



# The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

1015 18th Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C., 20036 | 202-349-1498

[www.CaribbeanPac.org](http://www.CaribbeanPac.org)

## The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC) District of Columbia – 2026 Candidate Questionnaire

Please return the completed form via email to [cpac.dmv@gmail.com](mailto:cpac.dmv@gmail.com) by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31, 2026. Responses will be shared with C-PAC's membership.

**Office Sought: Ward 1 DC Council**

**Candidate's Name: Aparna Raj**

**Current Occupation: Communications Manager, Local Progress**

**Party: Democratic Party**

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

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1. If elected, how would you proactively and consistently engage with Caribbean-American constituents, groups, local leaders, and organizations in your constituency?

As Ward 1 Councilmember, I will work to build relationships with all constituents by having an active and engaging presence in the Ward, meeting with small business owners, attending community events, and hosting town halls and meetings to ensure residents and business owners are able to meet with me and my staff to discuss key issues. I will work to especially speak with Caribbean-American community institutions, have a strong relationship with leaders in the Mayor's Office of Caribbean Community Affairs (MOCCA), and meet with groups like C-PAC to ensure that I fully understand the top priorities of the Caribbean-American community of Ward 1.

2. How would your office address barriers Caribbean immigrants face when accessing public services such as healthcare, safe, affordable housing, education or social programs that disproportionately affect them?

My campaign is focused on making it easier and more affordable to live in DC. That's why major planks of my platform include increasing access to those very services - restoring cuts to healthcare alliance and funding for emergency rental assistance; restructuring our school funding formula to be more



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equitable and funding free childcare for every family; and fighting for rent stabilization and more affordable housing in general.

Every resident of Ward 1 should be able to access the public services and programs they need to live and thrive in the District. As Councilmember, I will prioritize having a strong and culturally competent constituent services team so that all residents are able to access support from my office when navigating delays or issues with government programs. In particular, I will ensure access to language services so that anyone calling into my office can speak in the language they are most comfortable when seeking help. Accessibility will also be a key component of my oversight of District agencies, in particular those that directly serve community members such as the Department of Human Services and DC Public Schools. I will also work closely with groups like C-PAC to ensure that I understand the immediate needs of the community and work to be responsive to them.

3. How do you ensure culturally responsive services for Caribbean-American residents across agencies (e.g., health, education, law enforcement, etc.)?

Ensuring culturally responsive services for Caribbean-American residents starts with making sure people can actually access and trust the systems meant to serve them. That begins with consistent language access across agencies, especially those that interact most directly with the public. I will use oversight to ensure programs like Emergency Rental Assistance, food and cash benefits, and other human services are accessible to Caribbean residents, including those who speak Haitian Creole and other languages.

Access must also be paired with strong investment in the safety net. I will fight to restore and expand critical programs and protect services like the DC Healthcare Alliance so Caribbean-American residents can get the care and support they need regardless of income or immigration status.

Culturally responsive services also require accountability. I will conduct rigorous oversight to ensure agencies are reaching underserved communities, addressing disparities, and delivering services in ways that reflect the needs of Caribbean residents.

This approach is about making government accessible, accountable, and responsive so Caribbean-Americans and all District residents can get the support they need without barriers or fear.



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4. What initiatives will you lead and/or support that benefit Caribbean-American small business owners and workers, particularly in industries where they are heavily represented?

Caribbean-American small business owners and workers are a vital part of Ward 1's economy, and they deserve the support to stay and grow here. As Councilmember, I will focus on lowering costs, strengthening protections, and making it easier to build long-term stability.

Commercial rent is one of the biggest threats to small businesses. I will explore policies like commercial rent stabilization and take steps to discourage landlords from keeping storefronts vacant, which drives up costs and pushes out legacy businesses. I will also stay in close partnership with Caribbean-American business owners to identify barriers and shape solutions that reflect their needs.

Access to resources is just as important as affordability. I will advocate for better technical assistance and language access so Caribbean-Americans can fully access grants, licensing support, and District programs when beginning or sustaining a small business in Ward 1. Small business support should be easy to navigate and designed to reach the communities it is meant to serve.

For workers, I will fight to raise the minimum wage to \$25 an hour and raise the tipped minimum wage in DC by reinstating Initiative 82, so people can actually afford to live in the city where they work. I will also support policies that make it easier for workers to organize and form unions. Strong worker protections and collective bargaining rights are key to building power and ensuring fair wages, safe conditions, and long-term opportunity for Caribbean-American workers across industries.

5. What support would you provide for Caribbean-American students and parents, including language assistance and help navigating the school system?

Supporting students, parents, and teachers in our public schools is one of my top priorities, and as Councilmember I will work to be a resource to all families who need help navigating our school system to ensure their children receive a quality education. This starts by conducting rigorous oversight over DC Public Schools to ensure they are providing language access and culturally competent



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services to our students. In addition, I will work to expand the services available to students at school, including by investing in community schools, social workers, nurses, and support staff that make schools healthy places for our youth to be.

I will also work to ensure that our international educators are properly supported by making DCPS keep its promises to international educators. This means restoring its Green Card policy, and no longer dragging its feet on H1-B renewals. International educators are filling key vacancies, especially for ELL and bilingual positions, and we owe them a pathway to permanent residency. I also strongly support hiring workers on H1-B visas, rather than short-term J-visas which are more prone to exploitation. These are key ways to ensure that children from immigrant families can connect with educators and staff in their schools. I am proud to have received the endorsement of the Washington Teachers' Union, and will also work closely with them to ensure that Caribbean-American parents, students, teachers, and staff are getting the support they need to thrive in our school system.

6. How would you advance partnerships with Caribbean-American community organizations to promote mental health, chronic disease prevention, or other wellness initiatives?

Community organizations are essential partners in promoting health and wellness because they are trusted, culturally grounded, and connected to residents in ways the government alone cannot be. As Councilmember, I will work to build strong, sustained partnerships that center these organizations in designing and delivering programs, and will work with groups like C-PAC to help better understand the needs and priorities of the Caribbean-American community.

I will advocate for funding and technical support for community-led initiatives focused on mental health, chronic disease prevention, and overall wellness. This includes supporting culturally competent programming, language access, and outreach strategies that meet Caribbean residents where they are and reflect their lived experiences.

Oversight and accountability will be central to these efforts. I will ensure that programs funded by the District are evaluated for impact, accessibility, and cultural responsiveness, and I will make adjustments in partnership with community organizations to address gaps or barriers.



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7. How will you build trust and conduct robust oversight on local law enforcement to protect the rights, security, and safety of Caribbean-American residents?

The Metropolitan Police Department has eroded community trust over many years, and that harm is especially clear right now as local law enforcement coordinates with federal agencies in ways that put Black and brown residents, including Caribbean-American communities, at risk. Rebuilding trust starts with ending that collaboration and making clear that District agencies exist to serve and protect residents, not subject them to fear.

As Councilmember, I will use both legislation and oversight to strengthen and enforce our sanctuary laws, ensuring that MPD does not participate in immigration enforcement in any form. I will push for real accountability when violations occur and demand transparency so residents know how agencies are operating and who they are accountable to.

Trust also requires changing how public safety is delivered. I support a more holistic approach that reduces reliance on traditional policing by investing in Crisis Response Teams, violence interruption programs, and other community-based strategies that have a proven track record. These approaches are more effective at keeping communities safe and preventing harm before it happens.

I will also prioritize consistent engagement with Caribbean-American residents and organizations to understand their concerns and ensure their experiences shape policy decisions. Oversight is not just about hearings and reports. It is about listening directly to the people most impacted and making sure the government responds. This also means organizing together – as an organizer myself, I have been on the ground, working closely with groups across Ward 1 to defend our communities against ICE and support immigrant neighbors by delivering groceries when leaving home is dangerous. As Councilmember, I will be an organizer in office, and work to coordinate resources across Ward 1 to ensure that communities are working together to keep one another safe.

Every resident deserves to feel safe and free in their community. That means building a public safety system rooted in trust, accountability, and investment, and I am committed to advancing that vision for Caribbean-American residents and for the District as a whole.



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8. What programs, funding opportunities, or policy efforts will you champion that are aimed at improving outcomes for Caribbean-American communities?

I am running to make DC more affordable for all residents, including Caribbean-American communities, so families can stay, grow, and thrive here. Too many families are being pushed out by rising costs, and my priorities are focused on making sure the District works for working people.

Housing stability is central to that vision. I will champion policies that stop rent hikes, expand rent stabilization, and protect key tenant rights like the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act so residents have a real chance to stay in their homes and even build collective ownership. I will fight for strong investments in the Housing Production Trust Fund to create and preserve deeply affordable housing. I also support creating an Office of Social Housing to build publicly-owned, tenant-controlled housing for all.

My experience as a tenant organizer has shown me that enforcement and accountability are just as important as funding. I will push for stronger oversight of agencies like the Department of Housing and Community Development and the DC Housing Authority to ensure resources are reaching the communities that need them most, including Caribbean residents who often face barriers in accessing these programs.

Affordability also means making it possible to raise a family in DC, which is why I will work to fully fund free childcare for all children from three months to three years old. This investment would ease the financial burden on Caribbean families, support parents in the workforce, and ensure children have access to high-quality early education from the start.

Delivering on these priorities will require new revenue, and I am committed to pursuing a business activity tax and closing corporate tax loopholes so large corporations pay their fair share. That revenue should be directed toward housing, childcare, and other essential programs that improve outcomes for Caribbean-American communities and keep DC a place where working families can build a future.

9. How will you ensure that the Mayor's Office of Caribbean Community Affairs is fully funded, adequately staffed, and realizes its mission?



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Budget oversight is a central responsibility of the Council, and as Ward 1 Councilmember I will fight to ensure all residents have access to the services and support they need to thrive in DC. This includes making sure the Mayor's Office of Caribbean Community Affairs receives the funding and staffing necessary to serve the diversity of people who call the city home.

I will work closely with organizations like C-PAC to understand current gaps and community needs, and I will elevate those priorities during budget oversight. My goal is to ensure the office has the resources and support required to fully carry out its mission and serve Caribbean residents effectively.

10. Washington, D.C. adopted the [Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022](#), which permits noncitizens who reside in D.C. for at least 30 days before the election and are at least 18 years old to vote for local offices and ballot initiatives. How will you support awareness and implementation of this law?

It is essential that all residents, whether citizens or not, have a voice in how our city is governed, and I fully support the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022. This groundbreaking law has faced attacks from a hostile Congress, creating fear around noncitizens' participation in city life. That fear cannot become normal.

As Councilmember, I will prioritize defending the District's right to self-governance and advancing DC Statehood so laws like this can be fully implemented without threat. I will organize with local communities and national partners, including organizations that have endorsed me such as Run for Something and Working Families Party, to make DC autonomy a national issue and ensure elected officials stand up for our city's values.

I will also focus on ensuring that residents understand their rights under this law. This includes hosting voter education events in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Caribbean Community Affairs and providing oversight of the



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Board of Elections to ensure clear, accessible communication about the law and the voting process.

By combining advocacy for DC autonomy with practical outreach and education, I will work to make sure every resident has the opportunity to participate fully in shaping the future of our city.