

Greetings. Attached is the Caribbean-American PAC political questionnaire for candidates seeking our endorsement. it is due on 6/13/2022, Donna Christensen delegatedonna@yahoo.com

**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 5

Candidate's Name: Fatmata Barrie

Current Occupation: Immigration and Special Education Law Attorney

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 Country are being adequately addressed?

Answer: Over the past 20 years I have been a community advocate and activist for issues that benefited all residents of East County because we have often been forgotten. As chair and a member of the African Affairs Advisory Group, I've worked collaboratively with the Caribbean community to address issues impacting both of our Black immigrant communities. Each year we meet with the African American and Caribbean American groups to draft our annual proposal to the County Executive to address our needs. I have advocated for more resources for all of us Black immigrant communities. I am running for the county council to advocate for change that creates equity and inclusion for all District residents, particularly those who have been underserved, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, or citizenship. The Caribbean community should have the same access to opportunities and resources as any other demographic group in the county. I will fight to amplify their voices on the council and bring needed resources, including proper funding for programs.

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

Answer: I will not only support CAAG and ensure its continuity, but I will work to solidify their standing in council decision-making. I will continue to work with CAAG as I have done for over a decade. As a member of Councilmember Will Jawando's staff, I worked to ensure that CAAG and the AAAG were autonomous and were represented by their own individual liaison. I believe that we still need to go further and provide more resources because the Caribbean community is just as diverse as other groups and should have a full time liaison.

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.

Answer: Throughout my campaign I have spoken and written about transparency on the Council, bringing all the stakeholders to the table that represent impacted residents when decisions are being made about their communities and daily lives. The Caribbean community, and every community, will benefit from my determined stance on transparency and community outreach. I would like to bring the Caribbean community together to have candid conversations to address the community's needs, especially as it relates to proper representation where it matters. I would like to receive feedback from the community as to the best way to ensure the community is included and what boards will serve the community well.

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

Answer: As an immigration attorney, I have worked diligently to ensure that immigrants receive their immigration benefits and help them navigate the U.S. immigration system. I will continue the fight I have been involved in to ensure that undocumented immigrants have access to counsel. Black immigrants, which include Caribbean immigrants, are more likely to be stopped, detained and deported than any other immigrant group. I will continue the fight I was involved in to ensure the passage of another version of the Safe Act which would prevent the police from stopping immigrants or to hold immigrants past the hold time once arrested. I testified for the immigration reform bill at the general assembly years ago and worked with organizations like CASA to respond to the state as to the legality of the drafted legislation. I have also been endorsed by CASA In Action. As a Special Education Attorney representing District of Columbia students with special needs, I have litigated many special education cases in administrative and federal tribunals, to ensure students receive their legally mandated Free and Appropriate Public Education. I have also provided free legal clinics and workshops to assist the community with their immigration issues ranging from TPS to DACA and more. I have also advocated at the federal, state, and local levels for immigration benefits, including TPS, DACA and immigration reform.

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

Answer: As previously mentioned, I am an immigration attorney and understand the challenges of immigrants in our region. However, although Montgomery County is welcoming to refugees, whether the required resources are adequate is a separate issue. When on the council, I will work to ensure that culturally sensitive resources are available for Caribbean refugees. Also, under my proposed program to establish a “network of community ambassadors”, I would like to assign an ambassador to be a liaison between the county council, and the Caribbean community or utilize the current liaison from the County Executive to act as the liaison for the county, not just for the Executive .

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

Answer: I have been endorsed by the Montgomery County Education Association (The Apple Ballot) because I am a fighter and will fight for the rights of all our educators and students. The cornerstone of my platform is equity and inclusion for all residents regardless of their race, ethnicity, or citizenship status, especially and including our children. All our children deserve to have access to a broad range of reading materials, including sources that reinforce their own cultural backgrounds. As someone who spent most of her childhood in S. Florida, I have had and continue to have intimate relationships with the Caribbean community. I have benefitted from the rich and diverse culture of the Caribbean and I think many others need to have that exposure.

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?*

Answer: Everyone deserves to feel safe where they live - regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, economic or citizenship status. From 2013 to 2019, ten county residents lost their lives in police-related incidents. Black residents make up 63 percent of those killed by police in the State of Maryland. Furthermore, at least 18 percent of Maryland residents killed by police exhibited signs of mental illness and 22 percent were unarmed. Two of these shootings happened just a few minutes from my home in White Oak! State and local officials have been working to introduce legislation that addresses police brutality and eliminate racial disparities, but we have a long way to go. I want to be part of the solution for you, for our communities, and for me. In my view, police reform is part of the solution for keeping us safe, particularly Black residents; and quite frankly, smart police reform will keep our law enforcement officers safer. As your representative on the Montgomery County Council, I will ensure that local law enforcement follow newly enacted policies and procedures and fight to reimagine public safety so we can build safer communities. I will support funding to address the root cause of community issues that lead to police involvement. And, finally, I will work to establish a program for mental health first responders in lieu of police force when warranted, including mental health services for law enforcement officers themselves who also experience forms of emotional trauma.