



CPAC CHAT

Caribbean-American Political Action Committee Meets with Prince Georges County Executive

On Tuesday October 2, a C-PAC delegation met with Prince Georges County Executive Alsobrooks to discuss various issues of interest to the Caribbean American residents of the County. The delegation included Dr. Goulda Downer, C-PAC Chair; Chris Gardiner, C -PAC Co-Founder; Laughton Sargent, Dr. Allen Johnson and Jaye Anne Lowe, C-PAC Advisory Board members; and Royston DeSousa, a C-PAC member. Sargent, Lowe, Johnson and DeSousa are Prince Georges County residents. They spoke to the issues of concern to Caribbean American residents of the County.

The County Executive was joined by members of her staff, Sonja Welborne-Rice, Director, Stakeholder Engagement and Affairs, and Elvis Dennah, the African Diaspora Liaison.

Ms. Alsobrooks addressed a wide range of issues, including those specifically requested by C-PAC in our request for a meeting. These issues were broadly raised in a meeting in March with the County Executive's staff and included: education; immigration; business development; and Caribbean culture.





Education

Dr. Johnson spoke to the issue of education, specifically mentorship of pre-college students, and career guidance of college students, both before and after graduation. The

County Executive explained her plan to add 4,900 pre-K slots in the public-school system to accommodate the needs of the County. She revealed that her administration is in the planning stage of a mentorship and career guidance program. She invited Dr. Johnson – as a representative of C-PAC and the Caribbean community - to join her team in that effort. To that end, she promised to have the person responsible contact him.

Immigration

Jaye Anne Lowe spoke to the issue of immigration and its impact on the Caribbean American community. She noted that there is very little help being provided by the County to residents confronting immigration issues. She spoke to the need for “clinics” to address these concerns, as many of her clients are sometimes too afraid of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to leave their homes for days at a time. The County Executive was cognizant of the issue. But she wondered whether fear of ICE may prevent undocumented immigrants from gathering in groups, such as at an immigration clinic. She invited C-PAC – represented by Ms. Lowe - to engage with her Office on this issue. She will connect C-PAC with the Chief of Police to that end. She also invited C-PAC’s help with the upcoming census count in the County.

Business Development

Royston DeSousa spoke to the concerns of the 75 - 100 Caribbean businesses in the County. He also expressed the interest of Caribbean businesses in the development of a proposed County Trade Center, and their desire to have some input. Ms. Alsobrooks expressed her determination that Caribbean business have every opportunity to bid for County contracts. To that end, she promised to make an introduction to the head of procurement to ensure that we understand the procurement process. She also offered to add Mr. DeSousa - as a representative of the C-PAC and the Caribbean Community - to the Trade Center planning group.

Caribbean Culture

Laughton Sargent spoke to the desires of the Caribbean community to be better represented in the cultural life of the County. He broached the idea of a Caribbean cultural center in the County, and the positive benefits it would bring. The County Executive expressed great enthusiasm for Caribbean culture – especially Carnival. She

“liked” the idea of a cultural center. She suggested that Suitland might be a good location for such a center. However, if one were to be developed, she doubts it would be entirely “Caribbean.” She invited C-PAC’s and the Caribbean community’s input – represented by Mr. Sargent – in the exploration of this idea.

Next Steps

Over the next few weeks, and months, C-PAC will follow-up these initiatives with various members of the County Executive administration – at her suggestion. We will keep you abreast of our progress.



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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