

Office Sought: **State's Attorney for Montgomery County**

Candidate's Name: **Bernice Mireku-North**

Current Occupation: **Attorney**

Party: **Democrat**

Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website): **11215 Lockwood Drive Suite A, Silver Spring, MD 20901, 301-337-8375 (Phone), bernice@mirekunorth.com**

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

To ensure the interest of the Caribbean community will require opportunities for listening sessions, educational programming, or other outreach with the Caribbean community about the criminal justice system. The opportunities should include knowing your rights with police and discussing the relationship between immigration law and criminal justice. These events can be done at places of worship or cultural events or gatherings.

I will also aim to bring more diverse, multicultural staff for the office, including those from the Caribbean community. According to the George Mason Institute of Immigration Research, the Caribbean community currently residing in Montgomery County is the second largest in the D.C. Metro Area, I will work hard alongside the CAAG to ensure the office reflects the diversity of our County, including our Caribbean community.

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, former County Executive Isiah Leggett has done an extraordinary job of establishing the CAAG, and County Executive Marc Elrich is doing a great job of continuing their success. and the voice of the Caribbean American community needs to be heard. I believe that this organization does a great job of making their voices heard in the County government, and I would like to rely on the work of the group to better understand the community concerns impacting the Caribbean community.

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.

Yes. I have been a community leader for several years and I got my start on the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board. I will do my part in aiding and supporting members of the Caribbean community of Montgomery County to be appointed to County boards to the best of my abilities. I can offer to educate the Caribbean community on County Boards, as well as guiding them through the appointment and election process.

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

- 1) Develop a series of education conversations with community leaders on how immigration is impacted by a criminal case. This will allow community leaders to spread the message to others in the Caribbean community undocumented and afraid to talk to law enforcement.**
- 2) Develop an immigrant affairs unit, to encourage documented and undocumented immigrant victims and witnesses. This could foster more trust from undocumented Caribbean immigrants.**
- 3) I would also continue to support non-cooperation with ICE policies to protect our Caribbean community and other immigrant populations.**
- 4) I will work with training the prosecutors I lead on how certain criminal charges impact immigration status of the accused. This will be required training for all prosecutors upon my arrival as the next State's Attorney.**
- 5) We will work with defense attorneys to fashion fair outcomes to cases involving the undocumented immigrants that will not jeopardize public safety or cause unnecessary dispute for those impacted by the criminal charges an undocumented immigrant face.**

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

Yes, Caribbean immigrants residing in Montgomery County represent the second largest Caribbean population in the D.C. Metro Area. I will continue to support the welcoming of refugees.

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

Yes, I will work to support the availability of books about the Caribbean and from Caribbean authors whether from donation, county funding, or fundraising.

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?

We must have a new vision of justice that allows better and safer communities for all. That's why I want to create an Immigrant Affairs Unit to foster trust with the immigrant communities. The Unit would focus on prosecuting crimes that impact immigrant communities, such as fraud, and wage theft. This will require more funding for

interpreters in the office, and more victim/witness assistance to meet the needs of our immigrant communities.

For the Immigrant Affairs Unit to work, we must continue education for immigrant communities to learn about the unit and let those communities know they are treated the same regardless of immigration status.

I want to hire a diversion coordinator at the adult and juvenile levels to determine what alternatives to prosecution exist in the community before a person faces prosecution or incarceration. That would include an assessment of whether one needs mental health treatment, drug treatment or other diversions from pre-prosecution.

For a former prosecutor, I understand the important role police play in the prosecution of cases. However, it's important to hold police and prosecutors accountable to the public to restore trust in the system. That will include creating an online portal to submit use of force complaints for the State's Attorney's Office to review and act upon as needed. I will also lead the training of our prosecutors to understand the racial history of criminal justice in order to change the lens in which the prosecutors seek fair outcomes in their criminal cases. In addition, we'll use better discretion over the prosecution of use of force complaints and cases where police shoots or assaults civilians.