

**Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC)  
Montgomery County, MD – 2016 Candidate Questionnaire**

*Please return the completed form via email to [Cpac.dmv@gmail.com](mailto:Cpac.dmv@gmail.com) by Friday, April 15, 2016. Responses will be shared with C-PAC membership.*

**Office Sought: Board of Education At-Large**

**Candidate's Name: Phil Kauffman**

**Current Occupation: Member, Board of Education; Retired, Office of General Counsel, Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Party: Non-partisan**

**Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website): P.O. Box 1146, Olney, MD 20830; (301) 570-4836; [info@philkauffman.com](mailto:info@philkauffman.com); [www.philkauffman.com](http://www.philkauffman.com)**

\*\*\*\*\*

***1. Where do you stand specifically on the DREAM Act and DACA, especially as they apply to immigrant students graduating with advanced professional degrees?***

I fully support both the DREAM Act and DACA.

***2. Are you in favor of or against increased funding for language instruction as an integral part of early childhood education to help close the "achievement gap" for poor and/immigrant children? Why?***

I support increase funding for language instruction. In the 2017 budget recommended by the Board of Education, which I voted for, funds were specifically earmarked to study and expand our existing dual language programs. Our Choice study also envisions an expanded role for dual language programs. I believe dual language programs, where literacy instruction is provided in the native language will help close our achievement gaps.

***3. What concrete steps will you take to improve the School system in Montgomery County– including facilities and equipment, relationships with parents, and education standards and test scores?***

MCPS faces enormous facility challenges. Since 2007 over 17,000 new students have enrolled and MCPS will grow by at least 10,000 additional students by 2021. Those students need new classrooms. At the same time, MCPS needs to keep our revitalization list on schedule as well as address the maintenance needs of our schools. We have not received our fair share of the funds allocated by the state for school construction and the share we receive from the county has declined over the last several years. We must do better. We need to advocate forcefully with our state and county legislators to secure the necessary funding to keep up with our growth as well as to maintain or replace our old and outdated buildings. We must work with the County Council and Park and Planning for responsible growth and

development policies so that our infrastructure keeps pace with our schools' enrollment. Finally, we need a thorough review of the funding sources for school construction. These would include the fees we charge our developers to build in overcrowded areas and whether we should permit developers to directly fund school additions where our capacity challenges are severe.

Research indicates that parental involvement has a positive effect on student learning and is an important strategy in reducing achievement gaps. Meaningful and effective home-school partnerships help to ensure a safe and respectful learning environment. I believe the system needs to enhance its efforts to welcome all families into the school community. Families must be active participants in the life of the school and feel welcomed, valued and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning in class. We must improve our communication strategy, to make sure we meaningfully communicate with parents about student learning. As part of this board members need to foster greater connections to the faith-based community, routinely meet with parent leadership from the PTA, NAACP Parents' Council, and Latino parent groups, and meet parents "where they are" at market days, bus stops, shopping malls, Parent Academies, etc.

Regarding education standards, unfortunately, too many MCPS staff do not have high expectations for all students. Although MCPS has eliminated much of the "gatekeeping" for higher level AP and honors courses at the secondary level, many children are not sufficiently challenged at the elementary level and thus are not ready for the challenges of a rigorous curriculum. MCPS needs to do a better job identifying the strengths of all children, especially at an early age. It is especially important that we focus on literacy by grade 3 and ensure that all children are proficient readers at that age. To do this, we must increase the professional development of our staff around content, pedagogy, and culturally proficient instruction to make meaningful gains.

I believe there has been a lack of accountability for the poor performance at many schools. At a recent Board meeting, our staff reviewed literacy data. They indicated that some schools are doing well, but performance at many schools has declined. They indicated that the schools that did well consistently reviewed their data and provided appropriate interventions for struggling students, whereas that was not the case at the schools with lower performance. My question was how do we hold staff accountable for these results, including individual school leaders and their supervisors? This is an area I plan to raise with our new superintendent.

There is also an issue with children's readiness for school when they enter kindergarten. To address this issue, we need more investments in prekindergarten programs. There is strong evidence that a high quality prekindergarten program is an effective way to help all children succeed in school. Enhancing early child development appears to improve a child's ability to learn at later stages. Not only does early education improve a child's cognitive ability, but it increases the productivity of later educational initiatives. We need to work with state officials to increase funding for pre-k and expand MCPS' offerings.

***4. What efforts do you support to make higher education accessible and affordable to all Maryland residents who aspire towards completing collegiate and advanced degrees?***

I fully supported the recently enacted legislation enabling the creation of a Montgomery County (MD) Student Loan Refinance Authority (MCSLRA). It enables the Montgomery County Government to create a Refi Authority once they complete a feasibility and demand study. The proposed Authority would be able to refinance student loan debt for school system employees, graduates of our public high schools, county employees, and potentially other county residents as well. Because the Authority will be able to refinance at lower rates, doing so can save borrowers hundreds – if not thousands – of dollars per year.

***5. Over 3,000 children of immigrants enter Maryland schools every year. Many of them are children of color with cultural idiosyncrasies and language accents or differences, which earn them labels such as "troublesome" or as having ADHD or other disorders. Still others end up in the juvenile justice system. What are your plans to ensure that we have a Cadre of well trained, culturally competent and sensitive teachers who understand and are willing to help these children succeed in school?***

As a Board member, I have tried to ensure that professional development is provided on an ongoing basis to strengthen the skill sets of the key school-based staff members who work with immigrant children. This training focuses on the unique needs of these children, successful acculturation practices, and trauma informed strategies. Additionally, to address the learning needs of all staff members, MCPS developed an Unaccompanied Youth toolkit to provide an online resource for all schools. The toolkit contains essential readings, videos, statistics, and legal guidance, as well as links to MCPS supports for unaccompanied youth, such as the METS, SEPA, ESOL Counseling, and ESOL Parent Outreach programs. The toolkit includes links to community partners in Montgomery County who serve unaccompanied youth and several document libraries with information on emotional triggers, social emotional supports, and educational tools that teachers may use in the classroom