



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC) 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: Prince George's County Council at Large

Candidate's Name: Laura S. Gilchrest, PhD

Current Occupation: Professorial Lecturer, Human Rights and Ethics, GWU

Party: Democrat

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

Community to Elect Laura Gilchrest

PO Box 1114

College Park, MD 20742

301-953-4742

info@electlauragilchrest.com

www.electlauragilchrest.com

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

I've spent most of my adult life and career working with communities in and from Central and South America and the Caribbean, where I began working as a volunteer interpreter with medical groups over 20 years ago. The work I've been involved with since 2008 with local organizations, movements, communities, and governance to assess health systems, improve access to healthcare, economic opportunity and equity, has become a pressing issue in our very own Prince George's County. I will eagerly work with all of our Caribbean-American neighbors to ensure they have a say in the community they live in and contribute to so beautifully. For our Kreyòl and Spanish-speaking neighbors, I will ensure that everyone in the community has access to timely and transparent information and political processes in their language of preference. I will meet with people in the community, in organizations, and wherever there is need and interest.

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?

This is an issue that is close to my heart. I am committed to pushing for universal health and social services for every resident, regardless of income,



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language, or document status, because healthcare, housing, and education are human rights. I have worked closely with county Immigrant Rights Coalitions to support families, and am a long-time supporter of CASA Maryland and other organizations that directly support our Caribbean immigrants and will continue to do so in office, including informing and advising organizations to apply for non-departmental funds and to organize and present their needs and hopes for the County to the Council.

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

Prince George's County has one of the largest Caribbean populations in Maryland, many of whom are experts in health and education and community safety. I would work closely with experts in their fields, combining my own expertise in these areas with their lived experiences and specific knowledge of the needs unique to the Caribbean-American and immigrant communities in the County. Cultural responsiveness goes beyond language or performative imagery, and should include considerations like family dynamics, generational wisdoms and exchange, among other factors that many of our existing policies leave little room to incorporate. I'll work diligently to shift policy and practice along these lines.

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?

I support initiatives like Employ Prince George's and The Center for Community Progress that provide training, mentorship, opportunities, and resources for Caribbean-Americans to advance their careers or become entrepreneurs in sustainable development. I am a strong supporter of union labor and workers' rights. I also value the power and diversity of small businesses in our communities and would support or lead initiatives that give small business resources and preference over large corporations or developers.

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



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With regard to navigating the school system, I would propose a program, office, or other mechanism to alert new residents, whether homeowners or renters, of registration dates and clear, detailed instructions for accessing and registering children for school, their in-district schools, and the dates and requirements for the public charter school lottery system. Like the option to register to vote when changing an address, we could implement a school registration notification option through which the County Council and School Board could send out mailers or email alerts to families as reminders. The process is currently unnecessarily obscure and confusing. County agencies and non-departmental grants are currently essential resources for ensuring our students and their families receive wraparound services. I would ensure funding of NDGs and work with community schools to identify where additional supports are needed, and review and update community partners, as well as ensure that these resources and supports are distributed and coordinated according to highest needs first, while making sure that every school has what they need to thrive. I will also work to ensure that ESOL, language immersion, accessible after school and summer enrichment programs, and academic success counselors and college prep coordinators are supported through the County's Blueprint program, in addition to cooperation with Parks and Recreation for supplemental programming, and to urge state assembly members to fully fund such programs.

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

Community-driven solutions are my priority across issue areas, and numerous studies have shown that mental health, chronic disease prevention, and other wellness initiatives are effective when led by peers and neighbors working in conjunction with local organizations and public health officials. As a certified Mental Health and Youth Mental Health First Aider, I am especially interested in creating robust safety nets and community-based support systems to ensure culturally responsive resources, buffers, and preventative care. I also know that mental health and chronic disease are related to the social, economic, and environmental conditions, so shoring up policies that improve access to quality healthcare, education, housing, and living wages, and eliminating systemic racism and exclusionary policies that exacerbate health crises are always top of mind.



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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?

While I appreciate the work of law enforcement, I also know how dangerous interactions with officers can be for our communities of color. I oppose current efforts to rapidly increase surveillance and artificial intelligence technologies, especially without community input and oversight, that are shown to be discriminatory and even dangerously inaccurate in identifying suspected criminal activity. I am especially concerned for our immigrant neighbors who are being brutally targeted and denied their constitutional rights to due process, adequate representation, wrongful detention, abusive conditions, even death at the hands of ICE and local and regional police acting in conjunction with these entities. I strongly believe that community-driven safety programs are evidence-based, effective methods of improving community safety, reducing crime, and building community cohesion. Building trust among our neighbors and creating community watch programs like those that have succeeded in Baltimore in our own County will reduce the incidence of armed police responding to mental health crises or petty arguments or crime that result from poor conflict resolution or lack of legitimate opportunities. I strongly believe we must have an independent oversight and accountability commission to conduct regular review and oversight of policing and police-involved issues in our County and will push to establish policy and an oversight committee to that effect.

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

I will champion community-driven and community-centric policies that represent the interests, needs, and ambitions of all Prince Georgians, including the Caribbean-American and immigrant community. I'll support ongoing partnerships with organizations and businesses serving the Caribbean-American community and work to identify new areas of collaboration and opportunity to support health, education, housing, and other organizational efforts through nondepartmental funding and other funding mechanisms within my scope of authority. I want every community, in every city and every corner of Prince George's county to thrive and will do



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everything I can to advocate and support the Caribbean-American Community.