

Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC)

2026 Candidate Questionnaire

Office Sought: Montgomery County Executive

Candidate's Name: Will Jawando

Current Occupation: Montgomery County Councilmember At-Large

Party: Democratic

Campaign Contact Information:

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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?

This question hits close to home for me. My wife, Michele Lawrence Jawando, is a proud Caribbean American with deep roots in Bermuda. Her great-aunt, Dame Lois Browne-Evans, was the first Black woman lawyer in Bermuda and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. Michele's family has been at the center of civil rights and public service across the Caribbean and the United States for generations. In 2020, Michele received the Caribbean American Heritage Award in recognition of her heritage and her career in public service and corporate leadership.

As the son of a Nigerian immigrant myself, I understand what it means to navigate life between cultures, to hold onto your heritage while building a future in a new country. I have seen firsthand how Caribbean-American families contribute to Montgomery County across every sector, from healthcare and education to small business and public service.

As County Executive, I will create direct, ongoing channels of communication with Caribbean-American community organizations, faith leaders, and cultural groups. That means showing up at community events, not just during election season. It means appointing Caribbean-American residents to county boards and commissions where decisions are made. And it means establishing regular community roundtables so Caribbean-American leaders have a seat at the table in shaping county policy, not just reacting to it after the fact.

I do this work already as a Councilmember. I show up in communities across the county, and I listen. As County Executive, I will formalize that engagement and make sure the Caribbean-American community has a real voice in county government.

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?

Too many immigrant families in Montgomery County face real barriers when trying to access the services they need and deserve. Language gaps, unfamiliar systems, immigration status fears, and a lack of culturally attuned outreach all create obstacles that disproportionately affect Caribbean-American residents.

As County Executive, I will direct county agencies to adopt a “no wrong door” approach, so that any resident who reaches out for help gets connected to the right resource, regardless of which department they contact first. I will expand multilingual access across county services and invest in community navigators who can help Caribbean-American families access healthcare, housing assistance, school enrollment, and social programs.

On housing, I authored Montgomery County’s rent stabilization law to protect families from being priced out by sudden rent increases, and I helped create the \$100 million Housing Production Fund to build truly affordable units. As County Executive, I will continue to prioritize affordable housing near transit and protect families from displacement.

On healthcare, I have consistently supported expanding coverage to all residents regardless of immigration status, and I will use county funds to close gaps in access. On education, I will strengthen community schools that serve as neighborhood hubs where families can connect with wraparound services, language support, and resources all in one place.

Fundamentally, every resident of Montgomery County deserves to be treated with dignity when they walk through the doors of a county agency. I will hold department leaders accountable for making that a reality.

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

Culturally responsive services start with culturally diverse leadership. I will prioritize hiring and appointing people who reflect the diversity of our county at every level of county government, including Caribbean-American professionals in leadership roles across health, education, public safety, and human services.

I will direct county agencies to invest in cultural competency training that goes beyond a one-time workshop. Staff across departments need to understand the distinct experiences, traditions, and needs of Caribbean-American communities, not as an afterthought, but as core to how they do their jobs.

In education, as Chair of the Council’s Education and Culture Committee for seven years, I have pushed MCPS to better serve our diverse student population through close to 100 oversight sessions. I will continue that work as County Executive by partnering with school leaders and parent groups to ensure Caribbean-American students and families feel seen and supported.

In public safety, I have led on police accountability, including legislation requiring independent investigations of officer-involved incidents and support for civilian review with real oversight power. I will make sure our policing approach reflects the communities we serve.

I also supported creating the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice, and I will direct that office to include Caribbean-American community input in equity impact assessments for county policies and programs.

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?

Small businesses are the backbone of Montgomery County. Over 34,000 of our businesses are small businesses, and Caribbean-American entrepreneurs are well represented across our local economy in food service, healthcare, construction, childcare, transportation, and more.

Both my parents are small business owners right here in Montgomery County. My mom runs a catering and baking business, Ella's Bake Shop, and my stepfather runs a senior transportation service. I helped them both get started. I know firsthand the long hours, the red tape, and the barriers that entrepreneurs face when trying to build something.

On the Council, I expanded the Local Small Business Reserve Program to steer more county contracts toward local businesses. I renewed the Minority, Female, and Disabled-Owned Business (MFD) Program to ensure equitable access to county contracting opportunities. And I secured major funding for the Black Collective, which provides direct support to minority-owned businesses.

As County Executive, I will cut duplicative regulations that slow entrepreneurs down. If the state already requires a license or certification, the county does not need to pile on additional requirements. I will expand hands-on technical assistance so business owners can navigate county programs without hiring a consultant. I will increase access to capital through partnerships with local banks and community development financial institutions. And I will make sure our economic development strategy prioritizes the local entrepreneurs who invest in our neighborhoods, not just big corporations looking for tax breaks.

Caribbean-American business owners and workers will have a champion in the County Executive's office.

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

As the only candidate with four children currently enrolled in Montgomery County Public Schools, I live this every day. I know what it is like to navigate the school system as a parent, and I know it can be even more challenging for families who are new to the country or new to the county.

I have fought for expanded Pre-K, increased mental health supports for students, and full funding for our schools. I have visited a majority of our schools and seen firsthand where the system is working and where it is falling short.

As County Executive, I will expand community schools, which bring wraparound services directly into school buildings, including language assistance, healthcare access, family counseling, and help navigating enrollment, special education, and other programs. I will ensure that community school coordinators are drawn from the communities they serve, so that Caribbean-American families see people who understand their experience.

I will also push for stronger multilingual outreach from MCPS and county agencies so that information about school programs, enrollment, and parent resources reaches families in the languages they speak. And I will dramatically increase investment in career and technical education to open doors into good-paying careers for all students, including those from Caribbean-American families.

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

Mental health and chronic disease prevention are not one-size-fits-all. Caribbean-American communities bring their own cultural context around health, wellness, and seeking care, and our county's approach needs to reflect that.

As County Executive, I will direct the Department of Health and Human Services to actively partner with Caribbean-American community organizations, churches, and cultural groups to design and deliver health programming that resonates with the community. That means co-creating outreach materials, hosting wellness events in trusted community spaces, and making sure county health programs are accessible to people who may face language barriers or distrust of institutional systems.

On the Council, I secured funding for mental health programs and have fought to expand healthcare coverage to all residents. I will bring that same commitment to targeted partnerships with Caribbean-American organizations on chronic disease prevention, including diabetes, hypertension, and other conditions that disproportionately affect communities of color.

County government should not wait for residents to come to us. We need to go into communities, listen, and build trust over time. That is how you get real results on health outcomes.

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?

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their community and in their interactions with law enforcement. As a Black man raising four Black children in Montgomery County, I carry this with me every single day.

I described my work on police accountability in my answer to Question 3. Beyond that, I have supported reducing unnecessary police interactions over low-level infractions that do not pose a public safety risk, and I advocated for Eric's ID Law to improve safe interactions between people with disabilities and law enforcement.

As County Executive, I will ensure that our police department reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. I will invest in ongoing training on de-escalation and implicit bias. And I will expand community violence intervention programs that address root causes of crime, including youth employment, mental health services, and housing stability.

For Caribbean-American residents who are immigrants, I understand that trust in law enforcement can be complicated by fear of immigration enforcement. I have strongly supported codifying Montgomery County's sanctuary protections and ending collaboration with ICE. No resident should have to choose between reporting a crime and risking deportation. Public safety and immigrant protection are not in conflict. We need both.

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

Many of my specific commitments on housing, education, healthcare, small business, public safety, and civic engagement are detailed in my answers above. Rather than repeat them here, I want to highlight a few additional priorities.

I championed MoCo BOOST, a guaranteed income pilot that provided 300 low-income families with \$800 per month for two years. The results were powerful: families paid down debt, went back to school, and bought homes. As County Executive, I will expand this program based on its proven success, and Caribbean-American families will benefit directly.

I also support granting noncitizen residents the right to vote in local elections, because every resident who contributes to this community deserves a voice in how it is governed.

And I will co-lead with the Council on building a state-of-the-art sports and entertainment facility that creates good jobs, attracts visitors, and provides a gathering space that reflects the vibrancy and diversity of our county, including our Caribbean-American community.

At its core, the Montgomery Promise that drives my campaign is about making sure that no matter who you are or where you come from, you can afford to live, learn, raise a family, and retire with dignity in Montgomery County. With my family's own Caribbean-American roots, that promise is deeply personal to me, and I will fight for it every day as County Executive.