State Small Business Credit Initiative. Programs like the DC BizCAP loan program are great for those with substantial non-liquid assets that can be used as collateral, but the reality for many of our small business owners is something altogether different. We should take a thorough look at the program, through oversight on the DC Council, to determine whether the program is benefitting those who truly need assistance, or whether reforms are needed to make it more inclusive, particularly to those who may not have substantial assets to offer as collateral.

While DISB offers important resources for those seeking to start or maintain a business in DC, additional investments should be made outside of this Department to ensure that longtime business owners are not faced with predatory rent increases. **A business owner**



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who has operated in their community for decades, and has played an important role the growth of their neighborhood, should not be forced out simply because the city, and our developer community, decide on a different vision for that section of town. We should be rewarding those who have been longtime investors in our communities by investing in them. Programs that provide temporary assistance for business owners who owe back rent can be funded by the city at only a modest cost, and could be the difference between losing a business or not. Main Street programs that award grants to local businesses for beautification efforts can be expanded to offer grant programs that can do more than apply a fresh coat of paint to a façade, but can assist with critical improvements to infrastructure and equipment that an owner may not have the capital to obtain on their own, but that would help their business take advantage of a new market opportunity, or enhance their existing service. In addition to expanding existing programs, we must do more to make them accessible to all who could benefit from them, including by conducting proactive outreach to small business owners, and providing resources, training and outreach that is appropriate and useful for our limited- or non-English proficient neighbors, many of whom are business owners in DC, through expanded Language Access services.]

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

[As detailed above, I would like to pay specific attention to fixing the shortcomings of our current language access services. The DC Language Access Act was introduced in 2004, and passed over ten years ago. Since that time, immigrants have made up approximately one third of DC's population growth. **Our city's immigrant communities and limited- or non-English proficient (LEP/NEP) speakers are deserving of, and indeed entitled to, essential government services such as housing and healthcare assistance that provide basic safety and an opportunity for economic security and upward mobility, yet our Council has not prioritized much-needed reforms.** We have a long way to go when it comes to supporting our immigrant communities in DC, and we need to start by ensuring everyone in our city has access to basic government and legal services if their rights are being infringed upon.

I have been particularly concerned to learn about the lack of oversight and care that has gone into our current Immigrant Justice Legal Services Program, and one of my priorities would be making sure it is adequately funded and staffed so our immigrant community can receive legal support and services they desperately need. The work made possible through the Immigrant Justice Legal Services Grant Program has made a significant impact in the DC immigrant community, a community that continues to grow. According to a [report](#) by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the percentage of immigrants that make up the DC local population has risen from 12 percent 30 years ago, to 23 percent



[The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee](#)

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today. The proportion of the DC area's population that is foreign-born is greater than the national average, and continues to rise. As our immigrant population in DC increases, we must also recognize that the growing need for legal services outweighs the current capacity.

Mayor Bowser deserves credit for recognizing the ongoing need, and renewing the Grant Program by making an additional \$500,000 available in fiscal year 2018. For fiscal year 2019, she has proposed an increase of \$100,000, though legal services advocates note that even with the proposed increase the program is still falling short in meeting the need of the community. As such, I would fight for the requisite \$1.5 million funding, and work with colleagues for a dedicated line-item in the annual budget. This is the reality we face as the need continues to grow, and ongoing funding for the Immigrant Justice Legal Services Grant Program under the current structure will need to be considered, and renewed, every single year, leaving the future of the program in the balance on an annual basis.

Finally, we also must do more to support our immigrant communities in the workplace. This starts by making sure all workers are paid a living wage, and have access to predictable schedules that allow them the flexibility to take on additional employment, seek educational opportunities for themselves, be present with their children, provide care to family members, or otherwise benefit from the certainty that comes with workplace scheduling.]

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. This is yet another example of our city failing to keep pace with other large cities across the country. The Caribbean Community deserves access and assistance to community programs and government services, and DC must do more to conduct proactive outreach and engagement. **I fully support dedicated, mandatory funding to make this happen, and I pledge to work with the Caribbean community to establish such an Office immediately.]**

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?

[This program provides benefit to our small business community, but is in many ways another example of a DC bureaucracy that is falling short of its original intent. The procurement and development process in DC lacks transparency, accountability, and clarity, which works to the advantage of large entities with the money to make political connections, or the time, resources and staff to navigate a confusing system. Large



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developers and companies that choose to partner with local small businesses in order to qualify for CBE certification reap most if not all of the benefits, while doing little for the small businesses they partnered with. **The first step to addressing these issues is for the DC Council to work with stakeholders and advocates to identify specific shortcomings and potential ways to strengthen the program.** The Council must then conduct oversight in order to determine exactly where we are falling short, and where the program might benefit from programmatic changes or additional targeted resources. Because of the ease with which a large entity can qualify for CBE preference, simply by opening an office and moving staff into it, the program in its current state also allows entities that might not otherwise be eligible to proactively institute organizational changes with the goal of filing for certification, thereby bypassing businesses that have been good stewards of the program and have acted in good faith. Reforms and oversight must take place in order to make sure these abuses aren't able to occur.]

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 stress faced by DREAMers, immigrant communities, families and friends is what I consider to be the most concerning development of the Trump presidency. **As a Latina with Mexican-American family members who already struggle to access government services, it is deeply upsetting to know that these daily struggles have only become more difficult. Much of my family lives in Arizona, and I remember what it was like worrying about them every day as they lived under the terrible, discriminatory policies set by Sheriff Joe Arpaio. It is profoundly sad to know that some of those same ideas, and daily fears, have been spread even further throughout the country, but I am resolved to continue to stand up and defend our community in the face of these increasing threats.** I am happy that Mayor Bowser has expressed an unwavering commitment to maintaining DC's status as a sanctuary city, but I also believe we lack the level of compassion and empathy on our DC Council needed to understand these ongoing stresses, and to proactively protect our neighbors should the Trump administration seek to initiate additional damaging policy changes.

This issue is deeply personal for me. There are many reasons why I entered this race, but one moment that sticks out to me occurred in the summer of 2017, when my opponent Charles Allen sent a flippant tweet about Joe Arpaio. It became obvious to me at that moment that Mr. Allen clearly does not understand the pain and the damage Mr. Arpaio has caused so many immigrants, and so many members of my own family, many of whom live in Arizona. Even if we are to give him the benefit of the doubt and assume he means well, he clearly lacks the understanding and the empathy we need to see in our leaders in order to get through these difficult times. Seeing his remarks was yet one more reminder



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that we have elected a man who works for some of us, not all of us. **Protecting our immigrant communities requires more than words, it requires courage, empathy, and a willingness to fight. I have personally seen Mr. Allen fail to act when given the opportunity to defend the Latinx community. Simply put, I do not trust him to fight for our immigrant communities, because I do not believe that he understands our immigrant communities.**

I support more than merely maintaining DC's status as a sanctuary city. We should be ensuring that every student has access to free public schools, and financial aid to local universities. We also must proactively require that our DC agencies do more to make sure our neighbors who have been driven into the shadows by the Trump administration are having their health, housing, nutritional and economic needs met, and if there are shortfalls in our budget to fully meet these needs, now is the time to address it. One reform that stands to help thousands of immigrants in DC would be adjusting eligibility rules for the DC Healthcare Alliance so that beneficiaries don't have to re-certify for the program every 6-months, but instead re-certify annually, avoiding drops in coverage and alleviating the high volume facing service centers today.

I am running because I believe we are a stronger community when we lift everyone up, and leave none of our neighbors behind. Now, more than ever, this means supporting and fighting for our undocumented neighbors.

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?

[Unfortunately, the opportunity gaps in DC schools are some of the largest in the nation. Approximately 95 percent of DC's white third graders read at a proficient level, while the literacy rate for minority students is only 35 percent. This is a horrific stat that makes clear we've created a system that is not working for our minority and immigrant communities. **As a Latina, and a product of parents who had to overcome discrimination in their schools, towns, and workplaces, I take these issues to heart, and am committed to doing everything in my power to fix them.** My daughter, Julia Justicia, will soon be a Latina in our DC Public Schools, and I want her to learn and grow in a school system that works for everyone, regardless of their background, race, ethnicity or economic status.

Even as our DC government has fallen short, I remain convinced that our community shares the belief that our children are our greatest asset, and that each child deserves every possible opportunity to reach their full potential as individuals. Research has increasingly shown the benefits of integrating social and emotional development with academic learning. These approaches benefit all students but they are shown to be particularly beneficial for



[The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee](#)

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students who have experienced great adversity. It's critical for our community's public schools to prepare students not only for future academic success like high school completion and college graduation, but also the skills required to thrive as citizens and flourish in the workplace. Ward 6 is the proud home to schools that are emphasizing social-emotional learning skills and the competencies students will draw upon as they navigate future challenges. The teachers I have met throughout this campaign are champions for their students.

A common theme among teachers I have spoken to is the lack of time for lesson planning and other proactive work that improves the classroom experience for students. Teachers should not have to stay up until all hours of the night, in their own homes, doing work they get paid to do during the day. Requiring them to do so leads to burnout, and increases teacher churn. It's fundamentally unfair, and it also sends the wrong signal to our teachers and parents, because the work they are doing matters a great deal to our society, and it should be treated accordingly. **I would propose any new initiative that increases staff burden be accompanied by a burden assessment carried out by the DOE, and to the extent that we are adding extra hours or burden on our teachers and schools, it would be the responsibility of our government to provide appropriate dedicated funding and staff support accordingly before a requirement could be put in place.**

I believe our schools and our communities should not be defined by the performance of our elite, we should be defined by what we do to make sure we leave nobody behind. This means giving everyone a chance to succeed, especially our students with special needs, and nowhere is this more important than in our schools. **I fully support dedicated supplemental funding for programs, including funding for dedicated staff at each of our schools who are available to help children with social, emotional and health needs. It is also important to me that we have the funding and capacity to provide these same services to students with language access issues.**

By prioritizing dedicated funding and requiring dedicated personnel that is adequate to meet the needs of each school based on its enrollment size and demonstrated need, the DC Council can establish an infrastructure that is subject to well-defined benchmarks and has a chance to be successful. Using its ongoing oversight authority, the Council would be in a position to evaluate the successes and shortcomings and act accordingly. **One of my concerns with DC government generally is the extent to which the DC Council cedes responsibility and authority to the Mayor by failing to conduct regular accounting, oversight or investigations where appropriate. Too often, we learn about shortcomings in our school system from reporters, after they have happened. Effective ongoing oversight by a legislative body is important not just when it uncovers problems or scandals, but because ongoing oversight leads to higher levels of accountability, effectiveness and service within government on a daily basis.**



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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I would also propose an amendment to the Language Access for Education bill that would lower the thresholds that trigger the presence of a language liaison from what has currently been proposed. A school could conceivably fail to meet the 5 percent or 500-student threshold and still be the only educational resource for a substantial number of children who will need assistance in order to succeed in school. I would suggest a method through which all students can be provided targeted support based on demonstrated need, without respect to whether their school meets a designated threshold. Our schools are unique, and our policies need to reflect that. The ability of a student to access needed services should not be limited by a shortage of staff or resources based on pre-set numbers, so any reforms must include mandatory dedicated funding that is flexible enough to meet the needs of every school, and adjust with an increase in funding or personnel if that is found to not be the case. As part of any further consideration or markup of this legislation, I would like to see the thresholds that trigger the presence of a language liaison be lowered from what has currently been proposed. A school could conceivably fail to meet the 5 percent or 500-student threshold and still be the only educational resource for a substantial number of children who will need assistance in order to succeed in school. I would suggest a method through which all students can be provided targeted support based on demonstrated need, without respect to whether their school meets a designated threshold.

Student-to-teacher ratios should not be based on budgetary determinations made by the DC government, they should be based on information we receive from teachers and school personnel who are best equipped to determine what works for our students and what doesn't. This feedback must be incorporated into our policymaking and funding decisions. Recognizing that each community, each school, and indeed each classroom is different, there needs to be sufficient flexibility within a school to determine that staffing levels are meeting the needs of all students. Our low-income children face health disparities, food insecurity, undiagnosed medical conditions, unstable housing, and many other challenges that our high-performing students never need to think about, so my primary concern is making sure they have the support they need to be successful, and that teachers are given the tools, resources and time they need to help them succeed.

It is important for our elected officials to recognize that our opportunity gaps exist for many reasons beyond the walls of our schools. The literacy rates in our schools reflect wide racial and ethnic disparities, and students coming from communities of color are often not receiving the teaching, or achieving the results, they deserve. In particular, as the Latinx population continues to rise we've continued to ignore these issues, perhaps in part because, unlike most major US cities, DC has never had a member of the Latinx community elected to serve on its legislative body.]



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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?

[I would start by making sure we have a sufficient stock of affordable housing so our seniors are able to age in their homes and communities. Based on a recent report, Ward 6 has fewer rent controlled units than any other Ward in the city. I have met too many Ward 6 neighbors who have lived in their homes for decades and feel as though they are counting the days until they are forced out. The pressure placed on our neighbors to find affordable housing, let alone remain in it, is tremendous and at times inhumane. **As such, I support policies that tie rent increases to CPI and cap the annual rent increase percentage on rent-control units to 2.5 percent.**

We are in a particularly critical time when it comes to securing housing for our longtime residents, as the revisions to the Comprehensive Plan are moving through the DC Council. The Comp Plan is centered on the idea of an “inclusive city,” but in reviewing the proposed revisions, and the Council approval process, it does the opposite. I [testified before the DC Council](#) at the hearing on the Comp Plan, which went until 4 in the morning. **There is nothing inclusive about a process that takes place in the darkness of night.** It is clear that the amendments stand to drastically change DC and bend to the whims of the developer class. Far from providing for an “inclusive city,” the proposed changes inject ambiguity, loosen definitions to key terms (e.g., residential and commercial definitions of low-, moderate-, medium-, and high-density), and weaken the Comp Plan's existing prescriptive power at the cost of further displacing our Black and Latinx residents. This is wrong. Moreover, I am deeply troubled by the lack of transparency throughout the amendment process. I have spoken with countless voters throughout Ward 6 who have been counting on this Comprehensive Plan process to provide them with a pathway to stability and security in their longtime homes and neighborhoods. These are individuals who have lived in our city for 50-plus years, and thought this process would provide them with a voice, due process, and a recognition by their city that their continued presence in and contributions to their community was valued, respected, and worthy of protection. In light of this revision process, that's the opposite of what the DC government is telling our neighbors.

I support a process through which the deliberation and decision-making leading to any revisions are transparent, and available to everyone in the community who wishes to learn more about them. Further, I support a revision and approval process that is driven by the DC Council, not the Zoning Commission, because decisions that will have such profound impact on individual neighborhoods need to be made by elected officials who are directly accountable to the people living in those neighborhoods.]



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

[I am not running because I aspire to be a career politician. I'm running because I'm a progressive, working mom who is sick of watching our current leaders talk a good game, then take votes that leave too many of our neighbors behind. I have enough public service experience to know what inclusive representation looks like, and enough empathy to know how important it is that we don't fall short. I have watched shiny new buildings being built across our community, yet there doesn't seem to be anywhere affordable for our neighbors to live. I have watched longtime neighbors forced out of their communities because they can no longer afford the costs of living, or find a job that pays a fair wage. I have watched developers promise jobs to local residents, only to build large buildings with jobs that aren't even made available to our local community, and often times do not even pay a living wage. I have gone to my own councilmember, who is now my opponent, with complaints regarding discrimination against Latino workers in my neighborhood, and he took no action. From our growing skyline to our neighborhood streets, we're seeing too many people being ignored, or outright cast aside by our politicians, and I am no longer willing to sit on the sidelines and watch it happen. I am running for this job because I believe we can do better, and I believe we're stronger when we bring everyone with us, and leave nobody behind.

If elected, my immediate priorities will be to address DC's affordable housing crisis and burgeoning homelessness population; empower all DC workers so everyone can earn a stable living wage; and bring transparency and accountability to our campaign finance system to end the unchecked influence of wealthy campaign donors and special interests. There are very easy ways we can begin to tackle these very complex problems, if we elect people who are willing to try.

Housing Security: My proposal for ensuring housing security for every DC resident starts with adjusting the flawed formula that we currently use to define affordability and determine eligibility for housing programs. The Area Median Income (AMI), set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, incorporates the suburbs of DC in its calculation. Federal and DC-based housing programs peg eligibility to AMI, yet nothing precludes DC from employing a formula that focuses squarely on District income rather than incorporating suburban incomes in places such as Alexandria, Bethesda, Chevy Chase, McLean and others that skew what is truly affordable to low- and ultra-low-income DC residents. I would work with the Council, advocates, and groups such as the DC Fiscal Policy Institute to develop a DC-based AMI. For housing to be truly affordable, it needs to be affordable to those who need it most. Eighty percent of the current AMI is not affordable for too many of our neighbors, particularly single parents, or those struggling to find work.



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Economic Justice For Workers: I would also move to immediately pass an enhanced version of the Fair Scheduling Act. This legislation is critical because it would primarily support the most economically vulnerable workers in our city. Requiring employers to provide hours to current employees before bringing on new staff would allow many workers to reach full-time status, which would trigger their eligibility for employer-sponsored health insurance. Having worked on Affordable Care Act (ACA) implementation in the Obama administration, I can say with certainty that, in a city where our DC Council seeks to position themselves as champions of the ACA, one of the most important policy changes they could make in order to decrease the rate of uninsured DC workers would be to increase the number of full-time workers. Yet, they refuse to act. This bill is largely about economic certainty and security for low-wage workers, but it is also an example of DC business interests having undue influence in matters related to the health care of DC workers. Beyond the obvious benefits of additional work hours, advance notice of scheduling and the elimination of ‘just-in-time’ scheduling would allow workers to schedule childcare when it is needed – and not schedule it when it is not needed. It would also allow more workers to climb the economic ladder by taking evening classes or seeking additional employment should they choose to do so.

Transparency in Campaign Donations: I would also focus on truly reforming our campaign finance system to bring transparency and accountability to the business and developer donors who wield great influence over our elected officials, but are able to make campaign contributions that remain largely hidden from the public. Too many of our neighbors are being displaced by a slate of policies pushed by the DC Council, and it’s because our elected officials have been bought by corporate and developer executives who donate as individuals rather than through their companies. The first step to fixing this problem is to expose it. My proposal, which is [available here](#), would require mandatory disclosure of all individual donors who serve as owners, executives, principals, directors, partners, board members or trustees of companies that have lobbied the DC Council or received public benefits, to be defined as contracts, tax subsidies, or goods and services of substantial value provided by the city. Many progressive jurisdictions throughout the country have passed similar legislation, so DC will remain well behind when it comes to campaign finance reform, even after the Fair Elections Act is fully implemented. These types of disclosure laws have withstood First Amendment challenges in court because it is recognized that, even in an era where money is unfortunately protected as speech, it is in the public interest for voters to know who is electing – and influencing – their leaders.

I am concerned that too many of our neighbors feel as though they are being ignored by our city, simply because they do not donate to political candidates or have friends on the DC Council. I am concerned that too many of our neighbors do not have a voice in our city, because every important hearing and meeting seems to be scheduled at times that nobody who works an hourly job, or requires a babysitter for their children, could possibly



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attend. I believe we live in the greatest city in the world, and can achieve a government that is open, transparent, accountable, and effective for everyone in our community, regardless of what they look like, where they live, where they came from, or what they do for work.]