



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

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 by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31, 2026. Responses will be shared with C-PAC's membership.

Office Sought: Democrat for At-Large Councilmember

Candidate's Name: Candace Tiana Nelson

Current Occupation: Candidate

Party: Democrat

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

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Opening Statement

My name is Candace Tiana Nelson and I am running as a Democrat in the At-Large primary race for a seat on the DC Council.

As my race is decided citywide, I am humbly seeking the support of the Caribbean-American Diaspora across all eight wards of Washington, DC. The Caribbean Community is not a monolith, as the thirty-four countries represented here cover the English, Spanish, French, and Dutch speaking Caribbean. This gives rise to common and also uniquely specific challenges for the community.

Consideration must also be given to the agendas of the eleven member Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and the twenty member Caribbean Community (CARICOM) organizations, as they seek to further the aspirations of the Caribbean diaspora.

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



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As I am running for citywide office soliciting votes across all eight wards of the city, it is imperative that I identify the Caribbean-American constituents, groups, local leaders and organizations citywide.

I will maintain an open door policy throughout my tenure, making it very clear that these influencers and activists always have an opportunity to share community concerns. Regularly scheduled meetings will be key to making and keeping those connections. I will restart advisory groups and task forces as ways to tackle community specific items or take on challenges with defined outcomes that are not covered in legislation or through other means. My goal is to make the Caribbean diaspora feel seen, heard, and valued – and to deliver results.

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?

While the District tries to increase assistance to its residents, Caribbean-Americans experience barriers to access for a variety of reasons. My office will focus on increasing awareness as to the services that are currently available, making sure to overcome any language barriers.

We have to meet constituents where they are, and this requires more community engagement on a granular level. Public meetings at community centers where information can be shared about services, and information gathered as to the specifics of the barriers, are key. Whether that's at a government office or community social hub or restaurant, I will be sure to be present and available.

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

Culturally sensitive engagement with any community can be the difference between success and failure of any initiative, regardless of how well intentioned.

I will prioritize agencies hiring personnel from the Caribbean-American community, so that staff with familiarity with cultural norms are present to navigate interaction.



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Overall, cultural sensitivity training across all agencies would be another tool to make programs effective and reach our Caribbean-American communities with care.

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?

We should champion initiatives directly benefiting Caribbean-American small business owners who've built cultural and economic anchors in DC's food, entertainment, and increasingly professional services sectors.

I want to explore establishing an immigrant and minority entrepreneur fund that provides low-interest loans and grants specifically targeting Caribbean-owned businesses facing displacement or struggling with costs. Traditional banks and lenders often deny capital to entrepreneurs without extensive credit history or collateral even when their restaurants, catering companies, and entertainment venues thrive and employ dozens. I also want to create a bilingual small business navigator program offering free legal, accounting, and permitting assistance, because complex DC regulations overwhelm owners who can't afford consultants and often face language or cultural barriers navigating bureaucracy.

On government contracts, I'll aggressively enforce and expand Certified Business Enterprise requirements mandating that significant percentages of District contracts go to small, local, minority-owned businesses. I'll streamline certification processes making it easier for Caribbean entrepreneurs to qualify.

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

I will work with the Office of the State Superintendent, the State Board of Education, and both DC Public Schools and the DC Public Charter School systems to provide multilingual communications to reach the Caribbean-American community.



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Parents are under economic stress and help with to provide students with school supplies, meals, after school services, and public transportation can greatly help the community.

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

Culturally competent healthcare requires partnering with trusted community organizations rather than imposing top-down programs.

I want to see DC advance partnerships with Caribbean-American organizations by funding community health workers from Caribbean communities who understand cultural contexts around mental health stigma, traditional healing practices (doulas, home health aides for aging parents), and barriers preventing people from accessing our medical systems.

I'd look to fund legislation that provides grants to programs specifically for Caribbean-led organizations providing wellness initiatives. Whether mental health support groups addressing trauma and migration stress, chronic disease prevention targeting conditions like diabetes and hypertension disproportionately affecting Caribbean communities, or holistic wellness programs incorporating cultural practices and dietary traditions.

I'd also ensure District health contracts include Caribbean organizations as service providers rather than just advisory voices, mandate that public health campaigns are culturally tailored with appropriate messaging and trusted messengers, and fund community health centers in Caribbean-dense neighborhoods offering services in languages spoken and with providers understanding cultural nuances.

I'd convene regular forums bringing together Caribbean organizations, health agencies, and policymakers to identify gaps and co-design solutions, treating community expertise as essential rather than supplementary. Effective wellness initiatives require trust, cultural competence, and community ownership. Partnerships must center Caribbean organizations' knowledge and leadership, not tokenize them.



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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?

MPD's relationship with ICE must melt. I plan to help end MPD collaboration with ICE. No more terrorizing Caribbean immigrant communities and preventing people from reporting crimes or seeking help due to fear. I'll mandate implicit bias training addresses stereotypes affecting Caribbean-American residents while requiring officers to build relationships through community policing.

I'll also push for comprehensive data transparency showing whether MPD actually solves crimes affecting Caribbean communities, because trust requires both accountability when police harm people AND effective protection when communities face violence. I'll ensure resources go toward violence interruption programs and community-led safety initiatives that Caribbean organizations identify as priorities, treating residents as partners defining safety rather than problems requiring management.

Oversight means consequences for violations, investment in alternatives, and centering Caribbean voices in determining what safety actually looks like for their communities.

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

Programs directly addressing Caribbean-American needs will be my priority as the next At-Large Councilmember. In my office, this will include:

- Expanding affordable housing on a scale where Caribbean families actually live, because displacement from traditionally Caribbean neighborhoods like parts of Ward 1, 4, and 5 destroys community cohesion built over generations.
- I'll fund workforce development and apprenticeship programs partnering with unions, creating pathways into construction, healthcare, and public sector careers with family-sustaining wages and benefits.



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- I'll push education investments ensuring schools serve Caribbean students effectively. This will look like hiring Caribbean teachers and staff, providing culturally responsive curriculum acknowledging Caribbean history and contributions, robust support for English Language Learners, and wraparound services including mental health support addressing migration trauma and family separation Caribbean youth may experience.

Lastly, I'll ensure Caribbean-American representation in District employment through First Source enforcement and targeted recruitment, appointing Caribbean voices to boards and commissions, and creating formal advisory structures ensuring policy decisions affecting these communities actually include their input and leadership.

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

I'll ensure the [Mayor's Office of Caribbean Community Affairs](#) (MOCCA) has the resources matching its mission by using the Council's budget authority. The office must be able to maintain adequate staffing levels with competitive salaries to attract talented professionals from Caribbean communities who understand constituents' needs, funding community liaisons who can conduct outreach in multiple Caribbean languages and cultural contexts, and providing operational budget for events, programs, and partnerships rather than expecting the office to accomplish everything on shoestring funding.

I also want to explore expanding the office's authority beyond advisory roles to include formal input on policies affecting Caribbean communities, budget recommendations for programs serving these residents, and coordination across agencies ensuring Caribbean needs are integrated into housing, education, small business development, workforce, and health initiatives rather than siloed.

An adequately funded office with real authority becomes the institutional champion Caribbean-Americans deserve.

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



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this law?

Many DC residents, including members of the Caribbean-American community are unaware of the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022.

MOCCA, along with other community organizations, influencers, and activists, would be activated to join an awareness campaign to increase Caribbean-American participation in our local elections.

A specific focus would be with youth in high schools and college campuses across the city. Early participation and forming good voter habits will be essential to make it a lifelong action. A "Campus 4 Candace" is my campaign strategy, particularly focusing on the Caribbean Student Associations (CSAs) at the universities here in DC. These advocates will promote on campus mobilization efforts aimed at letting young people know of their voting rights, and getting them to the polls to vote!