



Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC)

2026 Candidate Questionnaire (Responses by: Qiana Johnson)

Office Sought: Clerk of the Circuit Court

Candidate's Name: Qiana Johnson

Current Occupation: Executive Director of Life After Release

Party: Democratic

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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?

If elected, my engagement with Caribbean-American constituents will be intentional, consistent, and rooted in relationships, not just outreach during election cycles.

As a proud second-generation immigrant with roots in Guyana, I understand the importance of staying connected to community spaces where culture, trust, and information are shared. My approach will focus on meeting people where they are and ensuring the Clerk's Office is visible, accessible, and responsive.

I will proactively engage by:

- **Building ongoing partnerships** with Caribbean organizations, churches, and cultural associations across Prince George's County
- **Hosting community-based workshops** on expungement, court navigation, and records access in spaces that Caribbean residents already trust

- **Attending and supporting Caribbean cultural events and forums** to maintain a consistent presence beyond campaign season
- **Creating clear, accessible communication channels**, including multilingual resources where needed, so residents understand how to interact with the court system
- **Establishing a community advisory touchpoint**, where Caribbean leaders and residents can regularly share feedback on how the Clerk's Office can better serve them

My goal is to ensure that engagement is not symbolic it is structured, ongoing, and leads to real improvements in how people experience the court system. The Clerk's Office should not feel distant or confusing, but like a place where every resident, including Caribbean-American families, can access services with clarity, dignity, and trust.

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 Clerk of the Circuit Court does not directly administer services like healthcare, housing, or education, the office plays a critical role in how residents, especially Caribbean immigrants experience access to justice and government systems overall.

Many of the barriers Caribbean immigrants face, confusing processes, lack of clear information, language access challenges, and fear or mistrust of institutions—also show up in how people interact with the courts. My responsibility as Clerk is to remove those barriers within our scope and help connect residents to the broader ecosystem of support.

If elected, I will:

- **Improve access to court services** by ensuring forms, records, and processes are clearly explained, user-friendly, and accessible to individuals who may be unfamiliar with the legal system
- **Expand language access and culturally competent service**, so Caribbean immigrants feel respected and understood when engaging with the Clerk's Office
- **Host community-based legal education workshops**, including expungement and court navigation clinics, in partnership with trusted Caribbean organizations
- **Strengthen partnerships with service providers and agencies** that work in healthcare, housing, and social services, so individuals interacting with the court system can be connected to the support they need
- **Train staff to deliver dignified, customer-centered service**, recognizing that for many residents, the Clerk's Office is their first point of contact with the justice system

In addition, I will work with county leadership to **co-locate or embed access points for social services and the Health Department within or alongside the courthouse**, so residents can

more easily connect to critical supports in the same place they are already seeking legal assistance. This kind of coordinated, one-stop approach reduces barriers and reflects how people actually navigate systems in real life.

I also believe that courthouses must be places where people feel safe accessing justice. I will work in collaboration with state and local leadership to **advocate for policies that limit immigration enforcement activity, including ICE presence in courthouses**, so that individuals are not deterred from participating in legal proceedings, seeking protection, or accessing critical services.

As someone who has worked directly with hundreds of residents navigating court records and administrative barriers, I understand that access to justice is deeply connected to broader life stability. My goal is to ensure that the Clerk's Office does not add to those barriers—but instead becomes a point of clarity, safety, and connection for Caribbean immigrant communities.

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 across agencies starts with acknowledging that government systems were not designed with all communities in mind—and that it takes intentional leadership, partnership, and accountability to change that.

While the Clerk of the Circuit Court does not oversee agencies like health, education, or law enforcement, the office sits at a critical intersection of these systems. I will use that position to model best practices and help drive collaboration across agencies.

If elected, I will:

- **Lead by example within the Clerk's Office** by implementing cultural competency training, hiring staff that reflect the diversity of Prince George's County, and ensuring language access for residents who need it
- **Create strong interagency partnerships** with health, education, and public safety agencies to share information, align services, and address gaps that impact Caribbean-American residents
- **Support coordinated service delivery**, including working with the county to co-locate or provide access to social services and health resources at or near the courthouse
- **Engage Caribbean community leaders and organizations** as ongoing partners to inform how services are delivered and where improvements are needed
- **Advocate for data transparency and accountability**, so agencies can better understand disparities and track progress in serving diverse communities

Culturally responsive service is not just about language—it is about respect, understanding, and trust. As a Caribbean-American woman and community leader, I understand how critical it is for residents to feel seen and valued when they interact with government.

My commitment is to ensure that the Clerk's Office sets a standard for accessibility and dignity, while also working across agencies to promote a more coordinated, culturally responsive approach to serving Caribbean-American residents throughout Prince George's County.

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 the backbone of Prince George's County's local economy—running barbershops, salons, restaurants, transportation services, and home-based businesses that keep our communities moving.

But too often, they are forced to navigate systems that are confusing, time-consuming, and not built with them in mind. One missed document, one delay, one unclear process in the courthouse can mean lost income, lost opportunities, or even losing a business.

I'm running for Clerk because I've seen this up close—and I'm committed to changing it.

If elected, I will:

- **Make the Clerk's Office faster, clearer, and more accessible**, so business owners are not losing time or money trying to figure out court processes
- **Bring legal education directly into the community**, partnering with Caribbean business owners and organizations to break down contracts, dispute resolution, and court procedures in plain language
- **Expand access to expungement**, because too many hardworking people are locked out of business opportunities due to past records
- **Ensure culturally responsive and respectful service**, so Caribbean entrepreneurs feel confident—not intimidated—when dealing with the court system
- **Push for user-friendly, online systems**, so people don't have to choose between handling legal matters and keeping their business open

I will also work with county partners to **connect business owners to real resources**—not just information, but pathways to licensing support, workforce programs, and economic opportunity.

Because here's the reality:

For many Caribbean-American families, there is no safety net—just hustle, sacrifice, and determination. Government should not be another obstacle in their way.

As someone who has navigated these systems personally and professionally, I'm not coming in to maintain the status quo—I'm coming in to make sure the Clerk's Office works for the people who need it most.

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

While the Clerk of the Circuit Court does not oversee school systems, the court plays a critical role in decisions that directly impact a child's ability to enroll in and succeed in school—particularly through custody, guardianship, and related court orders.

If elected, I will ensure the Clerk's Office is a place where families—especially those navigating language barriers or unfamiliar systems—can access clear, timely, and culturally responsive support.

I will:

- **Clarify and strengthen the connection between court orders and school enrollment**, ensuring custody and guardianship orders clearly outline who has authority to enroll a child, access school records, and participate in educational decisions
- **Improve intake and triage systems**, including a centralized point of contact and simple checklists to help families quickly identify whether they need custody, guardianship, or other court action to support school enrollment
- **Establish priority pathways for urgent cases**, so families facing immediate enrollment deadlines or relocation can access expedited processes and timely court orders
- **Ensure meaningful language access**, including trained interpreters for hearings and translated versions of critical documents such as custody, guardianship, and enrollment-related orders in commonly spoken languages
- **Provide plain-language summaries of court processes and orders**, so families can clearly understand what steps to take and what their rights and responsibilities are
- **Support coordination with schools and local agencies**, ensuring court orders are enforceable, clearly communicated, and updated when circumstances change

I understand that for many families, especially those navigating new systems, a delay or misunderstanding in the court process can mean a child missing school or losing access to critical educational support.

As Clerk, I will work to ensure that the court is not a barrier, but a bridge—helping families access education with clarity, dignity, and efficiency.

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

Advancing community wellness requires strong, intentional partnerships—especially between government and trusted, community-based Caribbean American organizations. While the Clerk

of the Circuit Court is not a public health agency, the office is often a key point of contact for residents navigating stressful and life-impacting situations.

If elected, I will use the Clerk's Office as a connector and access point to support broader wellness efforts across Prince George's County.

I will:

- **Partner with community-based organizations and public health providers** to host resource events and information sessions at or near the courthouse, focused on mental health, chronic disease prevention, and overall wellness
- **Work with the county to co-locate or provide access to health and social service resources** alongside court services, so individuals can connect to support in one place
- **Train staff to recognize and respond with empathy**, ensuring that individuals experiencing stress, trauma, or crisis are met with dignity and appropriate referrals
- **Support outreach initiatives** that bring wellness resources into the community, particularly in spaces where residents already gather and feel comfortable
- **Collaborate with local leaders and organizations** to ensure that wellness initiatives are culturally responsive and reflect the real needs of the community

My approach is rooted in the understanding that access to justice and community wellness are deeply connected. When people are supported—mentally, physically, and emotionally—they are better able to navigate systems, care for their families, and fully participate in civic life.

As Clerk, I will ensure the office is not just a place for processing paperwork, but a gateway to support, connection, and community well-being.

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?

Building trust and ensuring the protection of Caribbean- American residents requires transparency, accountability, and a commitment to fair access to the justice system. While the Clerk of the Circuit Court does not oversee law enforcement, the office plays an important role in how residents experience the legal system—and whether they feel safe engaging with it.

If elected, I will focus on the areas where the Clerk's Office can have real impact:

- **Ensure accurate, transparent, and accessible court records**, so residents, advocates, and oversight bodies have the information needed to identify patterns, protect rights, and hold systems accountable
- **Promote clear and consistent court processes**, so individuals understand their rights and are not disadvantaged by confusion or lack of access
- **Expand language access and culturally responsive service**, ensuring immigrant residents can navigate the court system with clarity and dignity

- **Support public education efforts** that help residents understand how to engage with the legal system safely and effectively
- **Collaborate with community organizations and legal advocates** to identify concerns and improve how the Clerk's Office interacts with vulnerable populations

In addition, I will work with state and local leaders to **advocate for policies that ensure courthouses remain safe and accessible spaces**, including limiting immigration enforcement activities that discourage individuals from participating in legal proceedings or seeking protection.

Trust is built when systems are fair, transparent, and people are treated with respect. As Clerk, I will ensure the office upholds those values and contributes to a justice system where all residents—regardless of immigration status—feel secure accessing the courts.

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

Improving outcomes for Caribbean American communities requires aligning policy, resources, and access in ways that reflect how people actually navigate systems. While the Clerk of the Circuit Court does not control funding streams, the office can play a meaningful role in advancing initiatives that remove barriers and connect residents to opportunity.

If elected, I will champion efforts that focus on access, education, and coordination across agencies and community partners.

I will:

- **Support and expand funding partnerships with community-based organizations** that provide legal education, expungement services, and court navigation support, particularly for immigrant residents
- **Advocate for investments in language access and technology modernization**, ensuring court systems are accessible, user-friendly, and inclusive of residents with varying levels of English proficiency
- **Partner with county and state leaders to support programs that co-locate legal, social, and health services**, making it easier for immigrant families to access multiple supports in one place
- **Promote policies that protect safe access to the courts**, including efforts that reduce fear and barriers related to immigration enforcement in courthouse settings
- **Leverage the Clerk's Office as a hub for information and referral**, connecting residents to workforce development, small business support, and social services that improve long-term stability

My approach is grounded in the understanding that access to justice is a critical entry point to broader opportunity. When immigrant communities can navigate systems without fear or confusion, they are better positioned to secure housing, employment, education, and stability for their families.

As Clerk, I will not only ensure the office operates efficiently, but also use the platform to advocate for policies and partnerships that lead to more equitable outcomes for Caribbean American communities across Prince George's County.