

**Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC)
Montgomery County - 2022 Candidate Questionnaire**

Please upload the completed form here: <https://www.caribbeanpac.org/news-candidate-responses.php> and submit it by 11:59 PM (EST) on Friday, June 13, 2022. Responses will be shared with C-PAC's membership.

Office Sought: Montgomery County Council, District 1

Candidate's Name: Andrew Friedson

Current Occupation: Montgomery County Councilmember, District 1

Party: Democrat

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

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- 1. What have you done, or will you do to ensure the interests of the Caribbean community in Montgomery County are being adequately addressed?**

I've been proud to support the Caribbean community in Montgomery County throughout my first term. As just a few examples, I was a co-sponsor of the Council's landmark Racial Equity and Social Justice Law, worked with colleagues to establish the African American Health Program as part of our equity-based approach during Covid to target support to the hardest hit communities, and have worked on expanding and improving the cultural competency of County services. Also working with colleagues, we created a program to support Black-owned businesses. I will continue to meet with Caribbean community leaders including CAAG and remain committed to support such an important community within our County.

- 2. The Caribbean- American Advisory Group (CAAG) was established by former County Executive Isaiah Leggett and continued by the current County Executive Marc Elrich, if you are elected will you support continuity of CAAG in its current form as an autonomous group**

Yes, absolutely. The Caribbean-American Advisory Group is one of many examples of how former County Executive Ike Leggett helped to "build a better table" of inclusion in Montgomery County. I remain committed to continuing that legacy.

- 3. Will you proactively encourage and facilitate members of the Caribbean community of Montgomery County to be appointed to County Boards? Please explain what mechanism your office would establish to give effect to this policy.**

As they say, "if you don't have a seat at the table, you end up on the menu." It is essential to encourage and facilitate members of the Caribbean community to serve on County Boards, Commissions and Committees. The first aspect is to ensure there is awareness of the vacancies as they emerge, and I am committed to continuously improve County communications and outreach to ensure better understanding of what is available to residents who wish to serve. Additionally, I will continue to encourage the County Executive to ensure appointments reflect the rich diversity of our County, which includes ample representation of the Caribbean community.

- 4. Please explain what policies you would espouse and implement to make Montgomery County a safe haven for undocumented Caribbean immigrants.**

I am proud that Montgomery County remains a safe haven for immigrants. This didn't happen just by chance; it happened by choices – to provide services and support and to ensure we don't leave anyone out. That's why I've been proud to support programs including the Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center, to provide direct assistance to families in Crisis during Covid to families including those who are undocumented, to provide robust support for healthcare to the uninsured and food assistance to the food insecure, many of whom are undocumented. We have also provided free legal services to undocumented immigrants facing deportation. Because we recognize that many undocumented residents may be discouraged from accessing services in government facilities, we have partnered with community-based organizations and faith institutions to provide culturally competent and language proficient services. Examples include the Community Hubs we set up during Covid and are now continuing as well as a public, private partnership I worked on with Council President Gabe Albornoz to fund a Mobile Medical Clinic which will focus on ensuring all children have the healthcare and vaccinations they need to be healthy and attend public school, especially refugees and those who are undocumented.

5. Will you support continuity of Montgomery County as welcoming Caribbean immigrants and settlement of the Region's refugees?

Yes, absolutely. Montgomery County's strength is our diversity. In what has been referred to as "The Montgomery County Way," it's who we are and who we will continue to be as we strive to be more welcoming and inclusive.

6. Will you support availability of books by Caribbean authors and about the Caribbean in libraries and in the schools?

Yes, absolutely. In Montgomery County, we don't ban books from libraries and restrict thoughts. We expand and include offerings to ensure that our books challenge and inspire our residents and the authors and subject matters are as reflective as possible of the community our schools and libraries serve.

7. It is difficult to balance crime prevention and community safety with trust and improved relations with local law enforcement. How will you work to strike this balance?

Our most fundamental responsibility in government is to keep residents safe. That means making sure they *feel* safe and that they *are* safe, which requires a careful balance. This requires tough work and open-minded conversations. I have tried to strike that careful balance in the significant police accountability work we have done over the past four years. I am the first to admit that I do not have the lived experience to provide me with a full understanding of the ongoing, generational trauma inflicted on people of color by systemic racism and I have never been asked to carry a gun or to put my life at risk every day when I go to work. So, I will continue to listen, ask questions, read, and grow so I can effectively represent all residents and be a constructive part of this ongoing process.