JCRC JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL OF GREATER WASHINGTON | WJW WashingtonJewishWeek

2026 MD PRIMARY JEWISH VOTER'S GUIDE

STATE SENATE & HOUSE OF DELEGATES, MONTGOMERY COUNTY EXECUTIVE, COUNTY COUNCIL, AND SCHOOL BOARD

MARYLAND FLAG: SELENSERGEN/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS; HAND AND BUTTON: PROSTOCK-STUDIO/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

JCRC JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL OF GREATER WASHINGTON | WJW Washington Jewish Week

Dear Members of the Maryland Jewish Community:

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Washington and the Washington Jewish Week (WJW) have produced this 2026 Maryland Jewish Voter's Guide for the Maryland State Senate & House of Delegates, and the Montgomery County Executive, County Council, and Board of Education races in the upcoming Primary Election on June 23, 2026. This publication will introduce you to candidates' positions on critical issues facing the Jewish community. We sent out survey questions to each candidate and then compiled their responses. We also requested candidate photographs.

For comprehensive information about the upcoming elections, including where, when and how to vote, as well as early voting and mail-in ballots use this link to the Maryland State Board of Elections.

IMPORTANT DATES TO KNOW:

- Primary Election Day is Tuesday, June 23, 2026 - Polls open 7:00am to 8:00pm.
- Early Voting begins Thursday, June 11 - Thursday, June 18, 2026.
- From May 9 - May 24, mail-in ballots will be sent to registered voters.
- Mail-in ballots must be postmarked and/or dropped in a ballot drop box by 8:00pm on June 23, 2026.
- Drop boxes will be available from May 9 – June 23 through 8:00pm
  – For the location and availability of a nearby drop box and/or post office, text BOX + your location's Zip Code to 77788 (Example: BOX 20879)

We hope this resource is a valuable tool to facilitate your participation in our democratic process. For additional information, please contact Deborah Miller at the JCRC at dmiller@jcouncil.org.

Maryland State Board of Elections 2026
https://elections.maryland.gov/index.html

Voter Location Lookup
https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/PollingPlaceSearch

State Senator/Delegate Lookup
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Members/District

Montgomery County Council District Lookup
https://mcgov-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=b57d3f11b2b847c5a7342e73f5079e98

Maryland State Board of Elections – Early Voting Centers
https://mcg.montgomerycountymd.gov/elections/EarlyVoting/EarlyVotingCenters.html

Maryland State Board of Elections – Mail-In Voting Instructions
https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/absentee.html

Maryland State Board of Elections – Mail-In Ballot Drop Box Locations
2026_Primary_Drop_Box_Locations.pdf

STILLFX/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

Candidates for State Senator:

District 14 - Democratic

Craig J. Zucker

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Enhance affordability in core areas like housing, healthcare, and energy bills; grow our economy and create opportunities for Marylanders to succeed. I have sponsored and passed legislation that has lowered utility and housing costs, invested in projects across the state, and provided opportunities for thousands of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

The rise in antisemitism is very concerning. Recently, my synagogue was vandalized. This past session, I added capital funding for security at Jewish religious institutions and co-sponsored the Jewish Heritage recognition legislation.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

It will not have any impact on my collaboration with Jewish organizations. My Jewish mother has more influence on my decision making.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I will work to ensure we are continuing to protect our immigrant communities. I supported anti-masking legislation for ICE and the elimination of 287G agreements.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

As chair of the Senate Capital Budget, I have worked with my colleagues to allocate hundreds of millions of dollars to public schools, investing in vital renovations, career and college readiness, and educator salaries. In addition, I have championed and secured capital and operating funding for our non-public special education schools across Maryland.

District 15 – Democratic

Brian J. Feldman

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. As the Senate Chair of the Education, Energy & Environment Committee, enhancing affordability in core areas like energy bills and housing are at the top of my priority list of important issues. During the 2026 Session, I led the effort to gain passage of the Utility Relief Act, one of most comprehensive energy policy bills enacted in Annapolis over the past decade which provides short-term and long-term relief to Marylanders on their utility bills. I also led the effort to gain passage of several bills relating to housing affordability. 2. Introduce and gain passage of legislation to help jumpstart and grow Maryland's economy. During the 2026 Session, I introduced and gained passage of several economic development bills. 3. Secure capital $ for important local projects located in my Senate District. During the 2026 Session, I was able to secure 100% of the requested capital funding, totaling $2.1 million, for 7 such projects.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As someone who was Bar Mitzvahed at the Tree of Life of Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the site of the deadliest antisemitic attack on Jews in US history, I am painfully aware of the horrors of antisemitism and other forms of hatred. In my role as Chair of the Senate Committee that has jurisdiction over education policy, I will continue to take steps to ensure that our students at both the K-12 and higher education levels are able to learn in environments that are safe and free from hate.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I have consistently pushed back in the legislature against efforts/pressure from such groups, albeit efforts to dismantle or defund the Maryland Israel Economic Development Center, BDS related efforts involving the repeal of a 2017 Executive Order which prohibits state agencies from contracting with companies that boycott Israel, or pension fund divestment efforts involving companies with ties to Israel.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As someone whose four grandparents all immigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe, I will always be mindful of the important role our immigrant community plays in our nation which is why I voted this Session for several measures intended to thwart inhumane ICE enforcement practices directed at that community. I have also been supportive of pro-immigrant policies related to access to education and healthcare.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

As the Chair of the Senate committee with jurisdiction over education policy, I look forward to working closely with the JCRC as I have always done to enhance both public and independent schools.

District 16 - Democratic

Lou James Bartolo

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Healthcare is my life's work. As a nurse and regulatory professional, I have seen firsthand what happens when people cannot access care, such as preventable suffering, avoidable deaths, and communities left behind. In Annapolis, I will fight to expand Medicaid regardless of immigration status, protect reproductive healthcare, and ensure Maryland leads rather than follows as federal cuts devastate our most vulnerable residents. Economic Justice is the foundation of everything else. Working families in District 16 and across Maryland are squeezed by rising costs while corporations exploit loopholes to avoid paying their fair share. Education is the promise we make to every child and every family. Maryland's Blueprint for Maryland's Future is transformational legislation, but only if we fund it fully and implement it equitably. I will fight to close resource gaps between wealthy and under-resourced schools, and ensure every child in Maryland — regardless of zip code, race, or immigration status — has access to a world-class public education.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As someone shaped by social teaching, nursing ethics, and a career spent fighting structural racism, I believe unequivocally that hatred in any form — antisemitism, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia — is an attack on the dignity of every person and demands an unequivocal response. In Annapolis, I will support legislation strengthening hate crime enforcement, fund Holocaust and genocide education in our schools, protect religious institutions and communities targeted by extremism, and ensure Maryland's civil rights laws have real teeth and real enforcement.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will not yield to that pressure. I believe in coalition building across differences, and that means engaging with all communities — including Jewish organizations that support Israel's right to exist as a democratic state. Antisemitism has no place in politics, and I reject any effort to marginalize or exclude Jewish community organizations from the democratic process. Solidarity is not selective, and I will work with every community committed to dignity, democracy, and justice.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As a nurse who has worked alongside immigrant colleagues, advocated for immigrant patients, and championed structural equity throughout my career, supporting immigrant communities is not a campaign position for me — it is a personal and professional commitment. In Annapolis, I will fight to expand healthcare coverage regardless of immigration status, oppose 287g agreements, strengthen worker protections for immigrant workers who are disproportionately exploited and endangered on the job, and ensure state agencies provide meaningful language access. The immigrant workers who build our homes, staff our hospitals, and feed our families deserve dignity, safety, and a Senator who shows up for them every single day — and I will.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

As a product of both public and private (Catholic) independent education, I understand the value each brings to our communities. In Annapolis, I will fight for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future to ensure every public school has the resources, teachers, and support staff students deserve, while closing persistent equity gaps between wealthy and under-resourced districts. For independent schools, I will support policies that reduce regulatory burdens, expand scholarship and tuition assistance programs for low and middle-income families, and ensure nonpublic schools serving students with disabilities receive adequate state support. Strong public schools and thriving independent schools are not competing priorities as they reflect a shared commitment to giving every Maryland child an excellent education.

Sara N. Love

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

There are a lot of issues that are important to the residents of District 16 and the State of Maryland, and I work to support them as much as I can. Many of these have other champions, so I focus my work on areas in which I have knowledge and experience. In light of this, the three most important issues to me are the environment, privacy, and victims of intimate partner violence. All of these (and so much more) are under attack with this Federal Administration and we must keep doing all we can. On the environment, I have sponsored many bills relating to the environment, including: updating our Forest Conservation Act, creating the Whole Watershed Act, multiple bills on protecting us from toxic PFAS, ensuring the Waters of Maryland are protected after the Supreme Court rolled back the Clean Water Act, enabling individuals and groups to sue to protect the waters of Maryland, and more. If re-elected, I will continue to work with constituents, advocates, local governments, and our agencies to push forward policies that keep our environment clean. On privacy. I was the lead House sponsor of the Maryland Online Data Privacy Act of 2024, which is one of the strongest online data privacy laws in the country. Too many entities track us online and this law helps protect us from companies that take our data and sell it without our permission. In 2025, I successfully sponsored (cross filed by D16 Delegate Marc Korman) a privacy bill that the data collected through the automatic enforcement programs. Maryland - and especially Montgomery County - has a lot of camera systems (speed cameras, red light cameras, stop sign cameras, school bus cameras, noise cameras) and there are bills every year to add more cameras. Our legislation ensures that the data collected is not used to track us, unless necessary for a legitimate law enforcement purpose (e.g. trying to solve a crime). This year I sponsored legislation to ensure that identifying data of victims of sexual assault and stalking is not accessible to the public. There is so much more to do in this space, and I hope to continue my work on it if re-elected. Finally, victims of intimate partner violence. This has always been something that is important to me, and now being on the Judicial Proceedings Committee I have the opportunity to work on it more. I have sponsored several bills these last two years (extending the time for a Temporary Protective Order, the privacy bill I mentioned above, protecting survivors of assault from being further abused by a lawsuit from their abuser, prohibiting the surveillance of individuals in one's home, and ensuring that child abuse victims can testify safely outside the presence of their abuser). I also fought for other bills to help survivors, and will continue all this work if re-elected.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

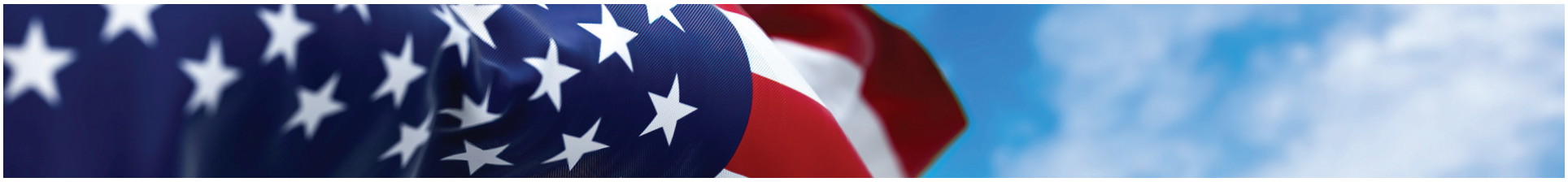
Antisemitism is unacceptable. Full stop. I will continue to confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in myriad ways. Sometimes it is one-on-one, explaining to people that what they said or did was antisemitic, discriminatory and offensive. Sometimes it is online - though I try to be careful posting or re-posting offensive material, as I do not want to give the haters more airtime. I voted for the bill to create a month celebrating Jewish and Muslim traditions, and voted against amendments to add Christian tradition to it and another to create a 'all religious traditions' month. I have co-sponsored and voted for legislation to educate the educators about anti-semitism and other forms of hatred; signed letters; and worked with colleagues to address antisemitism and other forms of hatred in many different arenas.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I don't have a problem saying no to people who would pressure me on that.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

This year the General Assembly worked on and passed many bills supporting the immigrant community: ending 287(g) agreements, banning ICE masking, the Trust Act, amending my privacy law to keep information from going to ICE, limiting the use of facilities as detention centers unless specific criteria are met, and so much more. I have helped individuals looking for resources, and supported constituents who are doing the same.



How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Both public and independent schools play an important role in our educational system. I have voted for multiple bills that support both.

District 17 - Democratic

Philip Cook

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. The Rent is too high. I believe that we need rent stabilization legislation. 2. Universal Pre-K and School lunches. This needs to be implemented as soon as possible. Families cannot afford the high cost of child care and kids have better outcomes in school when they are not hungry. 3. Universal Health Care. I would strongly support the Healthy Maryland Act. Healthcare costs are too high and we need universal health care.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I think educating kids about this is important because hatred is learned at a young age.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

There will certainly be people that are upset with me working with Jewish organizations, but I will be a Senator for everyone in my district and I believe that my legislation will help working class people regardless of race or religion.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

We need to fight back against the terror ICE is causing in our communities. I would support legislation banning former ICE employees from working as police officers, school teachers or any government job.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will fight for universal pre-k and school lunches. Also healthier plant-based foods for schools.

Cheryl C. Kagan

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

The 41,000+ Maryland nonprofits are too often overlooked and underappreciated. Often described as "the Senator for the nonprofit sector," I have crafted first-in-the-nation policies creating the NIMBL program, MEGA Council, Prompt Payment Parity, and the Nonprofit Navigator, among others. SB4, which just passed the Senate, would protect our nonprofits from a possible repeal of the Johnson Amendment, which protects the sector from getting pulled into partisan politics. For 12 years, I have worked to upgrade our 9-1-1 systems after three people have died in my district when 9-1-1 has failed. From funding, staffing, training, cybersecurity, GIS, and retirement benefits, Maryland is now at the forefront nationally. Despite Donald Trump's allegations to the contrary, our elections are secure, inclusive, and accurate. Each year, I have sponsored and passed legislation to make Maryland's even more effective.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As a longtime communal leader, I speak up. I educate colleagues and neighbors. I'm active on social media and have served on the board of AJC for 27 years now.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

That's a non-starter, and folks surely know that.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Our neighbors should be able to expect safety and opportunities. Most of us descend from immigrants and should respect and welcome our neighbors who are new to the area or the country. We have enacted laws to put limits on the criminal behaviors of ICE and hateful Trump policies.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I support our MCPS public schools. As Vice Chair of the Senate committee that deals with education policies, I was involved with the historic 10-year "Blueprint for Maryland Schools." In my "free" time, I love visiting public and non-public schools in my district, teaching our young people!

District 17 - Republican

Helene Meister

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My top priorities are lowering the cost of living, improving long-term budget planning, and supporting economic growth. First, high energy and housing costs are putting real pressure on households. I support expanding in-state energy generation by streamlining permitting, encouraging new generation capacity, and ensuring Maryland can produce more of its own electricity rather than relying heavily on external markets. This should be combined with stronger oversight of electricity rate increases at the state level, through the Public Service Commission. Large energy users, such as data centers, should bear the cost of their grid impact so that households are not subsidizing them. Second, Maryland must address recurring budget shortfalls with better long-term planning. That means controlling cost growth, reassessing timelines for major programs when necessary, and avoiding repeated reliance on short-term fixes or fee increases. Third, we need a more growth-oriented economic strategy. By making Maryland more attractive to businesses and investment, we can expand the tax base and generate the revenue needed to sustainably fund essential priorities like healthcare, transportation, and education.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

First, I would introduce legislation—such as a Campus Civil Rights Enforcement Act—to standardize and strengthen how Maryland's public colleges and universities handle civil rights complaints, particularly in higher education, where recent incidents have highlighted broader patterns of antisemitism and gaps in enforcement. While policies already exist, enforcement is often inconsistent. Clear statewide standards should require timely written findings, consistent follow-up and clear notice of outcomes to complainants, and accountability in how cases are handled. This should also include anonymized annual reporting of antisemitism-related incidents and outcomes to improve transparency. This is not about regulating speech—it is about enforcing existing civil rights protections. Second, Maryland already criminalizes hate-based conduct, but enforcement is inconsistent. I support improving classification and prosecution, including establishing a uniform reporting system to State Police and the Attorney General and publishing reliable data on incidents, charges, and case outcomes. This would ensure the law is applied consistently across jurisdictions. Finally, Jewish institutions face real and documented security risks. I support prioritizing rapid law enforcement response, as well as proactive deployment and coordination when there are elevated threat levels, for synagogues, schools, and community centers. The focus should be on ensuring effective, prioritized police protection and emergency response.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will work with all lawful community organizations and constituents in my district. I do not support excluding or refusing to engage with any group based on their identity or viewpoints. My responsibility is to represent everyone fairly and to make decisions independently. I will not allow political pressure to dictate whom I engage with or represent.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I am an immigrant myself and was naturalized in 2015. Maryland should better recognize foreign credentials so immigrants do not have to restart education or training completed abroad. We should create clearer licensing equivalencies and expand workforce development and English-language programs, including stronger ESL and bridge classes. Better integration helps immigrants overcome barriers, access jobs that match their qualifications, and fully contribute to our economy.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I would work to strengthen both public and independent schools by focusing on quality instruction, support for students, and strong academic standards. That includes ensuring teachers are competitively paid and that class sizes remain manageable so students receive adequate attention. We should also improve support for students who need additional help, including special education services, small-group instruction, and access to specialized staff. As a parent of a child with an IEP, I have seen how effective targeted support can be. In addition, schools should maintain strong academic expectations, including appropriate homework and reinforcement of core skills, which have declined in some areas since the pandemic. Expanding access to subjects like foreign languages, while also ensuring a strong foundation in core academic subjects, is important. The goal is to provide all students—across both public and independent schools—with the support and structure they need to succeed.

District 18 - Democratic

Jeff Waldstreicher

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My top three priorities are 1) fighting the affordability crisis here in Maryland, 2) pushing back against a lawless Trump Administration, and 3) growing our economy so that it works for all families.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

We must confront antisemitism without hesitation or equivocation. Each and every day, I'm fighting to protect our community. I was proud to sponsor legislation to require Title VI coordinators on all our college campuses, as well as appropriate $10 million in security grants to our Jewish institutions. In addition, I fought to include an additional $200,000 in security investments for synagogues in my legislative district.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I never interact with, or succumb to pressure by, antisemitic organizations that advocate for hate. Full stop.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

My grandparents and great-grandparents fled pogroms for religious freedom and economic opportunity here in America--so this is personal for me. In Annapolis, I have been proud to stand up for our immigrant neighbors. I helped lead the charge to eliminate 287(g) agreements, ban the use of face masks by law enforcement, and end cooperation with ICE. I was also humbled to be the author of the No Kings Act of 2026, which provides a private right of action against federal officials who violate our constitutional rights.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I'm incredibly proud that we have fully funded the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Maryland's once-a-generation school investment and accountability program. I have also fought for bond bills for capital expenses at our local Jewish day schools, including the Yeshiva of Greater Washington in my legislative district.

District 19 - Democratic

Ben Kramer

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Maryland must strengthen support for residents with disabilities by investing in community-based services, accessible housing, and employment pathways that promote independence. Our schools need sustained funding, expanded career and technical education, and stronger teacher recruitment and retention to prepare students for the workforce. As federal cuts to SNAP and Medicaid threaten vulnerable families, the State must act to protect food security and healthcare access by closing funding gaps and expanding targeted assistance. These are just three of many important issues the General Assembly must address.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will continue confronting Jew-hate with clear action and unwavering resolve. I have already led efforts to pass legislation opposing the BDS movement against Israel, established January 27 as Maryland Holocaust Remembrance Day, secured funding for student field trips to the Holocaust Museum, and supported dedicated annual funding of millions of dollars to protect faith-based institutions. Moving forward, I will strengthen education, expand security investments, and ensure Maryland stands firmly against hate in all forms while promoting understanding, safety, and respect for every community.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I am an unapologetic Zionist.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Maryland will continue to lead with compassion and fairness by supporting our immigrant communities. That means expanding access to legal services so families can navigate complex systems, ensuring equitable access to education and health care, and strengthening labor protections so workers are treated with dignity and paid fairly. We must also build trust between immigrant communities and public institutions, while actively preventing discrimination in all forms. These efforts not only protect vulnerable families but also promote economic stability, strengthen our workforce, and enrich communities across our state.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will continue to strengthen public schools by investing in excellent teaching, modern facilities, safe classrooms, and strong pathways to college and careers. I will continue to expand career and technical education, support teacher recruitment and retention, and ensure students have access to mental health services. Furthermore, I will also work to foster collaboration with independent schools to share best practices, innovation, and community partnerships that benefit all students. By raising standards, improving accountability, and supporting families, we can deliver a high-quality education system that prepares every student to succeed.

District 20 - Democratic

Will Smith

Did not submit a response and candidate unopposed.

District 39 - Democratic

Nancy J. King

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Education, public safety and economic development. We've made record investments in education and we are seeing results. Our schools consistently rank in the top ten in the country, and student achievement is rising. We must continue to prioritize funding for K - 12 education, which is fundamental to our quality of life in Montgomery County. Our violent crime rate is at its lowest level since 1975, thanks in part to common sense public safety initiatives passed by the General Assembly. Our state's economic development has taken several hits from actions taken by the federal government. We immediately set up resources for federal employees and we continue to invest in programs to encourage job creation and economic development.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

The rise in antisemitism in our communities and worldwide has been alarming and the Maryland Senate plays an important role to set the tone and create a system where hate is not tolerated under any circumstances. Through my role as Majority Leader, I was proud to shepherd through the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention, the Educate to Stop the Hate Act and the Maryland Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act to create programs that keep hate out of our communities and college campuses and educational programs that provide the proper training. Our work is not done and I look forward to continuing to work closely with the Jewish community to stop antisemitism in its tracks.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I have always appreciated a working relationship with organizations that support a Jewish democratic State of Israel. Jewish groups in Montgomery County have always been an incredible ally in my effort to create programs for Marylanders who need it the most and I look forward to continuing our work together.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I always fight for immigrant communities; unfortunately, we are less safe now because ICE is abducting members of our communities and ripping children out of schools. I am the lead sponsor of SB810 which prevents school officials from working with ICE. As Majority Leader, I helped lead the passage of SB245 to prohibit local law enforcement from working with ICE. I also secured $1 million for a Gaithersburg community center for Latino and other immigrant youth and families.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Throughout my time in public service, I am most proud of the work that I have done in education - from birth to post-secondary education. I have been the lead sponsor on many pieces of legislation to improve the safety and quality of daycare and pre-k programs and to recognize and invest in the professional growth of our pre-K teachers; I was a member of the Kirwan Commission that developed the Blueprint and continue to work on its implementation; I have been the lead sponsor on several pieces of legislation to strengthen our community colleges; and I continue to work to support Maryland's four year institutions of higher education.

Amar Mukunda

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

I come from an immigrant family—my parents are from India and Pakistan—but my story mirrors that of so many Jewish families. At a time of rising fear of "the other," we must stand united. My first priority is protecting our democracy by restricting ICE, pushing back against gerrymandering, and fixing the corruption that enabled Trump. My family moved eight times in Montgomery County before I graduated, but I went on to start two technology companies here. That's why my second priority is making the American Dream affordable by lowering costs like utility bills and making it easier to do business in our state. My third priority, rooted in my work as Assistant Director of Maryland's largest gun violence prevention program, is ensuring world-class, gun-free schools.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Humanity is one family. Yet our country is facing a surge in antisemitism—the most significant in my lifetime. More than ever, the Jewish community needs leaders who have the trust of other minority groups—especially Muslim Americans—and who are actively standing up against antisemitism and building bridges. That is the work I have been engaged in. My politics are rooted in a belief in universal human rights—that Islamophobia, antisemitism, xenophobia, and racism are all fruits of the same rotten tree. After October 7, I began conducting listening sessions to bring Jewish and Muslim community members together. Ours is the only campaign hosting an interfaith breakfast, and as State Senator, I will fight for stronger hate crime enforcement and be a vocal, outspoken bridge-builder.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

This question represents a defining line in our politics. I have knocked on 6,200 doors in my district, visited synagogues, and met with rabbis and countless Jewish families. Like many Jewish voters I've met, I am appalled by Netanyahu's conduct in Gaza. There can be no safety for Jewish people if we fail to push back against the dehumanization of Palestinians. Groups like AIPAC have enabled both Netanyahu and Trump, and I will not accept their money. But painting all Jewish organizations or individuals with the same brush is deeply wrong—it feeds the very antisemitism we must defeat. I will continue to visit synagogues, attend community events, and engage directly with Jewish residents across the district.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

The leadership of the Maryland State Senate has turned protecting immigrant families into a political football. This is the defining issue of our time and deeply personal to me. In 2025, Governor Moore and the House advanced legislation to end local cooperation with ICE and counter Trump's gerrymandering in Texas. The Senate delayed action on ICE for a full year—during which more than 3,300 Marylanders were detained—and left loopholes allowing warrantless information sharing. They also killed redistricting efforts to protect our democracy. This moment demands a different kind of leadership. I believe in active resistance: denying permits for detention facilities, protecting polling places, and passing every law possible to stand up to Trump. Fascism has no place in America.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I am a proud graduate of Montgomery County Public Schools. That education led me to a Bachelor's in Computer Science from Amherst, a Fulbright in machine learning, and a Master's from Stanford. In 2026, we must think differently about supporting our schools. First, no child can learn if they don't feel safe. That's why I support requiring owners of the most dangerous firearms to carry insurance and ensuring schools have appropriate safety personnel. Second is youth mental health. As a computer scientist, I understand the harms of social media algorithms and AI-generated content and will work to rein them in. Finally, we must strengthen school culture and parent trust. Too many parents feel schools are not being transparent; I will work to create a parent-teacher bill of rights that empowers teachers and keeps families informed.

Destiny Drake West

Did not submit a response.

Candidates for House of Delegates:

District 14 - Democratic

Alicia Contreras-Donello

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Stronger Schools: Fully implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, support and retain educators, and ensure every student has access to a world-class education, regardless of background or religion while addressing hate, including antisemitism. Resilient Communities: Build safe, healthy neighborhoods by strengthening public safety, expanding mental health care, and combating hate to promote tolerance so all families can live without fear. Inclusive Growth: Expand economic opportunity through workforce development, support for small businesses, and sustainable policies so diverse communities, including the Jewish community, can thrive.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism and all hate are unacceptable, especially as incidents in Montgomery County have more than doubled since 2023, with alarming growth in schools. I believe everyone should feel safe, included, and heard. I will speak out clearly against hatred and harmful tropes, strengthen hate crime prevention and funding, and support interfaith and cross-community dialogue, especially in schools, to build understanding. Drawing on my work in diverse and conflict-affected communities, I know stopping dehumanization early is key to preventing violence and building resilient communities. I'll also advance policies that expand education, support community partnerships, and build on the Jewish community's long leadership in civil rights.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a State Delegate for District 14, I will represent and serve all of my constituents and will do so with respect and openness. I will not support efforts to exclude Jewish organizations from civic life because of specific positions they may take. Encouraging respectful debate, co-existence, and valuing others' perspectives is essential to building a vibrant community and means prejudicing inclusion, not exclusion. The Jewish community, as all communities, are a valued part of District 14 and the country writ large. I will bring my diplomatic experience to bear and I will work collaboratively with Jewish organizations, as I will with all community groups, to address shared priorities like safety, education, and economic opportunity and to build a diverse community.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the daughter of immigrants, supporting immigrant communities is deeply personal to me. I will work to ensure immigrants are treated with dignity, and have access to opportunity and the resources they need to thrive, including education, healthcare, and fair workplace protections. I will oppose policies that undermine trust. I will work in collaboration with District 14's immigrant community, listening to their needs and elevating their voices, and to strengthen the dynamic network supporting them as I have done in the past. I recognize the Jewish community's vital role in supporting District 14's immigrant communities. I look forward to partnering with the Jewish community to ensure everyone is treated humanely and with respect and has the opportunity to thrive.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

As a parent of young children, I am deeply invested in building strong schools. Every child deserves access to a world-class education in a safe, supportive environment. I will work to fully implement Maryland's Blueprint for the Future so our public schools deliver strong academics, critical thinking, and a culture where every student, regardless of background or religion, feels respected. I will also support nonpublic schools, including Jewish day schools, by expanding access to security funding and other resources so students are safe and able to thrive amid rising hate crimes and other threats. Supporting educators is vital, and I will back policies to improve teacher retention, including an educator tax credit.

Anne R. Kaiser

What are the three most important issues to you, and how will you address each?

Affordability, education, and standing up to federal recklessness. 1) Affordability: I have supported policies that lower the cost of living by reducing utility rates. I have been the prime sponsor of legislation to expand tax credits for working families as well as legislation to ensure state benefits reach every Marylander who qualifies through better outreach and modernizing our delivery systems. My goal is to continue advancing similar legislation. 2) Education: I am committed to fully funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. My focus is on making higher education truly accessible and expanding vocational training so our students are prepared for high-paying careers in a changing economy. 3) Federal recklessness: I have worked to shield Maryland's economy and federal workforce from Washington's instability by protecting state-level funding for critical services. I am committed to ensuring Maryland remains a stable harbor, which is why I supported 2026 legislation to protect all Marylanders, including our immigrant communities, from federal overreach.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As a proud Jewish Marylander and leader in the Jewish Caucus, I am committed to a zero-tolerance policy for antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of hate. I have supported legislation to increase security funding for faith-based organizations. I will continue to ensure that Maryland remains a safe, inclusive home for residents of all backgrounds.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a proud Jewish legislator, I will always stand for what I believe in, which includes a commitment to a secure, democratic State of Israel and the right of Jewish organizations to participate fully in Maryland's civic life. I will not be pressured into ostracizing organizations that share my values or serve my constituents. Instead, I will continue to work with any group dedicated to improving Maryland, while firmly rejecting efforts to marginalize the Jewish community or silence its organizations. My record reflects this.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Paraphrasing Gandhi, "A society should be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable." Unconscionably, the current federal administration has treated our immigrant communities as if they are criminals and enemies of America. I voted for the robust package of legislation designed to push back against the Trump-Vance administration's reckless immigration enforcement agenda: 1) the Community Trust Act, which prohibits local jails from honoring ICE detainers without a judicial warrant and restricts police from inquiring about immigration status during routine stops; 2) an emergency measure to terminate all 287(g) agreements, ending formal partnerships where local officers acted as federal agents; and 3) the Law Enforcement Masking Ban, which imposes fines on officers, specifically targeting federal agents, who wear tactical masks or gaiters during community operations to ensure they remain identifiable and accountable. In addition, I was designated as the lead debater to defend the extension of in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I believe every Maryland child deserves to learn in a safe and secure environment. I have consistently supported state funding for security grants to ensure that all students are protected from external threats and violence.

Bernice Mireku-North

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

High utility costs are a concern for Maryland families. I have focused on lowering utility costs and making Maryland more affordable. It has been a balancing act of managing costs while enhancing clean energy. During the current legislative session, we are holding utility companies accountable for higher costs while ensuring we put money back in customers' pockets. I, along with my teammates Sen. Craig Zucker, Del. Anne Kaiser, and candidate Matt Post, are making this a priority. As a second generation immigrant, I will continue to work to protect our neighbors from ICE. I was proud to vote again to end Maryland's cooperation with ICE, and to vote to expand sensitive locations further to protect our children and families from ICE activity. The work continues to safeguard stored data of immigrant communities, and to fight for accountability in policing our immigrants, affordable housing, fair treatment of tenants, and access to healthcare. I will continue to protect and enhance education funding for 1) childcare, especially for our most vulnerable and developmentally delayed kids and for those kids with the greatest need and 2) for school construction and the continued progress of our transforming education system known as the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As a member of the Ways and Means committee, I have supported and voted for bills that address antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the schools. I will continue to work with colleagues to push bills in order to attack hatred, especially in the schools. More recently, I have voted for making May Jewish American Month, and supported legislation to review school curriculum that considers, among other things, Jewish history.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I have not co-sponsored legislation to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Supporting the immigrant community is one of my priorities for the upcoming election. For every opportunity I had to co-sponsor a piece of legislation, such as The Community Trust Act to curtail the presence of ICE, I have done so. I have also passed legislation to create multilingual election materials so there is greater parity of the ballot box. I also continue to support and/or speak at immigrant rallies to voice my support to not protect but also honor the immigrant communities that make Maryland thrive. The work continues to safeguard stored data of immigrant communities, and to fight for accountability in policing our immigrants, affordable housing, fair treatment of tenants, and access to healthcare.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will continue to listen and learn of the needs of the public and independent schools as we consider legislation. I have attended conferences to learn from educators their issues and concerns in the classroom as well. I have accepted meetings with education advocates annually to hear their priorities and discuss ways to work together. In the case of our public schools, I have had the opportunity to visit schools in the district with varying degrees of needs. I have seen the great strides made and acknowledge the additional work left to do, including diversifying the educator workforce, fighting for sustained funding for mental health for youth and funding school construction.

Matt Post

Did not submit a response.

District 15 - Democratic

Asher E. Beckwitt

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

The three most important issues to me are mental health, cost of living, and transportation and connectivity—because they directly shape people's daily lives. First, mental health. This is both personal and systemic. I will work to expand access to affordable, trauma-informed care, integrate mental health services into schools and primary care, and support prevention-focused, community-based programs so people can get help before they reach a crisis. Second, cost of living. Families are being squeezed—from housing to groceries to rising utility bills. I will support policies that increase affordable housing, provide relief from rising utility costs through stronger oversight and energy efficiency programs, and ensure working families have access to childcare and economic stability. Third, transportation and connectivity. In District 15, where you live determines your access to opportunity. I will advocate for expanded transit, infrastructure improvements, and smarter planning that reduces congestion and connects people to jobs—helping drive economic growth across our communities.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

This issue is deeply personal to me. I am third-generation Jewish on my father's side, and I was raised Christian. Growing up, I heard stories about how my grandfather came to the United States at just 16 years old to escape the Holocaust. Many in my family did not survive. That history shapes how I see the responsibility we have today. Hatred—whether it's antisemitism, racism, anti-LGBTQ+ violence, or religious intolerance—doesn't exist in isolation. It grows in silence, and it harms entire communities. What I will do: Speak out clearly and consistently against antisemitism and all forms of hate Support stronger hate crime reporting, prevention, and accountability Advocate for education that builds understanding across differences, including Holocaust education Invest in community-based programs that foster dialogue, belonging, and early intervention Work to ensure schools and public spaces are safe and inclusive for everyone But policy alone isn't enough. We need leadership that understands what's at stake—because history shows us what happens when hate is ignored.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I believe strongly that we cannot combat hate by excluding people—and that includes Jewish organizations. This is personal for me. I am third-generation Jewish on my father's side, and my family was directly impacted by the Holocaust. I was raised understanding both the importance of Jewish identity and the consequences of when that identity is marginalized or erased. At the same time, I also believe in human rights, dignity, and safety for all people—including Palestinians. These are not opposing values. What I will not do is allow any group to dictate who I can or cannot engage with based on identity or belief. What I will do: Work with a broad range of Jewish organizations, just as I would with any community group Engage in open, respectful dialogue, even when there are disagreements Stand firmly against antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of hate Focus on my role as a state delegate: serving my constituents and addressing issues that impact daily life here in Maryland

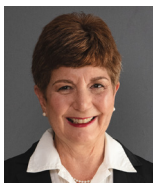
How will you work to support the immigrant community?

First, I will work to expand access—ensuring language services and culturally competent care are available in schools, healthcare, and public programs so people can fully participate in their communities. Second, I will strengthen protection by supporting legal aid, advocating for fair wages and worker protections, and helping build trust so immigrants feel safe accessing services without fear. That also means ensuring that local systems are not tied to immigration enforcement, so families feel safe seeking help, reporting crimes, and engaging in their communities without fear of ICE involvement. Third, I will promote opportunity by supporting small businesses, workforce pathways, and community-based programs that allow immigrant families to not just survive—but thrive.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

To strengthen education in Maryland's District 15, I would focus on four priorities: addressing teacher shortages by supporting competitive salaries, local teacher pipelines with Montgomery College, and reducing administrative burden; closing achievement gaps by prioritizing funding for the Academic Excellence Program and protecting resources for multilingual and low-income students; ensuring fair school funding by defending the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, improving enrollment-based funding formulas, and advocating for District 15's share of state construction investments; and maintaining strong school options by opposing efforts that divert funding away from public schools while expanding magnet programs, dual enrollment, and career pathways so all students—whether in public or independent schools—have access to high-quality, well-resourced educational opportunities.

Linda Foley



What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Workers' rights 2. Combating hate and discrimination 3. Protecting the most vulnerable. How do I address them: 1. I support and have sponsored many bills (including in the current legislative session) that promote the rights of workers to have access to fair wages, good benefits, fair working conditions and a real voice in their workplace (union rights). 2. I currently am the sponsor of legislation to track hate incidences in our public schools. I also make it a point to co-sponsor as much legislation that I can to combat hate & discrimination. 3. I always support and actively work to pass legislation that ensures vulnerable and underserved communities are lifted up. We also now have the added burden in the Md. Legislature of ensuring that vulnerable communities abandoned by draconian Trump federal cuts are supported by state resources and programs.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

First, condemn it. Second, as a legislator, sponsor and support legislation that fights antisemitism and other forms of hate. I am an allied member of the Legislative Jewish Caucus because I believe a united front against antisemitism and other hate is critical to our ability to fight against it.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I ignore efforts to pressure me to avoid working with Jewish organizations. I continue to support the Jewish community in my district and in our state. Most who are aware of me and my record know I am a supporter of a democratic Israel.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I support the efforts of CASA, both in Annapolis and with donations. I also was a strong supporter of legislation (recently signed into law) that prohibits local law enforcement from coordinating with ICE agents as they terrorize local immigrant communities. I have also supported legislation that protects housing rights and renters' rights, issues that go directly to many issues facing our immigrant communities. I also continue to support the right of immigrants, regardless of immigration status, to health care.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I am a strong supporter of public schools. As a rule, I am not a believer in using public school dollars to support private schools, with one major exception. I do believe we have an obligation to provide funds to ensure the safety of private school children, just as we do for private school children. This is

particularly important for children who attend private Jewish schools because of the unique threat posed by violent antisemitism in our country. I do not oppose the current BOOST program as it currently is administered and funded.

David V. Fraser-Hidalgo

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Continue to resist recent Federal Immigration Agencies attacks on Democracy and the Constitution, which has led to the death, incarceration and deportation of many innocent people. Decrease the cost of electricity, see my work in the 2026 Session HB 1532, to decrease the cost of electricity. Decrease the cost of Health Care, which is clearly a broken system. Continue to work in the Maryland General Assembly as a MD State Delegate improve outcomes and reduce Health Care cost.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

The Jewish Caucus, Black Caucus and the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus have worked together for several years to resist and stand up cooperatively (and I have individually) against all forms of racism and antisemitism. Creating new laws to buttress Maryland State Law on education and antisemitism, as well as resist "boycott divestment and sanction" efforts.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I am a proud member of the Jewish caucus and have been since the day of its creation within the Maryland General Assembly. Furthermore, those groups hold little weight in my decision making process.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I am a founding member of the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus. Furthermore, I was the Chair of the Caucus for 5 years. Having helped lead the battles on ITIN benefits, 287g, limiting cooperation with Federal Immigration Agencies.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I've been working to help both public and independent schools for years, as a parent and as a Maryland State Delegate. Furthermore, I have been fully supportive of security grants to ensure schools have the resources they need to stay safe.

Lily Qi

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Through my two terms as a state legislator, I have focused on economic competitiveness, stronger democracy, and more inclusive communities. I have been a champion for growing Maryland's economy by removing barriers to doing business in Maryland, making strategic investments in industries of the future and community revitalizations. I am equally passionate about reforming our closed primary elections. With one million and growing number of Marylanders choosing to be independent, our tax-dollar-funded primary elections should be open to independent voters because they are often the only elections that matter. Finally, I have been working on making Maryland more inclusive and elevating marginalized voices including establishing the Maryland LGBTQ Commission, supporting the homecare workers, and fighting against employment discrimination in state and local government. I will continue to focus on these priorities to make Maryland more competitive, democratic and inclusive.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

While shocking, the resurgence of antisemitism and other forms of hatred in recent years is reminiscent of historical waves of xenophobia and scapegoating, especially when there were dramatic demographic and economic changes that could be unsettling for people's identities and a sense of self. As a state legislator who represents a district with large Jewish and Muslim populations, I am proud to support enhanced funding for houses of worship, mandated professional training and curricula in public schools on antisemitism and Islamophobia, and all other measures to combat hate and otherization. I will continue to do my part to show that in Maryland and Montgomery County, we value all cultures and religions, cross-cultural understanding, and community integration.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

The Jewish community in Montgomery County has been a model for civic engagement, outreach to other communities, and supporting local causes that improve the quality of life for all of us. Their early and strong support for the Asian American community during the COVID pandemic was exemplary and reflects the best of who we are as Montgomery County. As someone who grew up in China, I know what's global is also local these days. Events happening halfway around the world can have immediate and significant impact on our personal and community wellbeing here. It's important that we separate a government and its leaders' policies and actions from its people, the culture/religion, and the country as a whole. I have been working with both Jewish and Muslim community organizations over many years, long before my elective office, and will continue to be bridge builder for a more inclusive and integrated Maryland.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As a proud immigrant who speaks English as a second language, and who had struggled for many years to find my footing, I consider it my life's work to push for immigrant integration and government cultural competency at the state and local levels. At the same time, I am proud to join the fight against the reckless federal government that is terrorizing our communities to ensure human dignity and basic rights regardless of who they are. I was proud to vote for several bills this session to severely restrict federal detention centers in Maryland and prohibit using local and state resources to enforce federal immigrant policies. Finally, I fight for a more inclusive election system because it disproportionally affects immigrant-heavy communities. If we truly value diversity, our diverse communities' voices must be included in driving sensible policies.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I am proud to support Maryland's public schools as the greatest community asset and equalizer for so many children. While I do not serve on the budget or appropriations committee, I support Maryland's balanced approach to independent schools which also play a critical role in meeting the needs of many children and their families. Over the years, my district colleagues and I have been working with independent schools, especially special education schools like Ivymount and the Kathryn Thomas School in our district to provide needed bond funding for capital improvement.

District 15 – Republican

Peter Chan

Did not submit a response and candidate unopposed.

District 16 - Democratic

Tazeen Ahmad

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My top three priorities are building an economy that works for everyone, protecting education, and protecting our environment. I will work to support businesses, expand access to capital, reduce unnecessary regulations, and advocate for affordable housing, transit, and fair wages with healthcare and paid leave. I will fight for high-quality public education by addressing overcrowding, absenteeism, and achievement gaps, while ensuring schools prepare students for the workforce of tomorrow. Our children deserve safe, well-maintained schools where all students have the support they need. A healthy economy relies on a livable planet. Maryland must invest in clean energy, modernize our power grid, cut carbon pollution, expand transit, protect forests and wetlands, hold major polluters accountable, and promote walkable, green communities with environmental justice.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will confront antisemitism and all forms of hate with leadership, education, and accountability. In Montgomery County, Jewish residents make up 10% of the population, but according to the Montgomery County Police Department, 40% of hate crimes here target Jews. No community should feel unsafe for who they are or what they believe. It is clear that the Jewish community is being unduly targeted in Montgomery County. As a Muslim woman and candidate for Delegate, I will set a leadership example and support robust hate-crime laws, advocate for additional security funding for places of worship and nonprofits, particularly for places that are being specifically targeted, and partner with Jewish, Muslim, and interfaith leaders. I will promote tolerance education in MCPS, and other local and state institutions, including legislative staff, police and fire departments, including training from experts like the JCRC, and push for better reporting of bias incidents. Fighting hate will be a top priority.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

Jews are just 2% of the U.S. population but face roughly 70% of religion-based hate crimes. Maryland has made some progress with hate crime expansions, antiswatting laws, and antisemitism training in schools, but more is needed. I will support adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism, implementing antisemitism training among the anti-bias training in public universities, among state legislators and staff, and the police and fire departments, and speak out against all stereotyping. As a Muslim candidate and leader, I will be visible in the Jewish community, attending synagogue and Jewish community events regularly, and serve as an allied member of the Maryland Legislative Jewish Caucus. I think that particularly because I am a Muslim leader that my voice and presence within the Montgomery County Jewish community will be significantly impactful.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I will support immigrant communities by strengthening partnerships with organizations that provide legal, social, and language services, ensuring families can access the help they need. I will champion immigrant-owned businesses as vital contributors to our local economy and work to expand their opportunities to grow. I will promote clear, factual information so communities understand their rights and available resources, while pushing back against misinformation and harmful narratives. Above all, I will continue to emphasize that immigrants are an essential part of our shared success and strengthen the fabric of our communities.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will support strong, equitable education across public and independent schools by focusing on shared goals: student success, teacher professional development, and accountability. This includes investing in safe facilities, modern resources, and competitive teacher pay; encouraging collaboration and best-practice sharing; and ensuring high academic standards while respecting each school's mission. I will advocate for and support efforts to expand access to specialized programs, strengthen career and technical pathways, and ensure families have clear information to make informed choices. A strong system embraces educational pluralism, where diverse models work together to improve outcomes.

Marc Korman

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

The three most important issues to me are education, transportation, and the environment, all through the lens of our economic success. Our schools are key to our local economy and quality of life and I will continue to work to invest in them while also tracking what is and is not working with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. For transportation, while all modes are important, I will continue my work to ensure Metro has the resources—and oversight—that it needs to thrive given its important to our transportation system, environment, and economy. And for our environment, I will continue to work towards our sustainability goals which can also drive our economy. All of this can contribute to our local economic health.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I sponsored legislation to expand our anti-bias training for school employees to school board members. We must continue these types of training, ongoing exchange, and engagement, and the unfortunate but necessary investment in security for our Jewish schools, houses of worship, and other locations.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

Other groups do not get to dictate who I do or do not work with.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

We must continue to make Maryland a welcoming and supportive place for immigrants, who are a huge contributor to our local economy and population. We should avoid making our state and local law enforcement immigration enforcement and, instead, devote our resources to programs for non-English learners, job training, and so forth.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

My priority is public education. However, I have supported targeted efforts to assist our independent schools like funding for the non-public textbook program and busing. I will continue to work in this fashion.

Sarah Wolek

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My top priority as a legislator is to our social fabric and fostering human well-being. Our communities are increasingly disconnected, and I'm committed to policies that create genuine connection and belonging. I've passed legislation to expand resources that allow our older residents to age in place with dignity and in community, give teachers and parents have tools to navigate the technology and social media products our children are using, and that support residents in community and neighborhood building efforts. Second, I'm focused on creating economic opportunity and development, which means building an ecosystem where entrepreneurs, small business owners, and workers can thrive. I've passed legislation requiring counties to report housing development data to the Department of Planning, giving legislators the most accurate picture of where and how to address our housing needs. This session, I'm pursuing legislation that expands capital access for small businesses, legislation that alleviates financial burden for nonprofits respectively, and legislation that makes work more accessible and inclusive for those Marylanders who cannot work full-time due to caregiving responsibilities, health, disability, or age. Third, I'm committed to protecting our most vulnerable communities. The principles of inclusion, access, and affordability must guide everything we

do. I've raised the property tax exemption for blind individuals, unchanged for 25 years, and secured funding to connect Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities to educational and employment opportunities. Government's fundamental role is to protect those who need us most and implement policies that enhance human flourishing for everyone.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

The rise in antisemitism and hatred in our communities is deeply disturbing. In my time knocking on doors across my district, I've heard too many stories from people who have been treated poorly because of who they are, their faith, and their community. There is no place for hate in our district and confronting it is a moral imperative. Legislation alone cannot solve hatred, but it can send a message about our values as a state. This session, I am proud to be bringing forward a bill to designate May as Jewish American Heritage Month in Maryland, a formal recognition of the profound contributions Jewish Americans have made and continue to make to our communities and our state. It is a small but meaningful step toward affirming that every person deserves to feel seen, valued, and safe. I have also cosponsored legislation that focused on providing teachers training on antisemitism and other forms of hate. As an appropriator I have successfully advocated for adequately funding security grants so that places like schools and synagogues can be protected. I was proud to join my District 16 colleagues in securing $240,000 for the Bender Jewish Community Center, $25,000 for the Alef Bet Montessori School and to name a few capital grants. These are not political statements; they are investments in our community. My constituents deserve places and institutions where they feel safe, supported, and at home, and I will always fight for that.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a Delegate, I pride myself in finding common ground and building strong working relationships with a diverse group of Marylanders. As such, I have successfully engaged with a multitude of organizations in our state who have opposing views on international matters so that we can better the lives of Marylanders. I personally support democracy at home and abroad and will happily work with organizations working to strengthen a democratic, safe, and stable Israel.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

The federal government's current approach to immigration is cruel and unlawful. Maryland's openness to immigrants is one of our core values and that must not change. In the 2026 legislative session, I voted to end 287(g) agreements that deputize local police as federal immigration enforcers, and I'll continue fighting federal overreach at every turn, including efforts to establish new detention centers in Maryland. In the 2025 legislative session I was proud to vote for legislation that protected immigrants from federal immigration actions at sensitive locations as well as legislation that improved safeguards for undocumented immigrants that were victims of crimes and helpful in the investigation and prosecution of criminal activity.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Education funding is a priority and I have worked to ensure that the Blueprint continues to be funded and is given time to be implemented in full. But funding alone isn't enough. Too many of our classrooms are overcrowded, students aren't getting enough time outdoors, and teachers are under enormous stress. To that end, I am bringing forward a bill this session that would make an accredited continuing education course on educator well-being and flourishing available to school personnel and administrators. Teachers who feel supported are more likely to stay in the classroom. I am also proud to have worked on a bill this session that limits the use of cell phones in public schools statewide so children can learn distraction free. Moreover, I am a big champion of outdoor learning and in my first two sessions sponsored bills that were focused on expanding out Green Schools program. I hope to do more work in this space in future sessions. Finally, I believe that we should be working diligently to provide children with the tools to manage their wellbeing and will continue to advance policy that prioritizes those efforts.

Teresa Saavedra Woorman

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Affordability is top of mind. I support policies that lower everyday costs—housing, health care, and energy—while protecting working families. Second is access to health care. As a Delegate sitting on the Health Committee, I'm focused on improving oversight of care facilities and expanding access so people can get timely, quality care. Third is protecting our democracy. I've championed expanding local public financing so more people can run for office without relying on big money, and I will continue working to strengthen fair and accessible elections.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism is real, rising, and unacceptable. I approach it the same way I approach all hate—by being clear that there is no place for it in our communities and backing that up with action. That includes supporting strong hate crime laws, ensuring schools and institutions take incidents seriously, and working with community leaders to promote education and understanding. I believe in showing up, listening, and responding when communities feel targeted. Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected, and I will continue to use my platform to speak out and act against hate in all its forms.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I believe in engaging with a wide range of community organizations, including Jewish organizations with diverse perspectives. I don't believe in drawing lines that shut out entire communities from conversation. My job is to represent all of my constituents and to listen, even when there are disagreements. I will continue to work with Jewish organizations, including those that support Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, while also engaging in thoughtful, respectful dialogue on complex issues. Refusing to engage does not move us forward—conversation does.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I grew up in Montgomery County as an undocumented immigrant. So yes. As someone who immigrated here as a child, this is personal. I've worked to expand access to education, protect families navigating complex systems, and remove outdated barriers in our laws—like restrictions that don't reflect how our communities actually live. I will continue fighting to make sure immigrants can access higher education, participate fully in civic life, and feel safe interacting with government. That also means making state services more accessible and ensuring policies reflect dignity, fairness, and opportunity for everyone who calls Maryland home.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

We need strong public schools and a healthy ecosystem of educational options. I support fully funding our public schools and making sure students graduate ready for college and careers. I've worked with Montgomery County Public Schools on legislation to better align curriculum and readiness standards with real-world expectations. At the same time, I respect the role independent schools play for many families. My focus is on ensuring all students—regardless of where they learn—have access to safe environments, strong academics, and opportunities to succeed.

District 16 - Republican

Ann Guthrie Hingston

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

I will advocate for Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Potomac residents and businesses and focus on issues that impact their livelihoods, families and neighborhoods. As a coalition builder, former Senior Executive Service administrator, Taxpayers League board member, I would focus on state legislation that makes the county more economically competitive and remove impediments that prevent effective county management. Examples: Provide MCPS a solely dedicated Inspector General, expand American Legion Bridge, I-270, I-495, remove bike lanes on major arteries, eliminate county's wholesale liquor monopoly, diversity energy sources, reform WSSC and Park and Planning, shared by Montgomery and Prince George's Counties for a century.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Polarization contributes to antisemitism which exists on the Left and Right. Conspiracy theories and negativity fester when we fail to engage on a human level with others of different religions, political party and socio-economic background. My focus would be on community engagement, safety, and educational curriculum that directly counters lies on social media. Antisemitism courses should sensitize faculty, staff and students about consequences of all hatred, especially Jewish hatred. Police are the first line of defense so train them well and place SRO's in public and independent schools. Protect places of worship.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I would ignore such pressure and push back on it explicitly, support IHRA and continue to support Israel. I was one of many who stood in solidarity against October 7 on the National Mall and if elected I would join the Jewish Caucus in the Maryland General Assembly. As a Catholic with Jewish family members, I know the importance of interreligious dialogue. I tuned in and enjoyed the JCRC's virtual discussion of 60th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's landmark document Nostra Aetate, "In Our Time" which was a good step in building stronger understanding between our communities.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Assimilation, education, safety. Assimilation is most important for the future of our country. I would support efforts to help immigrants learn about the benefits of freedom and responsibility available to them as US citizens. Provide civics education that showcases the immigrant story through generations and how America has prospered because of achievements by individuals - Jews, Blacks and migrants from throughout the world – who grasped opportunities provided here. Also, I would support increased efforts to protect immigrants in danger from criminals and gangs released into their communities.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I would provide families with more options because not every student learns in the same way and flourishes in the same environment. Some students need academic challenges and others need reading and math coaches, especially in low-income schools. MCPS needs a solely dedicated Inspector General to signal problems to the Board of Education and Superintendent before they require expensive litigation. In our county there are 27 Jewish and Catholic schools that accept low-income students on state funded BOOST scholarships. I would increase funding for BOOST and urge participation in the Education Freedom Scholarship tax credit program that benefits low-income families.

District 17 - Democratic

Julie Palakovich Carr

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) The biggest threat we currently face is President Trump, his administration, and his allies in Congress. As a state elected official, I know that we can't undo every bad federal action, but we have to fight back where we can. This session, I sponsored legislation to prevent additional state tax breaks to corporations because of the Big Ugly Bill (HR 1) and to maintain current protections for endangered species in spite of federal rollbacks. 2) I've been working to close corporate tax loopholes to make our tax code fairer and bring in the revenues the state needs for essential services. 3) Child care is unaffordable for too many families. I've sponsored legislation to make the state's scholarship program more sustainable and to give property tax credits to child care providers.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

During the eight years I've been a State Delegate, I've voted for and co-sponsored numerous bills—now laws—to combat antisemitism and bigotry. One new law provides grant funding to schools to support student field trips to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Jewish Museum of Maryland. This session, we're moving legislation to improve public transparency about the harassment or bullying of Jewish students and other demographic groups in public schools. We passed legislation to require police to receive training to recognize and respond to a hate crime. It's now a crime to display hate symbols, such as a swastika or noose, on another person's property. Additionally, we expanded the definition of hate crime to include acts that were motivated in whole or in part because of bias.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I have an open door policy in my office: all residents of my district, as well as local non-profits and stakeholders, are welcome to meet with me. I have a long history of meeting with Jewish organizations, including JCRC and Jews United for Justice, as well as attending their legislative advocacy events. I have also participated in the Holocaust remembrance 'Unto Every Person There Is a Name' video campaign for multiple years. I will continue these types of

involvement with the Jewish community and local Jewish organizations going forward.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

At a time when the federal government is attacking immigrants and U.S. citizens, it's more important than ever for the state government to step up to support our diverse community, including our immigrant neighbors. I've voted for and co-sponsored legislation to protect immigrants, including banning local law enforcement from coordinating with ICE and to try to prevent new ICE detention centers in Maryland. I also sponsored legislation—now law—to allow eligible immigrants to receive anti-poverty tax credits from the state. When I previously served on the Rockville City Council, I was the lead sponsor of the Trust Ordinance, which ensures that all residents feel comfortable calling 9-1-1 by barring local police from asking about immigration status.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I'm going to be very transparent and say that I am a believer in public school education. My son attends public school here in Montgomery County. Over the years, I've voted to increase investments in public schools to ensure an equitable education for all public school students, regardless of their socioeconomic status or zip code. That said, families should be free to chose a different education for their children, including private schools. Although I believe that taxpayer dollars should be focused on public education, I have supported the inclusion of independent schools in legislation I'm sponsoring to provide universal free school meals to all K-12 students in Maryland. Hungry kids should be fed no matter what school they attend.

Ryan Spiegel

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) Budget - On the Appropriations Committee, I work to fund important priorities, from education to the environment, and safety net programs while meeting our obligation to balance the budget. 2) Protecting Diverse Communities - I am committed to ensuring that our immigrant, LGBTQ+, minority, and other vulnerable communities are safe from hate and discrimination, whether it comes from the federal government or elsewhere. We are fortifying Maryland's civil rights laws and democratic institutions. 3) Investments for Infrastructure and Economic Development - I am committed to finding solutions to our transportation, energy, and other infrastructure needs, as well as the housing and utilities affordability crises, and to grow jobs and opportunity.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As a proud founding member of the Jewish Caucus, I have been outspoken about the need to confront the alarming rise of antisemitism and other forms of hate. I have strongly advocated for bills to improve anti-bias training for educators, Holocaust curricula in public schools, and protections for religious institutions. I support bills to add a Title VI coordinator at all schools, require public schools to report antisemitic bullying, prohibit blocking access to religious institutions, and proclaim Jewish American Heritage Month. I have also helped bring Holocaust survivors and hostage families to the State House and commemorated the 200th anniversary of Maryland's historic "Jew Bill," which enabled Jews to serve in public office.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I believe in the right of the Jewish People to self-determination through the existence of a free and secure Jewish nation in our ancestral homeland. I oppose legislation that singles out and penalizes Israel while ignoring the troubling actions of other countries or minimizing the horrific terrorism that has targeted Israel. Others are free to criticize the current leaders and military actions of the Israeli government. Indeed, I have done so myself. But it is wrong to blame the country and its people for those leaders and actions, and to oppose the very existence of Israel, the only democratic nation and the strongest American ally in the Middle East. I will work to defeat bills that seek to disinvest in Israel, undermine its right to exist, or penalize those who interact with Israel.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I am proud to represent one of the most diverse districts in America, with a large immigrant population. I supported the Maryland Values Act of 2025, which limits ICE access to sensitive areas like schools and hospitals, in addition to other legislation to protect immigrant communities. I also co-sponsored and/or voted for bills this year to ban 287(g) agreements with ICE, limit the construction and operation of immigrant detention centers, and restrict data sharing with ICE. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I also helped provide the authority and resources for our Maryland Attorney General to bring lawsuits challenging unlawful federal immigration actions, and I helped fund the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I attended a Jewish day school for K-8 and a Maryland public high school. I understand the importance of supporting public education while creating space for independent schools to thrive. I have been committed to funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future -- our K-12 public education reform -- and capital investments in local public schools. I have also supported the $10 million security grant for vulnerable institutions, as well as the separate Nonpublic School Health and Security Program. Last year, I also supported a pilot program in our budget to support transportation for nonpublic school students, and this year I voted for a package of bills that will improve and expand access to Maryland's Child Care Scholarship Program, giving more families access to preschool programs.

Christopher S. Reed

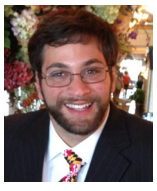
Did not submit a response.

Joe Vogel

Did not submit a response.

District 18 - Democratic

Aaron M Kaufman



What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

The three most important issues are ensuring that every child has a quality education which is why I will advocate for robust funding for Blueprint or Maryland future. I will continue to advocate for robust funding the social safety net in our state. I bring a unique perspective on this issue as a person with Cerebral Palsy. Another key priority is reducing energy for Marylanders. I will do this by supporting the Speaker Pena Melnyk comprehensive energy package.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism has no place in our society. I will fight it by continuing to push for robust security grants and, as a Jew, educating non Jews about Judaism, as the roots of antisemitism are partly based on myths and misconception.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

That is not an issue for me as my grandparents fought in the Hagenah and I work for a Jewish organization, serve on the Board of my local JCC and served on the Board of the Federation. Those groups know I will not succumb to the pressure.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I was a proud co-sponsor of legislation recently signed by Governor Moore to end 287g programs in Maryland and I voted for that. I also was proud to support legislation that allowed undocumented people to purchase health insurance through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. I will always stand with immigrant families who are being traumatized by ICE

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will ensure robust funding for public schools and robust security funding for private schools.

Emily Shetty

Did not submit a response.

Jared Solomon

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) Child Care: Because of bills I passed, MD had one of the largest increases in families getting subsidies for high quality child care. We have also lowered copays and raised income levels that qualify for support. As a dad/former teacher, I will always fight for kids. 2) Transportation Investment: With 9 Metro stations, 3 MARC stations, and proposed bus rapid transit lines serving my district, I'm a fierce advocate for transportation investments, which are critically important to our economy and environment. 3) Government Accountability: As House Chair of the Joint Audit Cmte, it's critical that our government works. In response to audits, this year I introduced and passed a five-bill package that will save money, improve state services, and keep vulnerable Marylanders out of harm's way.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As the founding House Co-Chair of the Maryland Legislative Jewish Caucus (MLJC), since the 2024 session I have helped to lead the charge against antisemitism in Annapolis, which is a primary reason why we formed the caucus. The MLJC has passed legislation to expand Holocaust education, protected synagogues and houses of worship with legislation and additional security investments, and passed anti-bullying legislation. I'm proud this year that we passed legislation I sponsored with Del. Wolek to officially designate May as Jewish American Heritage month and January as Muslim American Heritage Month. We also unveiled a plaque in the capitol rotunda this spring that recognizes the 200th anniversary of the passage of the "Jew Bill," which allowed Jews to hold public office in Maryland.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I'm proud that as Co-Chair of the MLJC we work with and support all types of Jewish organizations across the state that do incredible work. From child care to supporting and housing our seniors, to providing critical supports for people with disabilities, and providing food aid - our Maryland Jewish organizations are so important to our community. My support for those organizations will never change as long as I remain in office.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I was proud to cosponsor a bill banning 287(g) agreements, the Community Trust Act, and other immigration protection bills this session. As a member of the Latino Caucus and Co-Chair of the MJLC, it was critically important to me that the MJLC made supporting immigrants a top priority this year. Last session I co-lead and passed a bill preventing immigration enforcement in sensitive locations as well as a bill to improve the process for U-Visa applicants. In 2024 after working with a DREAMER who volunteers with the Wheaton Rescue Squad, I introduced and passed legislation to remove the citizenship requirement to be licensed as an EMT. In 2021, I helped ensure that our state's COVID relief package was available to all members of the community, regardless of immigration status.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

The MJLC has helped lead the push for enhanced security funding for schools, which we doubled to $10 million in this year and last year's budget. We will continue to fight for necessary infrastructure funding for all schools. I'm thrilled this year's budget included $12 million for a statewide literacy coaching program, which I have advocated for. As a former high school teacher, investments in education and our schools is and always will be a top priority for me.

Kate Stein

Did not submit a response.

District 19 - Democratic

Charlotte Crutchfield

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

During the past eight years it has been such an honor to represent the residents of D19. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the General Assembly to focus my efforts through support and favorable voting on issues around: 1). Affordability for Maryland residents to include but not limited to legislative support for a cost-effective environment where families can thrive; 2.) Protecting Maryland residents against President Trump's federal policy changes through legislative action such as redistricting and strengthened polices that safeguard immigrant communities from increased "ICE" arrests and interactions; and 3.) Ensuring through legislation that the state budget that is adopted reflects fiscal responsibility. Finally, I will continue to support reforming the criminal and juvenile justice system and defending civil rights through my leadership role, Chair of the Corrections Subcommittee in the Government, Labor and Elections Committee.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will confront all antisemitism and any other forms of hatred "head on". First, I will always unequivocally condemn antisemitism and any other forms of hatred. I have put my words into action by sponsoring legislation which is now Maryland Criminal Law § 10-309, a person who is the victim of a hate crime may bring a civil action to recover economic damages, noneconomic damages, treble damages, legal costs and courts may issue injunctive relief. Finally, I have and will continue to engage the community on these issues. Again, I have been involved in community conversations to discuss community concerns and strategy for resolution.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

Simply put, I will reject their point of view. I have never been in a situation where someone has pressured or forced me to go against my strong beliefs regarding nondiscrimination and inclusion, specifically everyone deserves respect, equal opportunity and safety.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I will continue to support legislation that is clear and concise towards safeguarding immigrant communities from unnecessary harassment, arrests, interactions and illegal acts targeted against them by "ICE". Most recently, I lead "floor debate" on HB1017, which prohibits the state or local government approval of private entity-operated immigration detention facility unless specifically zoned for such use.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I respect that families have choices about the education of their children. Therefore, I will support the funding of the "Blueprint for Maryland's Future" and continue to support "The BOOST" scholarship program at its current levels.

Sunil Dasgupta

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

D19 and Maryland residents are facing an affordability crisis, public education is at a crossroads, and we need to protect our communities. The state government has little capacity to lower grocery prices, but it does regulate electricity and gas rates, hospital and prescription drug costs, homeowners and auto insurance. I will advocate to keep the electricity capacity auction cap and work to create a robust data center regulatory regime that requires new generation, closed-loop water cooling, and preferential use of brownfield sites. I will work to retain the state's unique all-payer system for hospital payments. Housing policy reform has been slow-moving due to political disagreement between renter advocates and developers. I will advocate to bring those groups together using a rent stabilization trigger mechanism that ties to upzoning and permitting reform. Also, I will work to remove burdens for seniors wanting to age in place. In public education, we are struggling to get learning improvement and funding questions loom for the Blueprint law. I will advocate to fully fund the Blueprint as well as work to update the law to address student absenteeism, engagement, and school climate. To protect our communities, we need to push back against ICE and the Trump Administration, we need to enforce the law against harassment and bullying especially in schools, and work on reducing traffic violence. But to do this, we will need to focus on public welfare over factional fights, take politics seriously rather than pretend we stand above the fray, and match top tax rates to our collective ambitions. That's why I am running to make government work for the 99 percent.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

If elected, I will speak out against all forms of hatred, including antisemitism and Islamophobia. There is legitimate constitutional debate on what constitutes hate speech, but harassment, bullying, and vandalism are currently prohibited by law. I will support legislation as necessary to give law enforcement the tools to ensure public safety and public welfare for all D19 and all Maryland residents. This includes Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, disabled, neurodiverse, LGBTQ+, and nonreligious residents and groups in my community and in the state. I would like to see vastly better enforcement of harassment and bullying, especially in our schools where the problem is all-too rampant. In the long-term, education brings the hope of healing hatred and I will support curricular reform to help.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

We need a large tent to address the many issues we face in Maryland – and, of course, that means not excluding community groups based on their views about how to address the difficult issues in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. If elected, I will be open to learning from and working with any resident or group from D19 and Maryland, including Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, disabled, neurodiverse, LGBTQ+, and nonreligious As a college faculty member, I have decades of experience sorting through competing narratives and facts, and I have spent the last five years producing a state and local news podcast where we discuss political differences in a civil manner. If confronted with pressure, I will remain engaged, level-headed, and fact driven. Sadly, this pressure shows up generationally in our families. As an immigrant married to a Jewish woman and with three children being raised in the Jewish tradition (we are members of Temple Emanuel), our family is no exception. I am very concerned about how the next generation of Jews in America—the vast majority from the Reform tradition—is dealing with the fallout of the conflict and I would work to help heal the generational divide.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I am a first-generation immigrant and now I always carry my passport with me. My children carry their papers in their backpacks. Maryland remains a welcoming state, and we must act now to deny ICE/CBP warrantless access and public assault. I have been following ICE actions closely for my podcast and, in my personal capacity, participate in immigrant protection groups. I know that state and local agencies are institutionally and legally limited, but the government can and should enable civic mutual aid organizations, especially to help stranded children. Long-term, immigrants need responsive public education, affordable housing and healthcare, and safe streets. If elected, I will pursue legislation in the General Assembly to ensure that all our neighbors, immigrants and citizens alike, that we live in safety, with affordable healthcare and housing, and with dignity.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Religious minorities have a constitutional right to run their own schools and I support that right. The state has a responsibility in its own constitution to enforce education quality. The danger comes from the government using public resources as a tool to demand compliance from private schools that religious minorities might object to. This is a slippery slope and therefore I advocate clean lines between public and private education institutions. Definitionally, all residents, and by extension schools, use public resources like police, emergency response, sewer, and water. We need to be mindful of more specific funding arrangements. For example, should the government use its funding power to insist on Title IX-type support for girls in an Islamic school that does not see it as culturally or religiously appropriate? Could the government use its funding power to require more time for math education at the cost of religious study? The Founding Fathers articulated the establishment clause to keep the state out of religious practice. Setting distinct lines between public and non-public funding protects all schools and enables clear choices for families choosing between public and religious education.

Sebastian Johnson

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) Affordability: I will focus on reducing housing and health care costs. I support legislation to encourage more affordable housing development near transit, reduce red tape, and reform outdated zoning laws. I also support rent stabilization and good cause eviction to protect tenants and promote housing stability for working families. I will continue Del. Cullison's advocacy for prescription drug pricing reform through MD's first in the nation Prescription Drug Affordability Board, which I supported as a grantmaker at Arnold Ventures. The legislature is currently considering SB 987, which would end tax breaks on advertising for pharmaceutical companies and use the savings to extend ACA subsidies for Marylanders. This is a bill I fully support, and I will work with advocates in Annapolis to promote its passage. 2) Community Safety: I will push for common-sense reforms that keep our communities safe and redirect public dollars toward community violence intervention and alternatives to incarceration. I support Gov. Moore's investment in public-private efforts with philanthropies, like ENOUGH and the Safer Stronger Together Initiative, that focus on prevention, economic development, and improving service delivery for vulnerable children and families. I will also prioritize road and pedestrian safety, a major concern for D-19 given the major arterials that crisscross our district. 3) Sustainable Energy: I will support legislation to speed our transition to renewable energy while keeping costs down for consumers. Factors driving the rise in utility costs in Maryland include a lack of competition in the consumer electricity marketplace, increased energy demand from data centers, and red tape holding up new renewable energy projects. I support the Utility RELIEF Act, which will help to reduce electric bills in the short term by addressing these factors. The state should expedite its approval process and pressure PJM (the entity that manages our grid) to streamline approval for new renewable projects. I will also fight the construction of new data centers that generate air and noise pollution and drive up rates for residents.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, misogyny, racism, and other forms of hatred have no place in our community. I have been deeply saddened to witness the rise in antisemitism in our community. There is no justification for incitement to violence and hate. As an elected leader, I will support state funding for the Protecting Against Hate Crimes (PAHC) program and the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) Hate Crimes Grant. I will also support public education campaigns to combat antisemitism and other forms of hatred, as well as to foster dialogue across differences. I will work with the community and religious leaders to engage in ongoing, dedicated education and anti-Semitism awareness.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

The most important obligation of an elected official is to meet with and listen to their constituents. I would never sign any pledge that asked me not to work with a group based on their sincerely held beliefs on any topic. I believe that neighbors and advocacy groups can disagree on issues in good faith without shutting down debate or demonizing their opposition. Just the opposite – dialogue is the bedrock of democratic governance and is essential to finding the right solutions to the problems we face.

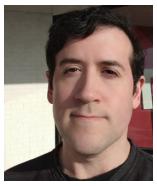
How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Immigrant rights are under assault by the Trump Administration. All of our neighbors deserve the same protection of their civil liberties and access to economic opportunity. I support legislation passed this session that prohibits local law enforcement from working with ICE. I also support legislation to prohibit face coverings for all law enforcement, and to fund legal representation for poor defendants in immigration court. Economic policies that I support include rent stabilization, good cause eviction, and strengthening workplace safety, which will particularly benefit immigrant communities. And I pledge to always listen deeply and intently to the concerns of advocates for the immigrant community.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

As a former teacher, I will be a strong supporter of our schools. I will fight to fully fund the Blueprint for MD's Future. We need to expand the number of community schools, increase collaborative time for teachers, and ensure a living wage for our education support professionals. I will also fight to automatically enroll all qualified students (as determined by state testing) in advanced coursework, and to expand career pathways and apprenticeship programs in our high schools.

Gabriel Sorrel



What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

I am focused on building up state institutions in wake of the Republican dismantling of the federal government, countering the growing threat of White Supremacist ideology, and tackling affordability and climate change through a large investment in solar power. I will aim to hire former federal workers in the healthcare and environments fields, many of whom already live in our state, and charge our state agencies with continuing important monitoring that was previously handled by the CDC and EPA. I would call for a state terrorism task force with a focus on tracking White Supremacist/neo-Nazi networks in state and online. Finally, I will propose devoting 1% of the state's land to solar power generation while issuing bonds to greatly accelerate energy infrastructure growth.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

By creating a state task force dedicated to monitoring antisemitism and other strains of White Supremacy, both within the MDV region and crucially on the Internet, so we have a better understanding of the prevalence of bigotry within our society but also who is spreading it and who is profiting from it. I will the promote my belief that speech which "others" people, espouses hierarchies based on bodily characteristics, or otherwise opposes multiculturalism is inherently hostile to the free speech and safety of all people and not deserving of legal protection. I would also call for routine background checks of law enforcement officers to ensure they are not being infiltrated by extremist ideology.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will do my best to communicate with respect and sympathy regarding Middle-East conflicts, but emphasize that we cannot afford division at home in light of increasing domestic extremism which very much benefits from greater tension between American minorities. And while I understand the desire for a way to feel like one is making a difference in geopolitical politics, such as by divesting from particular organizations, I believe such efforts are ultimately hurting ordinary people but not changing the behavior of world leaders with the actual power.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I support the efforts of Democrats in the Maryland General Assembly to ensure local law enforcers are not aiding Trump's draconian anti-immigrant policies, and will go further by attempting to dismantle the surveillance networks which are often deployed by individuals and corporations but end up being used by the federal government to track innocent people. Further, I will call for the state to quickly pay for damages caused by federal officers and then sue the government for compensation, so individuals are not left with painful economic burdens while legal battles are fought.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will call for expanding pre-K education to all people in Maryland regardless of income levels.

The educational benefits are pretty well studied, but perhaps more importantly this will alleviate much of the financial burden of raising children as parents will no longer need to pay for expensive daycare. I will also support the union rights of teachers and educational support staff so they can fully advocate for safe and healthy schools.

Vaughn Stewart

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Housing, protecting democracy, and immigrant rights are my three top priorities. On housing, I created the Community Schools Rental Assistance Fund and the Housing Innovation Fund, sponsored the Tenant Safety Act, and am pushing a land value tax around transit stations to spur affordable development. On democracy, I voted for Maryland's congressional redistricting bill to counter Republican gerrymandering, and I will keep fighting against any effort to suppress votes or concentrate power. On immigration, I sponsored the Dignity Not Detention Act, which shut down Maryland's three ICE jails, and HB1018 to set minimum detention standards. I am proud the legislature ended the 287g program. These three priorities reflect values shared deeply by the Jewish community: the obligation to welcome the stranger, to build just communities, and to protect democracy as the foundation of Jewish security in America.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism is a present and growing threat, and I take it with absolute seriousness. Hatred of Jewish people, whether it comes from the far right wrapped in white nationalism or from the left dressed up as political criticism, is antisemitism, and I will call it out by name. I support robust security funding for Jewish institutions, strong Holocaust education requirements in our public schools, and the vital work of the JCRC of Greater Washington. I also believe confronting hatred requires building relationships across communities before crises occur. Antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, and anti-immigrant hatred all draw from the same poisoned well. Fighting one means fighting all of them.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will not yield to that pressure. I did not seek the endorsement of the group whose questionnaire raised this issue, and I do not share its position. The JCRC, the Jewish Federation, and the Jewish institutions of District 19 are valued partners in my work, and I will continue working with them. I believe in Israel's right to exist as a Jewish, democratic state. I also believe that position is entirely compatible with advocating for Palestinian civilian life and hoping for a just peace. Elected officials who allow political pressure to sever relationships with the organized Jewish community are not acting in solidarity with anyone. They are abandoning their constituents.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

My record on immigration is one of the things I am most proud of. I was the primary sponsor of the Dignity Not Detention Act, which shut down Maryland's three ICE jails. I sponsored HB1018 to set minimum health and safety standards for detention facilities. I am proud the legislature ended the 287g program. The Jewish community understands in its bones why this work matters. The history of Jewish refugees turned away at borders is not distant history for many families in District 19. That history is why I believe Maryland must be a place where immigrants are treated with dignity, their families kept whole, and their labor respected. I will keep fighting for that.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Strong public schools are essential, and I will fight to fully protect Blueprint funding. But independent schools, including Jewish day schools, deserve real state support for services that benefit all children. Maryland already provides nonpublic schools with textbooks, technology, security grants, and health services. I support expanding all of those, especially security funding given the alarming rise in antisemitism. I have also championed using excess MCPS buses to serve nonpublic school students during off-peak hours, reducing congestion and costs for families. Every child in Maryland deserves these basic supports regardless of where they are educated.

Alec Stone

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Healthcare: affordable and accessible health care should be a right not a privilege. Skyrocketing insurance premiums, exorbitant co-pays, and outrageous prescription medications are destroying lives, making it impossible for healthcare providers to treat people. The state must help curtail these costs on families and increase support for Medicaid, Disability Determination Services (DDS), and the Maryland Health Connection (ACA). Families are struggling under the weight of healthcare costs, even with insurance. Much more so for those without any safety net. It's wrong. (2) Affordability and Quality of Life: The price of gas, groceries, and gadgets are forcing middle class Americans to make some very real choices in how we spend our precious dollars. Maryland must incentivize companies to locate in the state, with higher paying jobs. Manufacturing plants with union support should build products in Maryland. More investment in the 270-biotech corridor is necessary to spur innovation in science and medical discoveries for a better quality of life. We should enable higher education to be nimble in career choices and professional degrees for an ever-changing economy would demonstrate commitment to a lasting economic future. Quality of life includes transparency in government and making people's lives easier, not harder. That means soliciting genuine community input before making changes that impact their daily lives, whether that is transportation, zoning or similar matters. The state can play an important role in holding localities accountable to ensure that their residents are heard and count as part of the decision-making process. (3) Defending democracy: Maryland must stand strong in a national onslaught to curtail individual rights and freedoms. There are no kings here. Mail-in ballots will remain a viable state option for free elections. The press will be allowed in the halls of power for sunshine to be a disinfectant. Discrimination will not be tolerated, and certainly not legalized, we will stand against rampant antisemitism. Women will continue to have access to healthcare and the right to choose what they do with their bodies. People will be allowed to marry whomever they choose. And ICE will not be allowed to operate as armed, masked avengers on innocent Americans.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Some antisemitism is based on ignorance, and the work so many groups do to educate people about all forms of hatred—bigotry, racism, misogynism, homophobia, Islamophobia—and discrimination is still necessary. Proactive early educational programming, community service and events that recognize the unique contributions of each of our communities are important and must continue. And our leaders' voices must be heard – loudly and strongly. Governor Moore deserves praise for his leadership in vocally supporting the Jewish community and decrying antisemitism. That said, the increase in antisemitism we've experienced over the past three years—particularly in Maryland–has been astonishing and heartbreaking. I see and experience the increased fear and vigilance at my synagogue and community institutions. Hate-motivated violence, if allowed to grow unchecked, breeds fear disproportionately in populations that already feel deep vulnerability. We need to demand that our elected representatives consistently denounce antisemitism from wherever it appears–left or right. And we need to be clear that violence motivated by hate will be investigated and prosecuted as among law enforcement's highest priorities.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a proud Zionist, I do not run from support for the State of Israel. I firmly believe in an ultimate goal of two states, Israeli and Palestinian, living side by side in peace. That said, today, Israel is the only democracy in that region of the world, with free elections, a free press, an accepted LGBTQ+ community, the right to gather and protest, and equal rights and participation for women and minorities. Israel's Arab citizens hold positions of power on the Supreme Court, in the Knesset (Parliament) and military, and serve as doctors, lawyers and other professionals. That is a story that needs to be told more consistently, to combat disinformation and hate. More relevant to my work as a legislator, Maryland's partnership with the State of Israel has yielded significant tangible economic dividends. I support the Maryland Israel Development Corporation, not only because I support Israel, but because I support Maryland, and the MIDC brings jobs and opportunity here. I will never support BDS. Jewish organizations engaged in social services and advocacy would have my ear and likely my support, as their purposes resonate with my own philosophy of Tikkun Olam—healing the world.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Nearly all of us were or are immigrants to the United States. Communities are better because of immigrants, both economically and culturally. I will work to ensure that the state system is supportive of the immigrant community, that there are no mass deportations or unlawful, inhumane, or unconstitutional detention centers in Maryland. We must ensure that families are not separated through any process. First, ICE out. What happened in Minneapolis is unacceptable and will not happen in Maryland. Second, pathways to citizenship should be encouraged, helping to integrate, not exclude, the immigrant community. And third, we should vocally accept and celebrate the uniqueness of all immigrant communities, as they add so very much value to the American tapestry. There is a great slogan that encapsulates a wonderful, positive message: "Build a longer table, not a higher wall."

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

The Maryland state Constitution calls for a "thorough and efficient system of free public schools," rightly so. I am unalterably committed to a strong, fully funded public school system. At the same time, programs that provide support for independent schools increasingly have proven effective in offering parents additional options without harming public schools. They are generally funded from different sources, not the education budget. Parents send their children to independent schools for a number of reasons, and most of those parents are not wealthy. Maryland has a long history of creating positive, strong outcomes-oriented programs that provide these schools with secular educational textbooks, technology, and transportation. At no point does the state endorse or fund any independent school's mission, outside of traditional education. I will continue to support the best education for all Maryland students, in the many forms that currently exist to raise all children and teens to their own potential.

Christa Tichy

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

I believe we need a new voice. Nationally, my party has forgotten about working people, their determination, and the struggles they face. This has led to disastrous consequences for those with less of a voice and I won't let that happen in Maryland. Investment into classrooms and vocational education/skilled trades. Top among our educational priorities needs to be strong investment into vocational education at the secondary level. We should be creating real pipelines to apprenticeship training and skilled middle class jobs for students not going to four year colleges. Above all, my goal is ensure the Blueprint recognizes the value of all educators. I will use my seat to ensure our schools are adequately staffed, and to monitor its implementation and evolution so the Blueprint's objectives are truly met. Increase affordable housing and new construction. Once these folks are out in the workforce, we need effective solutions to incentivize development of homes skilled workers can afford. Affording quality housing and/or homeownership is key to the American Dream. Stable housing and the opportunity for long term investment is good for everyone, not just those with means to afford the limited and expensive housing stock we have now. Without housing stability, it's harder to support a family, contribute to the economy, or start a business. Support small businesses and working families. I believe entrepreneurship should be obtainable for anyone willing to work hard enough. Programs that assist in access to capital, targeted tax incentives, streamlined regulation and permitting are all ways we can help lift up small businesses throughout our State. Large corporations take advantage of these types of incentives all the time because the systems are in place. We need to incentivize and lift up small businesses as well. Above all, state taxes should never disproportionately affect small businesses.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Head on. There's no place for discrimination or hatred in my universe. Practically and preemptively, I would be proud to use my voice and legislative efforts to back JCRC's efforts to advocate, educate and activate our D-19 community against any discriminatory messaging, activity or hate crimes.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

By not legitimizing that kind of pressure and refusing to engage with organized efforts that seek to discredit or exclude Jewish organizations. I'll continue to engage with Jewish organizations—as I would any community—in good faith and with the belief that peace and acceptance are essential to making the world better. And I will always loudly support Israel's right to exist in peace and security alongside its neighbors.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

If I was in the House today, I would have voted for SB245/HB444, banning all 287(g) agreements at the state and local level. This approach protects civil liberties and promotes community trust without compromising public safety. Additionally, I support community efforts that invest in language access, workforce opportunity, education, and trust in public institutions — allowing immigrants to participate fully in community life regardless of status. Maryland already promotes immigrant integration through ESOL programs, workforce pathways like EARN Maryland, language access in public services, legal support clinics, and anti-discrimination enforcement. I will always vote to fight to keep these programs, or the grants that support them, fully funded.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Funding for Maryland's Blueprint must remain the state's top priority. While the 2025 compromise wasn't perfect, it restored $2 billion in proposed cuts. I will fight to maintain current funding levels—especially for students most in need—and ensure these kinds of compromises don't become a moving target as we continue to grapple with our budget deficit. I do not support any MD taxpayer funding being used for scholarships for private school tuition. I will work to end the BOOST program even if it has become a popular tool for low income families. I do support capital funding/Legislative Bond Initiatives limited to the safety, security and pre-k needs of independent and private schools, as long as these funds are available to all private schools, secular or nonsecular. Some states offer tax incentives for businesses that support scholarship funds. I'm open to learning more about those models, but I would need to study them carefully. My priority is funding our public school system, so I would not want to divert resources from that or to undermine our commitment to fully funding public education.

District 20 – Democratic

Lorig Charkoudian
Did not submit a response and candidate unopposed.

David Moon
Did not submit a response and candidate unopposed.

Jheanelle K. Wilkins
Did not submit a response and candidate unopposed.

District 39 – Democratic

Gabriel Acevero
Did not submit a response.

George Lluberes

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Safe, fully funded, and transparent public schools. I will fight for accountability in school spending, multilingual transparency for families, and targeted investment in high-poverty schools. This includes stabilizing the childcare scholarship fund so that working parents have reliable care that supports family stability. 2. Affordable housing and cost-of-living relief for working families. I will look to modernize housing affordability standards to reflect 2026 realities, strengthen renter protections, and ensure that state-county programs like PILOT agreements still support community needs, like school repairs. I'll also pursue a working families vehicle registration credit to provide relief for working families who rely on their vehicles to work, drive their kids to school, and simply live their lives. 3. Immigrant rights and access. Immigrant workers are essential to Maryland, and they deserve equal access to services, legal protections, and language justice. I will defend due process, fight to expand access to counsel in immigration proceedings, and ensure state agencies treat every worker with fairness and dignity.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

My campaign has three major pillars: Access, Accountability, and Action. In this case, Access to me means we ensuring that people have avenues to report hate crimes and receive the support they need. Accountability means ensuring that we enforce hate crimes and that those who commit these acts are prosecuted under the full extent of the law . Lastly, Action means ensuring that people receive the right kind of education to prevent hate crimes from taking place in the first place. This is all about equal justice, so we address the hatred before it even starts.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I approach these issues as a problem-solver, not through labels. I will work with Jewish organizations and any community partner committed to open dialogue and democratic values. In a time when politics are so polarized, we need to elevate the conversations by engaging across perspectives and focusing on solutions that strengthen our communities and expand opportunity for all of our members.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Immigrant rights and equal justice is a key priority for my campaign. Along with the decision to oppose 287(g) agreements, I would also support the Community Trust and Data Privacy Acts. Specifically, I would also fight for greater access to qualified defense lawyers for immigration proceedings. In the past, though the idea of qualified defense for immigration proceedings (HB 114) was generally supported in the Assembly, a lack of sustainable funding became its biggest obstacle. I believe we can increase the costs of failure to pay rent filings, which make up most of the filings in Maryland, to provide funding support for this program. A small increase in court filing fees could help to ensure we provide a basic right and an essential part of the concept of equal justice.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I commit to strengthening our public education system by fully funding and implementing the Blueprint to ensure that our schools receive the resources they need. I also commit to ensuring that all Marylanders have access to information in their own language to help them become active participants in their child's education. Regarding independent schools, any public funding must come with clear accountability standards to ensure that all students are safe, that they can reach their maximum potential, and that they are not discriminated against.

Lesley J. Lopez

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Right now, our biggest priorities are maintaining our stability despite the recklessness of the federal government, protecting our neighbors from ICE, and fighting the rising costs of living. Amplifying the voices of my constituents, I've partnered with community leaders to introduce legislation in each of those areas in the past session. From the M.E.L.T. ICE that takes on businesses that aid in unlawful detentions, to ensuring all pregnant patients get proper treatment in emergency rooms through EMTALA, and supporting major utility reforms, I've been on the front lines of these fights and would be honored to continue fighting.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As someone who is proud to represent one of the most diverse districts in America, confronting hate has been a constant in my work in Annapolis and in our community. One of the first bills I ever passed was to require our state police to be trained on identifying and record hate crimes. One lesson I've learned is that our work should always be driven and informed by the folks who are experiencing the injustice. We must center their voices as we determine what changes must occur and what resources they need. By centering their perspectives, we show respect and can truly address the issues at hand.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

Part of being in elected office is being on the receiving end of pressure, and the only way to withstand external pressure to be firmly rooted in your values and beliefs. I stand with my Jewish neighbors and understand that they are a diverse community with many different perspectives. Opposing an entire group or country does not align with my values.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Through direct services and also as a lawmaker. Part of my job as delegate has been to connect our constituents with local resources, such as legal aid, CASA representatives or food banks. Introducing bills and supporting my colleagues is another way. I am proud to say I voted in favor of every immigrant-supportive bill that was in front of me this session, in addition to introducing the M.E.L.T. ICE Act this session myself.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Though I am supporter of our public schools and an MCPS parent myself, every child in our community deserves a quality education where high standards are applied. That means clear non-discrimination policies, services for students with disabilities, and protections for vulnerable kids. Every educator deserves to work in an environment where they are treated professionally too. I also understand that families make choices about their children's school that reflect real needs, and lawmakers need to respect those choices.

Greg Wims

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Education: As a former Head Start teacher, I know education is the cornerstone of thriving communities. I'll fight for adequate school funding and expanded career readiness programs. Economic Opportunity: Economic prosperity should be within reach for every Marylander. Coming from a working-class, union family, I'll focus on creating pathways to well-paying jobs and ensuring fair compensation for workers. Housing: I grew up in poverty without running water or electricity — I know firsthand how unstable housing affects families. I support transit-oriented development to expand opportunity for commuters, and I'll continue partnering with County leaders to secure mixed-income housing that includes affordable options for low-income families across Maryland.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I take all forms of hatred seriously because I lived through and experienced racial segregation first hand. No one, regardless of background, religion, or race should face that in our community. If there are opportunities, I will speak up against antisemitism and stand in solidarity with the Jewish community. My work as the past President of the Montgomery County NAACP was rooted in Dr. King's belief that lasting change comes from building allyships. As a member of the Jewish Caucus, I'll work with colleagues to confront antisemitism head-on—especially in our schools and places of worship—and support legislation that addresses antisemitic behavior directly.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

My commitment to the Jewish community is not conditional. I have built relationships with Jewish organizations, leaders, and families over many years of public service—and those relationships are grounded in mutual respect, shared values, and a genuine commitment to community. My approach to public service has always been rooted in listening—to every voice, every perspective, every community in our district and beyond. I will not allow outside pressure to dictate which communities I engage with. I also believe honest dialogue matters. When perspectives differ, my commitment is to listen with respect, seek common ground where it exists, and remain clear about my values.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

My working-class background drives my commitment to ensuring immigrants and other marginalized communities have access to opportunities. With District 39's diverse population in mind, I've passed legislation focused on education, economic justice, public safety, and consumer protection. I've partnered with organizations like CASA in Action to pass HB 325, allowing language students to take the full GED exam in Spanish and requiring the state to study the feasibility of making the GED available in other languages. I'll keep fighting for worker benefits, educational pathways, fair wages, affordable housing, and healthcare access because these are issues our immigrant communities depend on. I will remain a member of the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

As a proud product of MCPS, and a candidate endorsed by the Maryland State Education Association and SEIU Local 500, I support fully funding the Blueprint for Maryland to enhance our public schools. I will continue to examine ways to fully meet the needs of students and staff, particularly those in early education and education support roles. As for independent schools, we need to make sure they adhere to policies regarding antidiscrimination, student achievement standards, school safety and discipline standards, certified teachers, employee protections, and student assessments. As a Ways & Means Committee member, I am focused on exploring avenues to strengthen schools so they can provide a world-class education to all students, regardless of background or socioeconomic status.

Robert T. Wu

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Broadly speaking, my focus in Annapolis would be rooted in the same advocacy I have brought to the Gaithersburg community for the past decade serving on the Gaithersburg City Council: building and supporting a diverse and vibrant community, focusing on innovative education and workforce/economic development from K-12 and beyond to attracting and growing businesses in our community, and finally focusing on a personal passion of mine, namely environmentalism and sustainability. What will be different is the focus and approach in Annapolis, but my core beliefs and interests will remain the same. Whether it be encouraging more affordable housing, safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists, or making sure everyone feels safe regardless of where they are from or what they look like, all are necessary elements of a diverse and vibrant community. I support free and public education and the initiatives brought about by the blue print, but there must also be focus on bringing jobs to Maryland so that all those wonderful educated students have jobs when they graduate. I have a particular focus on technology jobs, and I think Maryland can do a much better job growing and attracting great businesses within our state. Finally, Maryland should set the standard for sustainability and environmentalism, from growing our green spaces, investing in green energy and green technologies, to protecting our vulnerable ecosystems, such as the Chesapeake Bay.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Hate has no home in Maryland, and I will support legislation and funding that addresses hate and its impacts, whether it be antisemitism impacting our Jewish communities, hate against Asians and Asian Americans, or our Muslim communities to name a few. This will be continuation of my work on the Gaithersburg Council where my colleagues and I have not only spoken out against hate incidents in our community, but put resources behind those sentiments, including police resources to ensure the safety of our Jewish congregation at Shaare Torah. It will be no different working with our diverse communities from Annapolis and in District 39.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I believe that Israel has a right to exist in peace and security with its neighbors. I also firmly believe that my role as a community leader is to listen to and work on behalf of my entire diverse constituency. That includes listening to the spectrum of ideas and sentiments expressed by everyone who cares to share them. It also means that I will not avoid working with any constituency or community. No pressure will change my belief in this regard. I keep an open mind, informed by my beliefs and experiences.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the most diverse small city in America, the immigrant community stands at the core of the City of Gaithersburg, and I have spent the last decade working to engage with and support our immigrant communities. From ensuring services are available to all residents regardless of where they are from or what their status is, to meeting our residents where they are and in the language that they are comfortable with, it is important to me that everyone feels welcome in our community. I will continue that focus in Annapolis, working with my fellow community leaders to ensure that Montgomery County remains a welcoming place for everyone.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

First and foremost, I will support robust funding for our public schools through the Blue Print and other initiatives. We need to invest in our education system to ensure our students receive the education they deserve and need to succeed. One of the first initiatives I worked on in Gaithersburg was to help bring an innovative English/Spanish dual language immersion program to Brown Station Elementary School, a school with high FARMS and ESL, that has been uplifted by the program. I have also advocated with my colleagues for resources and capacity within the City to better serve our residents, and to bring STEM education to our schools. Education will be a focus of mine in Annapolis as the State of Maryland needs strong public education to support workforce development which itself helps attract and grow employment within the State.

Candidates for Montgomery County Executive - Democratic:

Mithun Banerjee

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) Provide Free Childcare by increasing Tax on Individuals Earning $1Million+ per year by working with State Legislators by enabling Legislation 2) Provide Free Universal Pre-K by increasing Tax on Business Profiting $1Million+ per year by working with State Legislators by enabling Legislation 3) Freeze Property Taxes for Properties Worth <$1 Million & maintain a Balanced Budget by increasing Taxes to Houses worth more than $1 Million. 4) Provide Legal Support to Stop illegal Deportation without Due Process 5) Once elected, I volunteer to take $120K as salary as County Executive instead of current salary ~232K & request all my fellow County & MCPS Employees to volunteer not to take more than $130K & all the savings will be used in MCPS Budget 6) Provide Higher Homeowners Tax Credits to Seniors, Special Needs & Low Income Households

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

My name is Mithun Banerjee, born in India & Legally Migrated to United States around quarter of a Century. I faced Racism & Discrimination during my stay here & even as a Candidate Running for County Executive, I received several hateful attacks which are Racist & Discriminatory. For example, I was told by self-proclaimed media person that I was not born in United States so I am an outsider even though I am a US Citizen. I was attacked by stating that I must go back to the Country that I came from even though I am a US Citizen. This is the major problem of our Society against Immigrant Community, People of Color, Minorities & People who Practice other Religions. In order to stop the hates, we must educate people & let them know that United States Constitution applies equally to all Citizens & People has a Constitution Rights as Freedom of Practice & I will take Strong Lawful Actions who will violate the US Constitution & spread Hates in the Communities.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As an Indian American Immigrant, I know the hate in our Society that exists. As a County Executive, I will work closely with Jewish Community & also will work hard to make sure that no one hates Jewish Community because they are Jewish. I strongly believe that Jewish Community must have equal Rights to coexist & live in this Country Freely. I will be their Champion to protect them so that the hates are reduced. I will also make Community Events to invite all Community Representatives so that we have Harmony & Peace in our Society rather than Hatred to one another including against the Jewish Community & Israel. I will also make sure that No Hatred is spread to Jewish Communities & people who does will be prosecuted to the Fullest Extent of Laws.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As a only Immigrant Candidate Running for County Executive Race, I suggest the followings but not limited to 1) Create Small Business-Friendly environment by cutting Red Tape for Business 2) Create Marketplace for Interested Small Businesses in Montgomery County Website by vetting process by County, include them in County Contracts by public bidding process & send email blasts to County Residents with their details 3) Provide Legal Support to Stop illegal Deportation without Due Process 4) Provide Free Metro Bus Passes, Free Toll Passes & Free Parking Passes to Students, Special Needs & Low Income Household 5) Reduce Crime, allow Graduate Students to join as Police-Intern to fill Vacancy 6) Provide Affordable Housing by Public-Private Partnership & Address Housing Issue 7) Freeze Property Taxes for Properties Worth <$1 Million & maintain a Balanced Budget 8) Provide Affordable Healthcare Assistance & Support Women Rights to Choose

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

1) Once elected, I volunteer to take $120K as salary as County Executive instead of current salary ~232K & request all my fellow County & MCPS Employees to volunteer not to take more than $130K & all the savings will be used in MCPS Budget 2) Any Full Time Service Employees & Educators from Montgomery County & MCPS should get no less than $60K & $80K per year with Healthcare & Pension Benefits & any Part Time Service Employees & Educators from Montgomery County & MCPS should get no less than $30K & $40K per year with Healthcare Benefits 3) Provide Free Childcare by increasing Tax on Individuals Earning $1Million+ per year by working with State Legislators by enabling Legislation 4) Provide Free Universal Pre-K by increasing Tax on Business Profiting $1Million+ per year by working with State Legislators by enabling Legislation 5) Make Montgomery Community College Tuition Free for all Students

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Once Elected as a County Executive, I will provide Free County Office Spaces to the Non Profit Organizations where they can have a Permanent Roof without any worries of Funding/Grant & Operate by just paying Maintenance & Utilities, without paying any Rent. I will host Community Events in 7 Montgomery County Districts on regular basis where we will invite all Non-Profit Organizations to come & present their work to the Residents of the Montgomery County. I also saw several wasteful spending happening from our Taxpayers Money. Hence, I will identity the Non Profit Organizations that are doing a great job for the People & fund them & also identify the Non Profit Organizations that are not doing a good job for the People & defund them. I will create more transparency to our Taxpayers & show the Public Funds flowing to Non-Profit Organizations & showcase the work been done by the Non-Profit Organizations for the betterment of the Society by that Fund.

Andrew Friedson

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My top priorities are centered on making Montgomery County safe, affordable, and inclusive for all residents. Accelerating Economic Growth and Competitiveness: Our community's ability to fund essential services depends on a thriving private sector. I will focus on making Montgomery County the best place in the region to start and grow a business by streamlining the regulatory process and investing in the high-growth sectors where we have a competitive advantage, such as life sciences and hospitality. My administration will move at the speed of business to attract investment and create high quality jobs. Economic Affordability and Housing: I will scale up the inclusive growth initiatives I spearheaded on the Council, including the $100 million Housing Production Fund, $50 million Nonprofit Housing Preservation Fund, and FAITH ZTA to facilitate affordable housing at places of worship. My goal is to increase the supply of transit-oriented housing while protecting the social safety net provided by our nonprofit partners, ensuring that working families and seniors can afford to stay in our community. To do this, we must hold the line on taxes. We cannot make Montgomery County more affordable by making it more expensive to live here. Protecting and Strengthening the Social Safety Net: I will prioritize a data-driven, outcomes-focused approach to human services. This includes strengthening the partnership between the County and our network of nonprofits, including Jewish social service agencies to address food insecurity, mental health, and the needs of our aging population with greater efficiency and transparency.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I believe that what starts with Jews never ends with Jews, as we saw in Buffalo, Charlottesville, and El Paso, and combating antisemitism is a necessity for a healthy democracy. I was proud to lead the County Council in unanimously passing a resolution to combat and address antisemitism in 2022. As County Executive, I will build on my proven work by taking direct executive action to eliminate anti-Jewish hate in Montgomery County: Integrate specific antisemitism bias-incident training for law enforcement, county personnel, and school officials to ensure we have the proper education and tools to identify and respond to anti-Jewish hate. Expand the Nonprofit Security Grant Program which I spearheaded working alongside JCRC, and have already helped grow to nearly $7 million, to ensure all faith-based, cultural, and identity-based nonprofits at risk of hate crimes are protected. Foster Interfaith Coalitions: I will use the Office of Community Partnerships, Faith Community Advisory Group, and Committee Against Hate/Violence to proactively build bridges between the Jewish community and other faith groups, ensuring that whenever any community is targeted by hate, we respond with a unified, countywide voice.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will not waver in my longstanding support for, or my partnership with, the organized Jewish community which spans beyond my time in public office. I find the calls to shun or "de-platform" Jewish organizations based on their connection to the State of Israel to be a form of religious and ethnic discrimination that has no place in Montgomery County. I will continue to be a partner with the JCRC and its constituent agencies to serve our community as I have my entire career. While there are strong and varied opinions of the current Netanyahu government as there are with the Trump government here in the United States, Zionism is a core component of the identity of the vast majority of our County's Jewish residents. To exclude organizations and people from public life based on this standard would not only be a betrayal of our values of pluralism and inclusion but would also harm the thousands of residents—Jewish and non-Jewish alike—who rely on Jewish social service agencies for healthcare, eldercare, and social services. I was deeply proud and humbled to receive the inaugural JCRC "Community Champion" Award for our work together and will always be someone who stands up against any efforts to marginalize or isolate the Jewish community.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Supporting our immigrant neighbors is both a moral imperative and an economic necessity. I will focus on: Legal and Social Protections: As County Executive, I will be a leader for all those who call Montgomery County home by standing up to the cruel, inhumane policies and practices of the Trump administration. We must do everything in our power to reign in ICE and protect Montgomery County residents, and continue our efforts with recently passed legislation such as the TRUST Act and Community Values Act, and the pending measures including the ICE Out Act to prohibit permitting of private detention centers, and Unmasking ICE Act at the state and local level. We also must bolster efforts to provide funding for legal services for our immigrant community who are being targeted and a coordinated rapid response between local government and community partners to provide resources for families at risk. I will maintain strong support for the Latino Health and "Newcomers" initiatives and build on my efforts to partner with community nonprofits to establish the first mobile health clinic focused on serving immigrant children and families, ensuring that everyone in Montgomery County, regardless of their status, feels safe interacting with County government and law enforcement, and receiving social services. Inclusive Economic Opportunity: I will expand and build upon the New J.O.B.S. Initiative and Founders Equity Fund, which I spearheaded to provide vital funding and investment in underrepresented and historically under-resourced communities. Recognizing that economic development requires a multi-faceted approach, I will continue to support initiatives like the microloan program while strengthening our partnerships with key business support groups, including the Montgomery County Latino Restaurant Association, Black Collective, Amber Program, Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. By working at the speed of business, we will ensure our minority, female, and disabled-owned (MFD) businesses have the tools to thrive. Safe and Welcoming Access to Services: I will ensure that County services—particularly our social safety net—are culturally appropriate and language-accessible. I have previously advocated for programs that support our most vulnerable residents and, as Executive, I will broaden these efforts to ensure that navigating County human services is seamless for all residents, regardless of their background or primary language, ensuring a stable and secure future for themselves and their families.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Our County's strength lies in its educational diversity. For Public Schools (MCPS): I will continue to fund our schools at record levels while demanding the transparency and accountability metrics I introduced as Council President. Building on legislation I

successfully passed during my time on the Council, I will continue to strengthen the Office of Inspector General's oversight of MCPS, ensuring every dollar reaches the classroom to improve outcomes for all students. For Independent Schools: I recognize that our Jewish schools and other independent institutions are vital community assets. I will work to ensure these schools are included in County safety and infrastructure conversations, specifically regarding pedestrian safety, security grants, and critical transportation needs. Combating School-Based Bias: Throughout my tenure on the Council, I have been working hand-in-hand with JCRC, ADL, and other community partners to address ongoing antisemitism and to respond to specific anti-Jewish hate-bias incidents. I will continue this close collaboration with law enforcement agencies, county departments, and the Board of Education to ensure that training and education curricula accurately reflect Jewish history and the Holocaust, and that school administrators are equipped with the proper training and resources to respond to bias incidents with the seriousness they deserve.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are the "front line" of our social safety net, and providing them with stability is one of my highest priorities. I am committed to moving the County away from unpredictable, year-to-year "crisis" funding toward a more sustainable, multi-year 'fee for service" model. By fixing well-intended but poorly executed grant and contract processes, I will ensure our funding is fair, consistent, and outcomes-based. This transition is essential so that our partners can focus on long-term impact rather than short-term survival. Streamlined Contracting: I will reform the County's procurement and grant-making processes to reduce the administrative burden on nonprofits like JSSA, JCA, Makom, Bender JCC, and JCADA, allowing them to focus on service delivery rather than delayed reimbursements and red tape. Problem-Solving Through Partnership: As County Executive, I will be a partner in creatively tackling challenges. A prime example of this was the zoning legislation I passed to allow Bikur Cholim to build a kosher kitchen to serve families in medical crisis. I will continue to champion similar innovative solutions with state and county support for essential partners like Sunflower Bakery, ensuring our nonprofits have the infrastructure and regulatory support they need to succeed.

Evan Glass

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Montgomery County faces three defining challenges: keeping residents safe from hate and extremism; ensuring every family can afford to live here; and modernizing our county government so it provides the quality services we deserve. On safety and hate, we must make Montgomery County a safe and welcoming place for everyone. Hate has no home here and I am committed to protecting our diversity. On affordability, too many families, seniors and nonprofits are being squeezed. We cannot continue to increase taxes year after year, which only burdens our residents and business community. On government services, I will require that Montgomery County's budget be completely transparent so taxpayers know where all the funding is going and that it is being used efficiently.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism and hate is unfortunately on the rise in Montgomery County. It's why I created the Montgomery County Anti-Hate Task Force, because fighting hatred must be a proactive responsibility. The Task Force brought together law enforcement, faith leaders, and schools together with a mandate to identify threats, improve responses, and protect our neighbors. As County Executive, I will build on that foundation. I have fought for and secured county funding for security funding at houses of worship, because no one should have to worry about their safety while in prayer. I will expand that security funding as County Executive. As a proud member of Temple Emanuel, antisemitism is a threat to my family and our community. I will speak that truth honestly, name antisemitism whenever I see it.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I believe in Israel's right to exist as a Jewish, democratic state. Full stop. Montgomery County is home to one of the most vibrant Jewish communities in America. I understand that elected officials sometimes face intense pressure to distance themselves from Jewish communal organizations under the guise of political neutrality. Living in a diverse community means having a diversity of opinions. As County Executive, I will maintain open, ongoing relationships with Jewish organizations across the spectrum of our community. I will also continue to advocate for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Middle East that ensures security and dignity for both Israelis and Palestinians. Those positions are not in conflict.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Montgomery County's immigrant community is one of our greatest strengths. From Africa to Central America to Asia, our diversity is our strength. Like many Jewish families, mine came to America fleeing Ukraine and Russia a century ago in search of a better life. I will always defend Montgomery County's welcoming, inclusive policies. It's why I introduced the ICE Out Act, to ensure that private immigrant detention facilities will not be built in Montgomery County. And it's why I will continue to ensure that county services – from housing to healthcare to education – are accessible regardless of immigration status.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Every child in Montgomery County deserves an excellent education — whether they attend a MCPS school, a Jewish day school or an independent institution. As County Executive, I will be a champion for all. For MCPS, I will demand transparency at every level — from how decisions are made to how resources are allocated — so families and educators can see exactly what's working and what isn't. I will insist on clear accountability, ensuring the system delivers for every student, in every zip code. For independent schools, I will work to expand access to county services where legally permissible — including transportation, mental health services, and security resources.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Our nonprofit agencies are the backbone of our community. They keep our social safety net strong and ensure everyone is able to lead healthy, productive lives. Nonprofits will have a true partner in me as County Executive. Before serving on the Council, I was the Executive Director of a nonprofit that provided after-school programs for immigrant and at-risk youth. I know firsthand what it means to stretch a budget and fight for every grant dollar. As County Executive, I will work to streamline and expand the county's grants process so that nonprofits spend less time on paperwork and more time serving people. I will also push for multi-year funding commitments, so organizations can plan and hire with stability rather than lurching from grant cycle to grant cycle. Stability and predictability are key to nonprofit organizations.

Peter James

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) Stop Trumps Dark Enlightment billionaire backers from replacing democracy with a corporate dictatorship I will attack the Trump techno-fascists billionaire where it hurts the most, their pocket books. By building autonomous guideways that will compete with Elon Musk's robotaxis. The county will sell them to other jurisdictions and generate hundreds billions of dollars to eliminate taxes and cut royalty checks to County residents similar to Qatar's oil revenues redistribution. Replace Larry Ellisons Oracle, Brin & Page Google's & Bill "Epstein" Gate's Microsoft software with home grown version that don't spy on our citizens. Again, licenses this software to other jurisdiction for billion in revenue. 2) Kill the AI beast. Their are 7 techno-fascists race to see who can get their AI to wake up and help them live forever and rule the world. We need to go to war and kill the beast. I won't pause the Dicker data center I will stop it as it is a public safety risk. Suicides and overdoses in the County are 3.5 times fatalities from homicides and traffic crashes. I will replace Social media psychosis is damage our kids mental health. Taking them down darker and darker paths. I'll replace AI driven social platforms that are creating psychographic profiles on all of us and using subliminal messaging to control us, AI free versions that don't spy on us and attempt to control us. AI is replacing humans in the work force rapidly. We need to jettison the "jobs" paradigm. I will turn workers into owners of AI and robots so that we will flourish, instead of starve, when all the jobs are gone. 3) Soon there will be an economic crash more brutal than anything we have experienced in our lifetimes. This is because of the christening Commercial real-estate debt, over built data center debt and the $30 trillion in derivatives stacked on top of the underlying debt. This is the reason the well meaning rent stabilization law drove multi-family housing permits form 1,200 per quart to 7 per quarter. There is too little money chasing to many deals. Banks and private equity investors chose Northern Virginia deals without the risk of rent stabilization Montgomery County's deals had attached to them. Instead of issuing housing bonds and issuing them to landlord developer that rent the properties out, I will provide those same funds to renters for mortgages and mortgage subsidies to make them owners. The current system keeps renters in poverty. A modest 1 bedroom apartment costs $270K over 30 years because rents go up every year. Someone who owns that same apartment, pays only $70K over 30 years. Now that's affordable. The best way to build generational wealth is home ownership. I will also encourage equity share leases where some of each rent payment goes toward equity in the home. This allows landlords to make some profits and renters to eventually own their home or share the profits from home value appreciation when the home is sold. Currently, 50% of lower half of the population owns only 2.5% of the wealth and for the last 4 years in office my opponents have only allowed the gap between rich and poor become worst. My guideways will eliminate most of the land area now used for parking and roads. This will provide more affordable land for build more affordable homes. With the coming collapse we will need to feed and house people. I run a smart robotics company and will provide my technologies free too the County. We will use robots to build low cost homes and robot farms and greenhouse. I had developed the hydroponics program at University or DC. These robots will be provide to farmers, builder and construction workers at cost. This will turn construction workers that will be replaced by robots into owners of those robots.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Implement Montessori schools that teach peace and compassion. Instead of Prussian authoritative schools we have now. Stop funding dark enlightenment ICE contractors. The County is providing dark enlightenment techno-fascist billionaires over $100M/yr in through contracts, county and pension fund investments. I will cancel contract and divest. Shut off camera 7 license plat feeds to the fusion center & ICE. Cancel contract with Equinix. The same data center ICE uses. See peter4moco.com website

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

i don't fold under pressure. See my uncle Bill on my website. He never surrendered when under impossible odds facing thousands of stormtroopers and a column of Panzer tanks. Him and 17 other teenagers held them off for 24 hours in the Battle of the Bulge

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I asked the county council to shut off traffic,security and doorbell camera feeds, license plate readers data to the Hanover fusion center where ICE has access to the video and data. I never got a response from any of them, except a Glass aid who said state regulation protect our privacy. On the contrary state camera data regulation say the data must be sent to the fusion center.? In 201, I found over $100 million in fraudulent mortgages by a non-existent company, Americas Wholesale Lender. These mortgage were targeted to immigrants. These where predatory variable rate mortgages. Many were unlawfully foreclosed on. I attempted to get Courts the reverse these foreclosure and stop any future foreclosures on these phony mortgages to no avail. I asked the white collar crime depart in the states attorney's office to prosecute these fraudsters, they refused saying, "We don't have they resources to go after banks". The problem was these were not banks they were individuals. The states attorney prosecutes blacks six time the rate of white on a per capita bases, but doesn't prosecute white collar crime results in thousand of times more dollar losses to the public. I would have the county start hiring new immigrants and sponsor their visas.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I would convert all large Prussian modeled authoritarian schools to condominiums and build smaller student driven curriculum similar to Montessori system. I have had hundreds of interns over the years teaching them critical thinking, robotics, program, renewable energy, critical thinking and science. I have already install hydroponics systems in three MCPS high schools, I will have the county install robotic hydroponics system in all schools to provide fresh healthy foods for students, teachers and support staff. I will provide all schools with my Plant Whisperer technologies that use a wide array of technology like hyperspectral scanning, AI, nano pore streaming(in field DNA and RNA analysis), 3D printed chromatography. I will provide free land care robots to all schools. These have machine vision, robot arms and UVC light for controlling weeds and disease without pesticides. These robotic platforms will be available for STEM classes and student projects as they have a wide array of technologies to study biology, robotics and a field of psychics called disapattive structures or order out of chaos theory which forms the basis of understanding why life forms tend towards greater order rather then disorder. The 2nd law of thermodynamics is taught to students that says all systems have to go to disorder(quibble), when life forms, hurricanes and heat inversions don't. Having students learn about dissapative structures will allow them to help prevent and cure disease and prolong life times. Classic deterministic physics only works for close system like mechanical machines not life. I will provide all my technologies at no cost to everyone in the county except for making weapons or run away AI. I have a robotic land-care platform that

can be used for school STEM project and teaching. See facebook.com/robogrow The County provide robots at cost fr growing food, build homes, schools and community health centers. I would provide meta cognition tools for student to continually manage their learning journey. These essential provide students t asset what they know and what they don't know and help them set a path towards those knowledge domains they wish to pursue. These tools will be available to all County residents to provide life long learning as technology is advancing at an accelerating rate and the knowledge learned in school is quickly obsolete. I believe the "schools" paradigm will soon be obsolete as the internet will provide easy access to knowledge. How the current trend of large language models are probabilistic algorithms that only provide probable answers not accurate and reliable ones. The are also train on popular wisdom which IMHO is an oxymoron. Critical thinking skills and validation methods are the skills that will be in the most demand in the future. Many education cognitive scientist believe critical thinking can not be taught. This wrong and use very definable process to perform critical thinking. My 50 year career as a consultant to hundreds of fortune 500, inc 100, governments and NGOs is based on a rigorous critical thinking process.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I would issue food, housing and medical bonds that will circulate as money creating prosperity for all. Similar to Jewish interest free lending groups. Before the crash of 1929, private charities provided all services to those in need. When Congress granted the private bank a monopoly to issue Monday as debt it cause the 1929 collapse and that ended the ability of private charities to meet the needs of the vast number of destitute people. Because most families are living paycheck to paycheck, there is no additional funds for charitable donations. With true prosperity, excess family wealth will both shrink the number of people in need and provide the excess family wealth to provide charitable giving. If you google tally sticks and visit https://positivemoney.org/uk/archive/qe-for-people-where-you-least-expected-it-a-history-of-qe-for-people-part-4/ You will see how responsible issuance of local interest free currencies create abundance and prosperity. This is the best way to reverse the widening gap between rich and poor. I will issue bond funding to turn renters and workers into owners.the will create generational health. Housing, food and healthcare will be low cost. Private charities will need to compete for funding from the resulting prosperous community. Public funding of private charities by the County that created a quid pro quo system. I and three other county executive candidates have been victims of this plutocracy. I have had several County funded non-profits exclude myself and 3 other County Exec non-professional politicians candidates have been excluded from several 501c3 sponsored forum in violation of the IRS political interference rule. Experiencing this corrupt system has effect my position on this. I'd like to know why the good acting non-profits haven't step up to condemned this practice and shown support for DEI in the election process. i would not provide funding to advocacy non-profits as they provide no real services, pay high salaries to key employees and provided unlawful advocaty to elected officals. Instead I would fund certain non-profits like Mana foods that have efficient operations and can show they are more cost effective then similar county run operations. Also, would consider non-profits heavily embeded in communities that can provide specialize services like Kosher food delivery to the poor and those house bound or service in need of providers that speak certain languages and para transit provides.

Will Jawando

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

First, fully funding our schools. I chair the Council's Education Committee and I'm the only candidate with kids in MCPS. I'll fight for smaller classes, more counselors, and modernized buildings. Second, housing affordability. I authored our rent stabilization law and helped create the $100 million Housing Production Fund. I'll build truly affordable housing near transit and help seniors age in place. Third, affordable childcare. Hundreds of thousands of women left the workforce because they can't afford care. Only 17% of infant and toddler demand is met here, and it can cost $28,000 a year. I passed legislation creating a systems-level approach to early education and I'll push for universal pre-K. This is a policy that supports families and economic development at the same time.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism is rising across the country and right here in our county, and I take it seriously. I was a co-lead of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act, which requires equity considerations in all county decisions. I also know the deep history of partnership between the Black and Jewish communities, from the civil rights movement to the fights we've waged together right here in Montgomery County. That solidarity isn't just history; it's a model for how we confront hatred today. Antisemitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, anti-Black racism, hatred targeting immigrant or LGBTQ communities: all of it demands the same response of swift condemnation, real accountability, and proactive prevention. As County Executive, I'll ensure our Office of Human Rights is resourced for hate crime response. I'll invest in education programs in schools and across the county workforce that address how antisemitism and other forms of hatred actually operate. And I'll use the convening power of the County Executive's office to strengthen the cross-community solidarity that has always been our best defense.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I don't believe in excluding people from the table. Montgomery County is one of the most diverse places in the country, and governing well means engaging with all communities, including the full spectrum of Jewish communal life. I have worked closely with Jewish organizations throughout my career, and I will continue those partnerships as County Executive. I won't let outside pressure from any direction dictate who I meet with or work alongside. My approach to leadership is bringing people together, listening to different perspectives, and finding common ground where we can. That's how I've operated on the Council, and it's how I'll lead the county.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the son of a Nigerian immigrant, protecting immigrant families is deeply personal to me. Nearly 45% of county residents are immigrants or children of immigrants, and they make this county stronger. On the Council, I've fought to codify protections that prevent county agencies from cooperating with federal immigration enforcement. I supported emergency financial assistance for undocumented residents during COVID when others said it was too risky. As County Executive, I'll expand legal defense resources, ensure schools remain safe spaces for all children, fund Know Your Rights education, and make sure every resident can access county services regardless of status. Montgomery County will remain a place where immigrant families are welcomed and protected.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Education is so important to me. As Chair of the Education Committee, I've held nearly 100 committee sessions this term, more than any previous chair, and visited a majority of our schools. My priorities are smaller class sizes, expanded pre-K, mental health supports, modernized buildings, and recruiting and retaining great educators. I also value the role independent and private schools play in our county's educational landscape, including many faith-based schools serving the Jewish community. Strong public schools and strong independent schools both contribute to a well-educated county. As County Executive, I'll work to ensure all families have access to quality education and that county policies support the full range of options available to residents.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Montgomery County is home to an extraordinary network of nonprofit organizations that serve as a lifeline for residents in need. These organizations aren't a substitute for public services. They're a force multiplier. They're embedded in communities, trusted by the families they serve, and able to meet people where they are in ways that complement what county agencies do. As County Executive, I'll make sure our nonprofit partners have the stable, predictable funding they need to do that work well, not just one-year grants that make it impossible to plan or retain staff. I also believe we need to grow our economy from the bottom up and the middle out, not through tax breaks for those at the top, but by investing in working families, small businesses, and the community infrastructure that drives broadly shared prosperity. That means fair taxation that asks a little more from those who have benefited the most, and directing those resources toward the partnerships and programs that deliver real results for residents. When we invest in our nonprofits, we invest in the people they serve.

Candidates for Montgomery County Executive - Republican:

Shelly Skolnick

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Government Affordability - by reducing the property tax rate. 2. Government Efficiency - by ending very low priorities (such as public funds for politician's campaigns); by offering free tuition at Montgomery College for volunteers in the County Government; and using Artificial Intelligence. 3. Cure Traffic Congestion - by increasing public transit use by constructing bus rider buildings at METRO stations; by converting HOV lanes to variable toll lanes; and by converting the left lane on 3 & 4 lane roads to a variable toll lane during rush hours.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will create a "See Something, Say Something, Paid Something" program to encourage residents to notify the Montgomery County Police of threats of violence. Also, I will direct the Montgomery County Police (in cooperation with the Maryland State Police and the FBI) to use Artificial Intelligence to identify threats of violence in the public social media.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I am self-funding my campaign. Thus, I will not be subject to pressure from special interest groups that traditionally donate money to political candidates.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I will pursue every legal effort to downsize and reform ICE. Also, I will ask the federal government to establish an Immigration Court in Montgomery County with adequate judges and staff to process the backlog of cases.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

By offering free tuition at Montgomery College to volunteers in County Government (including the Montgomery County Public Schools), I expect many volunteers as teacher aides, crossing guards, etc.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I will direct the applicable County Government departments to perform a cost comparison of similar activities by the department and a nonprofit agency. If the nonprofit agency is less expensive, funds would be provided to the nonprofit agency.

Esther Wells

Did not submit a response.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council - At-Large - Democratic:

Fatmata Barrie

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Protecting county residents from the effects of the Trump administration, including protections for furloughed employees, supporting immigrant communities so they can feel safe and fighting back against harmful legislation affecting our schools and our communities 2. Fighting the affordability crisis - too many county residents are finding themselves getting priced out of our county, whether it's retirees adjusting to property taxes and rising costs of groceries and healthcare, renters unable to transition to homeowners or working families living paycheck to paycheck. We must act to make Montgomery County affordable for all our residents. 3. Ensuring our schools are fully funded - as a special education attorney, I've seen the effects of underfunding which has gotten worse with the current US Department of Education's policies. As a councilmember, I will fight to ensure no students slip through the cracks and we find solutions to fully fund our school budget.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will confront antisemitism and all forms of hate directly and unequivocally. Hate has no place in Montgomery County, and we must ensure that hate crimes and acts of discrimination are taken seriously and fully prosecuted. As a Black woman, an African immigrant, and a Muslim, I understand firsthand the harm that hate and discrimination cause. That perspective strengthens my commitment to protecting every community in our county. This means working in partnership with community leaders, supporting education and prevention efforts, and ensuring our policies promote safety, dignity, and respect for all.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As an At-Large Councilmember, I will listen to and engage with all communities across Montgomery County, recognizing that people hold a wide range of views. My focus will remain on serving our residents and addressing local priorities—while ensuring every community feels heard, respected, and included. I believe that when we center our shared humanity—treating one another with dignity, care, and respect—we create a stronger, more connected community. That is the approach I will bring to this role.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As an immigration attorney, an immigrant, and a community advocate, I have seen firsthand the fear and harm impacting immigrant communities today. As a Councilmember, I will work to ensure Montgomery County remains a place where all residents feel safe, supported, and able to access the resources they need. That includes upholding and strengthening policies that protect immigrant communities, ensuring local laws are fully implemented, and working closely with trusted community organizations to provide accurate information and support. I will also be a strong advocate for access to services—such as legal resources, education, and healthcare—so families can live with stability and dignity. This is work I am already doing, and in this role, I will be able to expand that impact to better protect and support immigrant communities across our county.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I believe every student in Montgomery County deserves access to a high-quality education, regardless of their background or where they live. Public schools are the foundation of our education system, and I believe all students should have the resources they need to succeed. At the same time, I will engage with independent schools as important members of our broader education community. There are opportunities to collaborate; particularly around student well-being, safety, and shared community challenges. As a councilmember, I will work closely with the Board of Education and community partners to ensure every child in Montgomery County is supported and set up for success.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofit organizations are essential partners in delivering critical services across Montgomery County, especially during times of economic uncertainty and when many families are struggling with affordability and fear. To enhance funding, I would prioritize stronger and more consistent county investment in nonprofit partners, including multi-year funding where possible so organizations can plan and sustain their services. I also support streamlining the grant process to make funding more accessible and equitable, particularly for smaller, community-based organizations. At the same time, we must strengthen our local economy—by supporting small businesses and expanding job opportunities—so the county has the revenue needed to invest in the services our residents rely on. My goal is to ensure that no one in Montgomery County falls through the cracks and that the organizations serving them have the resources to meet the need.

Josie Caballero

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Our top three issues are housing, cost of living, and education. As a renter and the daughter of a first-generation immigrant, I know how displacement, high costs, and lack of opportunity affect disadvantaged communities, especially those threatened by ICE. We must build more affordable housing, strengthen renter protections, and cut property taxes to relieve families struggling to make ends meet. The rising cost of living demands fair wages and protections for workers to keep families safe and stable. In education, we must fully fund schools, provide wraparound services, and ensure immigrant students and families have the support they need to thrive.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Rising antisemitism in Montgomery County is deeply concerning, with total bias incidents increasing from 143 in 2021 to 483 in 2024, and antisemitic incidents rising from 20% to 40% of all cases. One important step is in our public schools. Jewish residents make up nearly 10% of the county, yet many students lack an understanding of American Jewish history. I will advocate for a curriculum that teaches both the history of antisemitism in the U.S. and the vital role Jewish Americans have played in advancing civil rights, including leadership in the NAACP and the broader Civil Rights Movement. This is but one example of what we can do, and upon review of its success, similar approaches could be replicated to counter other forms of hate and build a more inclusive community.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a Councilwoman, I will meet with any group that seeks to work together, including Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel. I will not give in to any pressure to avoid any constituents based on their beliefs, even when there may be strong disagreement. My focus is on listening, creating dialogue, and building broad, inclusive coalitions to address issues that affect our neighbors, including housing, healthcare, education, and dignity for all. Engaging respectfully with diverse community groups is essential to responsible, accountable governance.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the daughter of a first-generation immigrant, I know firsthand the hope and fear immigrant families face. I will work to protect them in a multitude of ways, such as codifying Montgomery County's Promoting Community Trust Executive Order to end local collaboration with ICE, including stopping detention notifications and corrections transfers without warrants. I will also expand legal aid, translation services, and renter protections, ensure we unmask ICE agents and limit their ability to work in the county, support healthcare and wraparound services, ensure fair wages and safe working conditions, and empower immigrant voices in civic life. Immigrants are vital to Montgomery County, and I will fight to help them thrive with dignity and fairness.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

As a Councilwoman, I will fight to fully fund MCPS, including advocating for a County Charter Amendment to lock in recurring funding. I will prioritize fair pay, manageable workloads, and professional support to recruit and retain excellent educators. Expanding community school models, affordable workforce housing, and wraparound services will ensure students thrive. I will protect federal and state education funding, support diversity and inclusive curricula, and strengthen our public schools so every child has equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I support switching to progressive taxation to increase county revenue, ensuring those with the greatest ability to pay contribute more. This would expand discretionary funds for nonprofits providing critical social services, while allowing us to reduce property taxes for middle and working class families. By strengthening funding for nonprofits and easing tax burdens on those who need it most, we can help residents access housing, workforce programs, and wraparound services, while keeping essential county services strong and equitable.

Radwan Chowdhury

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Affordability and Cost of Living Montgomery County families are facing rising housing costs and broader cost-of-living pressures. Residents consistently identify affordability as one of the most pressing challenges in the county. My approach focuses on total affordability, not just housing. I will work to responsibly expand affordable and workforce housing while aligning zoning decisions with infrastructure capacity. I will also strengthen fiscal discipline to protect residents from structural tax increases, improve transparency around county fees, and promote policies that reduce regulatory duplication that drives up construction costs. Affordability must address the full cost of living for working families. 2. Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning Growth is necessary for a healthy economy, but it must be managed responsibly. Too often development decisions occur before schools, transportation, and public infrastructure are ready to support that growth. I will advance an infrastructure-first growth strategy that aligns major development approvals with transportation capacity, school planning, and long-term fiscal sustainability. This includes closing loopholes in land-use approvals, strengthening community input in zoning decisions, and ensuring that growth contributes fairly to the infrastructure it requires. Responsible planning protects neighborhoods while ensuring sustainable economic development. 3. Government Accountability and Fiscal Responsibility Public trust depends on transparent, accountable government that delivers measurable results. I will implement outcome-based budgeting, independent performance audits, and public transparency dashboards so residents can clearly see how tax dollars are being spent and whether programs are achieving results. I will also strengthen long-term fiscal planning to address pension liabilities and ensure the county's financial stability. Taxpayer trust must be earned through transparency, responsible budgeting, and measurable performance. PS: It is also available in my campaign website @ www.RadwanVampaign.com

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Montgomery County's diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and protecting every community from hatred and discrimination must be a fundamental responsibility of local government. Antisemitism and all forms of hate — including Islamophobia, racism, and xenophobia — threaten the safety and cohesion of our communities and must be confronted with urgency and resolve. First, we must ensure strong coordination between law enforcement, community organizations, and faith institutions to prevent and respond to hate crimes. This includes improving reporting systems, strengthening hate-crime investigation capacity, and maintaining transparent public data so communities know these incidents are taken seriously. Second, education and community engagement are essential. I support expanding programs in schools and community institutions that promote understanding, counter misinformation, and foster respect across cultures and faiths. Prevention begins with education and dialogue. Third, county government must work closely with affected communities to ensure they feel safe and supported. This includes strengthening language access, supporting community-based organizations, and ensuring that public safety strategies are inclusive and responsive. As a first-generation immigrant, I believe deeply that Montgomery County must remain a place where people of every background and faith can live safely and with dignity. Combating antisemitism and all forms of hatred requires vigilance, partnership, and leadership committed to protecting every resident.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a public servant, my responsibility is to work with all communities in Montgomery County with respect, fairness, and openness. I believe that local government should foster collaboration with community organizations of all backgrounds, including Jewish organizations, faith institutions, and civic groups that contribute to the well-being of our residents. I support the principle that Israel, like any nation, has the right to exist and to ensure the safety of its people. At the same time, I believe that lasting peace and stability in the region will ultimately depend on a diplomatic and negotiated two-state solution that allows both Israelis and Palestinians to live in security and dignity. At the local level, my focus will remain on strengthening relationships with all communities in Montgomery County, opposing antisemitism and all forms of hatred, and ensuring that public leadership remains inclusive, respectful, and grounded in dialogue rather than division.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Montgomery County is strengthened by the diversity, entrepreneurship, and cultural richness of its immigrant communities. As a first-generation immigrant, I understand firsthand the opportunities and challenges many immigrant families face. Supporting immigrant communities requires ensuring access to opportunity, protecting civil rights, and strengthening pathways to economic stability. First, I will work to improve access to county services by strengthening language access, expanding community outreach, and partnering with trusted nonprofit and community organizations. Residents should be able to navigate housing, education, health, and workforce resources regardless of language barriers. Second, I will support policies that expand economic opportunity for immigrant families and entrepreneurs. This includes improving access to county procurement opportunities for small businesses, reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers for entrepreneurs, and strengthening workforce training programs that help residents access living-wage jobs. Third, public safety policies must ensure that all residents feel safe reporting crimes and seeking assistance without fear. I support community-focused safety strategies and policies that protect vulnerable communities while strengthening trust between residents and local government. Ultimately, supporting immigrant communities means ensuring that every resident has the opportunity to contribute, succeed, and feel a sense of belonging in Montgomery County.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Strong schools require more than funding — they require transparency, thoughtful planning, and accountability. Montgomery County's public and independent schools both play important roles in educating our children and strengthening our communities. For our public schools, I believe we must protect classroom funding while ensuring transparency and measurable outcomes. That includes addressing achievement gaps through targeted academic interventions, expanding Career and Technical Education programs aligned with workforce opportunities, and improving long-term capital planning to address overcrowding and facility needs. School planning must also be aligned with housing and infrastructure decisions so that growth does not outpace our educational capacity. At the same time, independent schools contribute significantly to educational diversity and innovation in our county. I believe local government should maintain constructive relationships with these institutions, support collaboration where appropriate, and ensure policies respect the role they play in serving many families across the county. Beyond academics, supporting youth development is essential. Expanding after-school programs, mentorship opportunities, and access to student mental health resources helps create safe and supportive learning environments. Investments in youth enrichment and prevention programs can also reduce youth violence and strengthen long-term outcomes for students. Ultimately, educational excellence must be measurable and supported by strong partnerships among schools, families, and the broader community to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofit organizations play an essential role in delivering social services that government alone cannot provide effectively. In Montgomery County, these organizations help address critical needs such as food insecurity, housing instability, youth services, mental health support, immigrant assistance, and workforce development. Strengthening these partnerships is key to ensuring residents receive the support they need. My approach begins with raising the standard of oversight and ensuring that public resources are allocated based on clear data and measurable outcomes. Funding decisions should be guided by comprehensive community needs assessments that examine demographic trends, service demand, and indicators of economic hardship. This helps ensure that limited resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact. I also support improving transparency and accountability in how funds are distributed, while streamlining the grant and contracting processes so that effective nonprofit organizations can access funding more efficiently. Stable partnerships, including multi-year funding where appropriate, allow nonprofits to plan, retain skilled staff, and expand services to meet growing needs. Montgomery County has the talent, diversity, and civic commitment to lead again. By strengthening collaboration between government and nonprofit organizations, we can expand opportunity

responsibly, protect fiscal stability, and ensure that essential services reach the communities that depend on them most.

Marc Elrich

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Economic Development - I'll work to expand our economic base & build the transportation infrastructure to drive growth like VA has. We must expand our life science industry & help our small businesses to thrive. Education & Programs - We must fund education & social programs so we can eradicate poverty & the problems it creates. Our residents should be able to receive these services regardless of what zip code they live in and I will vote against these cuts. Affordability - We have a broken tax system that relies on residential property & a regressive income tax structure. NO jurisdiction in our area has lower commercial taxes than our County. I'll work towards creating a more progressive tax structure with the General Assembly to ensure that our families & employees can afford to live here.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I've always spoken out against antisemitism & worked to support efforts to emphasize respect for multiculturalism & respect for all faiths & the right to be safe anywhere in this county. We've made major investments to help faith institutions improve their physical safety in this climate of growing threats. Hate is irrational, and we should not tolerate it - once you rationalize hating one group, you can hate any group. As a kid who grew up in this county & experienced antisemitism in all its ugliness firsthand, I know the danger of not pushing back against it.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I have always worked with the many Jewish groups in the county who represent different opinions on many issues. There's a common thread of service & community and a shared commitment to building a better community, so I focus on common purpose & goals. It's something I apply to all groups: if their work here betters our community, then we can work together.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I have a decades-long history of working with the immigrant community, going back to working with Latino immigrants in the 80's while I was on the council in Takoma Park. I've consistently supported programs around housing, around access to health care, and as Executive, we've expanded the safety net as needs grew. Even now, we're working to keep immigrants as safe as possible under the Trump administration's threats. I believe that our strength lies in diversity & we should help our neighbors with their transition to American life. We've absorbed immigrants from around the world who often faced discrimination when they first arrived, but education & opportunities allowed diverse communities to thrive, and it's what we need to promote today.

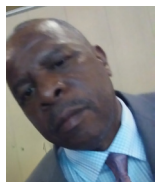
How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I believe that we have a responsibility to fully fund our public schools' needs. With more students in poverty than we've ever seen before, the impact on education is real. We have been spending less per pupil than we did in 2012 - greater needs & fewer resources are a bad combination. Over 7 years, I've been diligently restoring funding to get back to where we were. We do not provide funding for private schools, nor have we ever, but we also do not create obstacles. As far as student services, there are some that the county should support - security needs are a space where we have stepped in.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

In making priorities, as a Councilmember & now as the Executive, I have increased nonprofit funding & expanded programs that we fund. The socio-economic challenges that people are facing are only growing, so I'll continue to support the services we need. In the end, it all comes down to resource allocation - we either fund what we value, or don't fund it & stop saying we value it. We are beholden to a tax system which over-taxes residents & under-taxes commercial property. It is a tax system that forces us to tax both the same - unlike DC & Virginia where commercial property is taxed at a far higher rate.

Dana Eugene Gassaway



What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

The three most important issues for me are the economy, lack of housing, and poverty in the county. My plan for the economy involves creating jobs through innovation and increased educational alignment with the labor market. Additionally, I wish to use the local multiplier effect to keep money in the community. An example would be allowing locally owned restaurants to acquire food service contracts for local high schools and thereby keeping local money in circulation in the county. Finally, we must transition the bottom portion of our population into higher paying jobs, and one idea I have is the idea of creating a solar power initiative that will focus on reducing the use of energy by creating solar power in most government schools and buildings within the next four to six years. This process will do several things; first, it will bring jobs for people who are working in the building industry and help people who are experiencing change in this area find work. Next, this will, in eight or so years, pay for itself and reduce our dependence on the electrical national grid. Finally, I want to eliminate homelessness in the county. I feel that those who were stewards of our county have done a poor job of ensuring that daily living continues without the restrictions of overcrowding or poverty, and the resulting homeless bloom that is evident in our county is a direct result of allowing too many building projects without consideration for possible negative consequences. I have witnessed prices for rental units go up over three hundred percent from my graduation from Highschool to the present. In order to solve the homeless situation, I feel, we should do three things: First, we must take a look at the way we have used land and what land we can reobtain and create new communities in places where the land is underused. A core of my concept, when I ran for council in 2022, was reacquiring the land that was once Lakeforest Mall and building 1200 to 1300 good 1/16 of an acre homes on this land. It is my belief that it is time for the government to manage commercial land exchanges better, and to create, control and subsidize, at least the initial growth, of these new areas. This will allow for entry level price control, and allow the county to plan, and implement its ideas for communities. Additionally, we must deal with the mental consequences, and physical results, that our dumbbell economy has caused by making mental health resources more available to all; there is no doubt that the crushing weight of having to maintain a living in this county causes stress and mental challenges, and I believe we as a community need to be our brother's keeper; lastly, We must have an economy that has opportunities for all at any stage of their lives, and at a variety of skill sets.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will confront it as I always do, I stand against any form of chastising of any ethnic group, any nationality, or any people. I believe that I stand for the rights for all humans to live safe and equitably.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I feel this is an international issue, and because of my Christian faith I hold a respect for Israel, but I do have problems with some of their polices, as I do with some Islamic policies; however, I cannot show blanket contempt for anyone simply based on my view or public opinion without meeting those people and obtaining their input. I am not a follower I am a leader.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I think the key to helping immigrant families/people in our communities involves two things: First, we must create an economy that is strong, diversified, and inclusive. Next, I believe we have so many new people to this area that we must build bridges that enable us to coalesce into a community and not just a group of people living next to each other. As a member of one of the oldest families in the county, and an At-Large member of the council, I intend to attend as many culturally different functions as possible that I am invited to that I can. I want to be the person in memorable photos that people say who is that guy Waldo. I speak in fun, but it is my hope to be an ambassador for connection between the old and new in our county.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I do not think money is an issue, but how that money is being spent is the problem in public schools, and I intend to review our county school budget identify waste and redirect that money into both school overall productivity and recreational activities for our students. With respect to independent schools, my concerns are more focused on ensuring these schools have the ability attract qualified skilled teachers and that their educational experience is on par with that of the public school system.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I honestly think we need to reevaluate how nonprofit support is done in the county and make it more effective. the process of having people stand in lines or wait in cars for food is, I feel, not the way; I think we need to give nonprofits the benefit of having store front locations in the areas the serve and allow people a little dignity. Thus, I am in favor of finding spaces for stabilizing clothing and food nonprofits in a manner that will allow people to get essentials in a dignified way,

Scott Evan Goldberg

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

#1 - The high cost of living in Montgomery County that continues to trend in the wrong direction, in particular the rising costs of housing, which can be improved by increasing the Housing Production Fund to $150 million, using county-owned land for multi-family housing and reinventing the Departments of Permitting Services and Planning to reflect the needs of this century. Increasing taxes and fees only makes our county more unaffordable. By raising property taxes, income taxes, solid waste charges and water bills all at the same time, we make things harder on working families. #2 - Supercharging our local economy by fostering a welcoming and supporting atmosphere to entrepreneurs. #3 - Collaborative but meaningful oversight of the public schools to return to our status as the best school system in the state. The Council funds the school system at amounts greater that required, which I 100% support, but doesn't demand accountability and improvement that our students need and deserve.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

"He's a garbage human being. He's a vile racist. Zionists are just Jewish white supremacists" and "Come clean on your views of... AIPAC FUNDING, and current Israel Iran war" are a small sample of what I hear on the campaign trail as a proud Jew. As a candidate and Democrat, I've experienced firsthand the surfacing and spreading of antisemitism personally and in the party. People follow leadership and when local leaders are silent on hatred and don't want to have difficult but necessary conversations, we allow tropes and stereotypes to permeate our communities. There are times when education and understanding are the solution to advance tolerance but there are also times when hatred simply needs to be excluded from public and political spaces.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

This will help narrow down the guest list to my son's bar mitzvah at our temple! The State of Israel should and will exist in perpetuity as a democratic home to Jews throughout the world. It will never be OK to advocate for the destruction of Israel. However, just like we're experiencing here in the United States with the federal government doing highly objectionable things, it is in bounds to be critical of the actions of the Israeli government's leadership when we have disagreements. No one will tell Scott Goldberg where to go or not go or who to avoid working with to improve the lives of the people of Montgomery County.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

One of the top priorities on the County Council is to supercharge the local economy which will provide ample jobs with good wages, so that the immigrant community can achieve happiness and prosperity. In the short term, we'll continue to protect those who are here against the cruelty of the federal government using any means allowable by law. We will always provide housing, food, medical care, mental health care and all social services to people who need it without regard to immigration status. In the long term, Montgomery County needs to be less expensive. Comptroller Lierman prepared a detailed report showing that people are leaving high-cost blue states for lower cost red states, putting Maryland at risk for losing a vote in the Electoral College and a member of Congress at the next Census. Having Democrats in control of the White House and Congress is an effective safeguard to protecting immigrants but we have to make Maryland easier to live in.

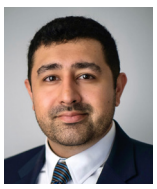
How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

The Montgomery County Public School system was once the best in the state of Maryland and with refocus, oversight and accountability, we can get back there and be one of the best systems in the county. Currently, the Board of Education consists of 7 members elected by the public and a student member elected by students. The Board members are paid a measly $25,000 per year to be responsible for 157,000 students, 25,000 employees, in 211 schools. If we don't reform how our school system is managed with a modern infrastructure, then it will be impossible to reach our full potential. To do this, we need a full time Board of Education with appropriate staff to be responsive to the community. A rising tide lifts all boats. When the public schools improve, independent schools will improve to remain competitive.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

The entire grant process and how we finance nonprofit agencies needs to be revamped. With a supercharged local economy, tax revenues will increase so we can have even more funds to provide the critical services that our nonprofit ecosystem performs. Nonprofits are more effective and less costly than county government in many cases and this where we should be focusing our efforts.

Hamza Khan



What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

In a county as vast and diverse as ours, it is difficult to narrow my campaign to just three priorities. Addressing our cost of living crisis, improving infrastructure, ensuring every child has an impactful educational experience, protecting our environment, and strengthening good governance and transparency are all major concerns. My commitment to the long-term good and welfare of our county led me to complete a Master's degree in Democracy & Governance at Georgetown University. As someone who chose to stay in the county to

help care for two siblings with disabilities, disability funding and tzedek are central to everything I do.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism is real and rising, and it must be confronted clearly and consistently. I will expand funding for security grants to protect houses of worship and strengthen coordination with law enforcement to ensure rapid response to threats. I have personally led Holocaust education trainings for Jewish and non-Jewish students for the past decade, and I support expanding educational initiatives that bring young people together across communities to build understanding and prevent hate before it takes root. Combating antisemitism requires both protection and prevention, and I am committed to ensuring Jewish residents can live safely and with dignity.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will not walk away from any community. I've spent years building relationships across Montgomery County, including my service on the board of the Jewish Islamic Dialogue Society, leadership as president of AEPi in college, and close friendships with rabbis across movements both locally and nationally. I will continue to work with Jewish organizations for the good and welfare of our county, just as I do with all communities. I bring my own independent judgment to every issue, and I reject efforts to isolate members of our vibrant society. Win or lose, my door is always open to those willing to have a conversation—preferably over good coffee. I will always choose engagement to strengthen our shared future.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the son of immigrants, this issue is deeply personal to me. My family's journey—and the journeys of so many across Montgomery County—have shaped my commitment to ensuring that every resident is treated with dignity and has the opportunity to thrive. I have worked to advance policies like the Dream Act and the Trust Act to protect and empower immigrant families. Our county's strength lies in its diversity, and I will continue building bridges across communities to ensure that everyone—regardless of where they come from—can fully belong and contribute to our shared future.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Education is deeply personal to me. I graduated from Winston Churchill High School, and some of my closest friends growing up attended Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, the Yeshiva of Greater Washington, and the Berman Hebrew Academy. Those experiences shaped my deep respect for the diverse educational paths families choose in Montgomery County. I am committed to ensuring every child has access to a meaningful and impactful educational experience, and I look forward to working with public school and private school leaders alike. Our strength as a county comes from supporting all students and fostering a culture of learning, respect, and opportunity across our entire community.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are essential to the well-being of our community. This is deeply personal to me—my younger sister has received critical support through JSSA, including services that support individuals with disabilities and aging populations. Experiences like this have shaped my understanding of how vital these organizations are for families across Montgomery County. I value the role nonprofits play as trusted partners in delivering care and support—work that reflects the spirit of Tikkun Olam. I am committed to ensuring they have the resources needed to continue and expand their impact for those who rely on them every day.

Matt Losak

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Housing: I have worked for more than 15 years to advance rental housing affordability, quality and stability. There is ample evidence that good housing policy is directly linked to community health, welfare and prosperity. As MoCo's renter population continues to grow (from 23% in 2007 to nearly 40% today), including a growing senior population, it is critical that we understand the role stable housing plays in public policy. I also fully believe that renter protections and the preservation of stable, affordable housing and housing production are not mutually exclusive. We can protect residents from unfair evictions and community destabilization while focusing on housing production that makes sense including targeting multi-family housing production in areas zoned for that purpose. Education: Like robust housing policies that increase, protect and preserve housing for all, MoCo's education system nourishes the social, political and economic health of our county. As a former educator and education administrator, I am familiar with what works and what doesn't in school administration. A top priority will always be supporting teacher excellence which includes combining professional development and management support with fair pay, benefits and job security. At the end of the day, every public dollar must be used to contribute to student academic achievement and personal growth.

Government Efficiency. As the county evolves from a rural suburb to Washington DC to a semi-urban network of communities with a population more than five times its size a half century ago, so must our government adapt to meet our modern needs. I propose it's time to create a Government Efficiency Task Force to review government operations and assess effectiveness and make recommendations for improvements. It is critical for the public to maintain and increase confidence in government institutions and to understand the direct benefit to county residents that tax dollars pay for.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As a victim, student of and activist against anti-Semitism and bigotry of all kinds, I will remain a strong vocal opponent. Methods to address bigotry include education, vocal opposition and private and public criticism. There is no silver bullet, but neither is complacency or appeasement acceptable.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As above, I will address it when I see or hear it, but at the end of the day, I will never succumb to anti-Semitism or any form of bigotry including the growing shapeshifting of anti-Semtism into anti-Zionism. I will oppose any effort to legitimize these efforts and will call out any effort to unfairly single out Israel for unwarranted sanctions, criticism or disinvestment rooted in false information, conspiracy theories or anti-Semitic views.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Like most county residents, I welcome and enjoy our diversity and will work to ensure that all residents are treated with respect and dignity and receive support. As head of a nonprofit that works with immigrant communities, I am well aware of immigrant concerns. Our neighbors and fellow residents should feel welcome and secure and have reasonable access to county services. All residents must enjoy equal treatment before the law and due process. I oppose the threats and abusive surge of ICE under the current administration and support county efforts to limit any additional cooperation with ICE not required under current law and policy.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I believe the county has a much wider interest in the success and functioning of public and independent schools than is currently overseen by the county council and executive. MCPS account for more than half of county funds and is key to the future health, welfare and prosperity of our county. I will work to enhance MCPS oversight, including closer review of budgeting, student achievement and ensure that educators have what they need to teach in secure, productive educational environments.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

As a nonprofit executive with more than three decades working with nonprofits, civic groups and government, I see nonprofit work as an essential, cost-effective partner to government policy and the public interest. While ensuring fiscal integrity and reasonable review of funding priorities, I will work to support nonprofits to increase capacity and keep up with rising costs.

Jim McNulty

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

The top issues facing Montgomery County are: Getting our economy moving again, making living here more affordable, and strengthening our communities. My focus will be on growing our economy and our tax base, not raising taxes. We can make it more attractive for businesses to invest here, and more affordable to live here, by streamlining the permitting process and eliminating unnecessary regulatory barriers. This will lower costs, increase investment and expand access to affordable housing. We also need to address the Police Department's hiring shortage, and prioritize transportation investments that ease congestion, not make it worse. As one of the only candidates who's dealt with these issues in local government, I can bring that experience to the whole County. (More at: JimMcnulty.org)

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I condemn antisemitism and all forms of hatred in the strongest possible terms. Hatred, intimidation, and violence directed at anyone because of who they are or what they believe have no place in our community. On October 7, I spoke out with deep emotion and conviction about the horrific attacks against Israelis. My response was not political — it was personal. Having been held hostage at the former Discovery building in Silver Spring, I know firsthand the terror that targeted violence inflicts. We can confront such hatred by: - Ensuring hate crimes are aggressively investigated and prosecuted - Stronger coordination between law enforcement and faith communities - Education and prevention efforts to combat antisemitism and extremism - Speaking out with moral clarity when antisemitism appears

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I got into public service after a life-changing traumatic experience as a hostage that almost cost me my life. That puts any amount of political pressure I might get from any special-interest group in the right perspective. So, I have no problem standing up to any amount of pressure and making my decisions purely on the merits. In fact, that's a big part of why I'm running. I am happy to work with anyone who lives, works or prays in our community to make this a better place. I also believe that the Council needs to stay in its lane. We should focus on the real challenges our community faces right here, not get dragged into performative gestures on national or international issues where we have no ability to impact the outcome.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As a descendant of immigrants who came to this country from Ireland in search of a better life, and given the fact that so many of our friends, neighbors are co-workers were foreign-born, I believe it is imperative to support our immigrant community. My faith teaches me to welcome the stranger, protect those who are being persecuted, and help those in need. Unfortunately, our immigrant community is under threat today from the actions of our own federal government. I support a non-cooperation policy with ICE, and providing legal services, healthcare access, and other life-sustaining services to all County residents regardless of status.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

One thing that makes Montgomery County a great place to live, work or grow a business is our excellent schools. Montgomery County Public Schools account for over half of the County budget, yet the Council has little say other than through the budget. We need greater transparency to ensure money is being invested in the classroom, not more administrators in the central office. Their focus should be on improving outcomes, expanding vocational programs, attacking racial and income disparities and enhancing safety with School Resource Officers. Our kids attended both public and private religious schools, so we understand the importance of independent schools too. They provide a diversity of choices, save taxpayers money, and need to be supported as part of a balanced educational system.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

My focus is on growing our tax base so the County can afford to do more for those in need. Families needing help now wait four years on average to receive a housing (HOC) voucher. How is that a safety net? I support efforts to reduce the backlog and bring assistance to those who need it. I will also expand access to mental health services for adults and youth, and prioritize funding for nonprofits who provide crucial services, including senior services, food insecurity, and job training, to build capacity. Healthy nonprofits attract talent and reduce downstream costs in emergency services, public health, and social services. When we underinvest in the nonprofit sector we don't save money, we shift costs to emergency rooms, law enforcement and families who fall through the cracks.

Jeremiah Pope

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Inflation and the cost of living, affordable housing, and strong schools are my top priorities. I will work to ease financial pressure on families by supporting good-paying jobs and responsible budgeting. I will expand affordable housing so residents are not priced out of our community. I will also fight to fully fund our public schools and ensure every student has the resources to succeed.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism and all forms of hate must be confronted with strong leadership. I will ensure law enforcement works closely with Jewish institutions to keep synagogues, schools, and community centers safe. The County Council must reject efforts that fuel division and stand firmly against antisemitism. In our schools, there must be zero tolerance for harassment or hate, along with education that promotes understanding and respect for the diverse communities that make up our county.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

Montgomery County must be a place where everyone is welcome and respected. I will not boycott Jewish constituents or organizations, and I will never require anyone to hold a specific view on Middle East politics to meet with me. I support Israel's right to exist in peace and security and believe in building strong relationships and dialogue that foster understanding, cooperation, and opportunity for our diverse community.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Montgomery County should be a welcoming place for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. I will work to ensure county services are fair, accessible, and culturally responsive, and that our boards and commissions reflect the diversity of our community. I also support policies that ensure residents can seek help from law enforcement without fear, so everyone—regardless of immigration status—feels safe accessing services and reporting crime.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Strong schools start with safe learning environments. While I do not support using public funds for private school instruction, I support security grants that help independent schools protect students and staff from potential threats. I also support strong partnerships between schools and law enforcement, including School Resource Officers where appropriate, so both public and independent schools have the support needed to keep students safe and focused on learning.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofit organizations play a vital role in delivering social services in our community. I will work to strengthen partnerships between county agencies and nonprofit providers so they have clear information about funding opportunities and resources. By improving communication and collaboration, we can ensure nonprofits have the support they need to expand services and better meet the needs of residents across our county.

Laurie-Anne Sayles

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

As an At-Large Councilmember, my top priorities include: Affordable Housing, Economic Growth, and Education, promoted through my S.M.A.R.T. agenda: Strengthening Education, Making Living Affordable, Advancing Equity and Sustainability, Revitalizing our Economy, and Tackling Climate Change. I advocate for expanding affordable housing via incentives, inclusionary zoning, and strategic partnerships. To boost our economy, I support investments in workforce development and small businesses. Additionally, I prioritize strengthening education by retaining top educators, fostering community engagement, and enhancing student support programs. A robust economy underpins all these efforts, creating opportunities and sustaining investments that enhance the quality of life for all residents.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

As a woman of color who has experienced discrimination, I bring a sense of empathy and urgency to the fight against antisemitism and all forms of hate. I am dedicated to promoting education and awareness through community programs and partnerships that foster understanding and compassion. I will collaborate closely with Jewish organizations to strengthen our efforts, support victims, and address hate speech effectively. Additionally, I will advocate for stronger protections against hate crimes and improve reporting and outreach initiatives. I am committed to fostering open and respectful dialogue with all communities, guided by principles of justice and human rights, and focused on building a safe and inclusive environment for everyone.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I take a principled and balanced approach, ensuring that outside pressures do not compromise my values. As an elected official, I listen to diverse perspectives and respect all voices, even when we disagree. I am committed to maintaining open and honest dialogue with all community stakeholders, including those who support a Jewish, democratic state of Israel, because respectful engagement fosters understanding and common ground. My decisions are guided by principles of justice, equity, and human rights, and I am willing to collaborate with any organization that shares these values. My focus is on building an inclusive and resilient community that actively confronts antisemitism and all forms of hate.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the only At-Large incumbent seeking re-election, I proudly embrace my identity as the daughter of Jamaican immigrants. I have co-sponsored legislation aimed at supporting and protecting immigrants. I am dedicated to building on the progress we've made for our immigrant community by combating misinformation and ensuring that residents have multilingual access to resources and information about their rights. My goal is to ensure residents feel empowered to thrive. To achieve this, I collaborate with organizations to improve access to legal, social, educational, and language services. Additionally, I actively promote and support immigrant-owned businesses through funding and training. I celebrate the vital contributions that immigrants make to our economy and culture.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Strengthening both public and independent schools is essential for a thriving educational system in Montgomery County. My approach emphasizes collaboration, high standards, and student-centered learning across all educational models. I support policies that promote academic rigor and personalized learning, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed. I am dedicated to investing in professional development so that educators have the necessary tools and training. Additionally, I value educational pluralism and encourage public and independent schools to share best practices and innovations. Rather than seeing a divide, I envision a unified community working together to help every student reach their greatest potential.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

As the Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, I oversee one of the largest budgets in the County and prioritize reliable funding for nonprofit social service providers. I have advocated for increased and more flexible County investments, faster contracting processes, and equitable access to resources so nonprofits can meet the growing demand for their services. I support diversifying funding through public-private partnerships and leveraging state and federal funds, while focusing on data-driven outcomes to demonstrate our impact. Additionally, I promote collaboration across sectors to maximize resources and efficiency. My goal is to create a sustainable funding ecosystem that enables nonprofits to deliver critical services to our most vulnerable residents

Prabu Selvam

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) The economic future of Montgomery County: With the devastating loss of federally funded jobs superimposed on more than 10 years of slow private sector growth, our county's economic future is in jeopardy. At a time when so many critical social services are getting stripped away from our residents, including healthcare access and food assistance, and we face major budget shortfalls in areas such as school infrastructure, we are in trouble. I will work to significantly grow our private sector, unleashing the entrepreneurial potential of our highly skilled and diverse workforce—along with greater investment in rapid educational pipelines for residents to enter highly skilled, well-paying jobs. We must also create a one-stop permitting office and a single application for businesses to access grants and low-interest county-backed loan programs that already exist. 2) Affordable housing: We have a fundamental problem of inadequate housing supply in our county. We must eliminate unnecessary delays in permitting that discourages efficient and cost-effective construction of homes, especially multi-family units. I'm endorsed by the Sierra Club and believe that we can be aligned with strict environmental protection standards while also removing bureaucratic barriers to construction that do not serve the public. I propose a significant expansion of the Senior Property Tax credit while restricting it to seniors making less than $80K per household in retirement. We must also invest more in our Housing Assistance Fund to help to first-time home buyers with forgivable no-interest loans. 3) Protection of democracy and human rights: We must do all we can to protect innocent immigrant families from being torn apart and from due process rights violations. We should create an anonymous online reporting system for any ICE infringements so that county government can be aware of illegal governmental activities occurring in our county. We should also invest more in non-profits such as the Gilchrist Center providing legal aid to immigrant families.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

From my experience in the U.S. military, to the deep engagement I have with families working in the ER, to the humanitarian work that I do in my current full-time job at a non-profit, there is one thing that I understand at my core: As human beings, and especially as Montgomery County residents, we are one family with a shared future. My deep love and compassion for others comes not from idealism, but from being in crisis situations time and again and seeing the humanity in every individual. The most important thing I can do as a Councilmember is speak the truth openly and transparently. I will not shy away from being a courageous and outspoken defender of Jewish members of our Montgomery County family. Because of who I am and what I know, I also understand that defending one community is not an affront to another. The same resolve and sense of responsibility with which I would stand up against Islamophobia or protect immigrant rights is what I feel for our Jewish families, who are particularly hurting right now given horrific events around the world targeting the Jewish community. I can call for protecting children in Gaza while simultaneously protecting our Jewish community members whose families have, in many cases, experienced generational trauma. In one word, my approach would be compassion.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

The Jewish people have suffered generational trauma. I fully support the people of Israel and their right to have a safe, thriving country. They, like all people, have the right to defend themselves against terrorism and maintain a strong government and military for that purpose. As we have seen with our current presidential administration in the U.S., there can be leaders who do not represent the views and values of the people they are expected to serve. Human rights violations, unconstitutional actions, and political or military decisions meant to distract from the personal failures of leaders are a reality in this world. In my view, the current Israeli government and military have responded to the threat of Hamas in a manner that is cruel and disproportionate. In my humanitarian work, I speak with healthcare workers on the ground in Gaza, and I know the reality of the human suffering faced by innocent people living there—just as I was heartbroken by the suffering faced by the Israeli people on Oct. 7, 2023. It will take a thoughtful approach to walk this fine line, but I will not support programs where public funds could be used to support Israeli military operations or efforts to deny basic needs, such as medication, to people in need. But it is clear in my mind, that the actions of the current Israeli government are not representative of the Israeli people or the Jewish community at large.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Please see above.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

We must address threats to safety that our children and teachers face in some of our current public schools. Renovation and/or rebuilding of those schools must be of utmost priority. We must fully fund our special education programs.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I would see my role on the county council as an advocate and as someone who can convene nonprofits, government offices and community leaders to increase collaboration and efficiency. We must tie funding to demonstrated outcomes. I have done this very work to help communities discover after disasters and I am excited to bring these skills home.

Karla Silvestre

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

A welcoming and inclusive community: I want Montgomery County to be a place where Jewish residents and all residents feel safe and welcome. I will support safety grants for faith and community organizations, speak out against antisemitism, and work closely with interfaith community leaders to combat hate. Excellent education environment: Strong schools matter to families across the county. I will support high academic standards, safe and respectful schools, teaching about the Holocaust, and better communication between schools and parents. Bring good jobs and make the county more affordable: I want people to be able to live, work, and raise a family in our county. I will work to bring more good jobs to the county, build housing people can afford, expand child care options, and support our small businesses.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism is real, it's rising, and it's unacceptable. I know the Jewish community is scared and hurting. First, we need more education in schools and the community. I support teaching about antisemitism and the Holocaust. We also need to make it easier for people to report hate incidents and aggressively investigate and charge the perpetrators with hate crimes. Schools, county staff, and law enforcement should be trained to recognize antisemitism and respond quickly and appropriately. I strongly support security funding for faith-based organizations and nonprofits so people can gather safely. And I will work closely with Jewish and interfaith leaders so we are preventing hate and building a stronger, more respectful community together.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I would reject that pressure outright. No community should be asked to renounce its identity or core beliefs to participate in civic life. Jewish organizations that support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state are longstanding partners in Montgomery County, and I will continue to work with them. Attempts to isolate Jewish groups because of their connection to Israel are unacceptable. Leadership means standing up to that pressure and ensuring Jewish organizations are treated with respect and access.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

This is personal for me. My family came to the United States from Guatemala and rebuilt our lives here

as political asylees. I have served as manager of the County's Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center and have worked with immigrant communities in the county for nearly 20 years. We must stand with our immigrant neighbors and do everything in our power to ensure they have due process and feel safe in our community. I will ensure families can safely access safety net and legal services, understand their rights, and feel comfortable seeking help when they need it. Finally, I will work with schools and will support workforce opportunities that can help immigrant families succeed and fully participate in county life.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will continue to prioritize strong academics, safe and respectful schools, and better communication with parents. Independent schools are important parts of our community. I support improving special education services by speeding up evaluations, improving scheduling, and communicating more clearly with parents about available support. I will also work to keep students and staff safe and partner with schools on transportation and traffic safety for families traveling across the county. As enrollment declines in Montgomery County Public Schools, I support partnerships with independent schools to make better use of facilities and making zoning and permitting processes clearer and faster so schools can improve or expand their campuses.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are critical and trusted partners that help serve our diverse communities and our most vulnerable residents. Montgomery County can increase funding over time by growing our local economy and bringing in more businesses. That means supporting small businesses, attracting industries like life sciences and technology, and building housing near transit. We should also pursue more state and federal grants and partner with foundations and the private sector. Finally, the county should make funding more predictable and reduce red tape for smaller nonprofits so more resources reach the communities that need them most.

Steve Solomon

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Economic Development with a Focus on Small Business Growth Small businesses are the backbone of Montgomery County, yet they often face too much red tape that makes it difficult for them to survive. I would address this by streamlining inspections and permitting to make it easier to start and grow a business. 2. Infrastructure Improvements Reliable infrastructure is essential for economic growth. This includes roads, public transit, and utilities. I would prioritize smart, data-driven investments to repair aging roads, reduce congestion, and expand all transportation options. 3. Supporting libraries, parks, and recreation centers Some of the things we should be most proud of in Montgomery County are our incredible libraries, parks, and recreation centers. They account for about 3% of our budget, but are a vital part of life for so many of us. With economic growth, we can fully fund these important departments.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Confronting antisemitism and other forms of hate in Montgomery County requires an approach that combines prevention, education, protection, and accountability. We must expand education in schools to address antisemitism, strengthen community partnerships, improve reporting and transparency so incidents are accurately tracked, and invest in security.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I am the child of two Holocaust survivors, and I attended JDS from K-12. I have been proud to stay actively involved in the Jewish community through JDS alumni, the JCRC, the Jewish Federation, the Jewish Parents Coalition, End Jew Hatred, and the Montgomery County Jewish Educators Alliance. Most of my extended family lives in Israel, and I will always fight for their right to live in a safe, secure, free country.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the child of two immigrants who both struggled to learn English, go to school, find work, and make a good living, I understand the immigrant experience. Montgomery County is one of the most diverse communities in the country, and immigrants are a huge part of our success. It is essential that we continue to invest in the services, resources, and programs that support these communities, while also safeguarding the rights and dignity of all residents.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Ever since I was a kid, the shining star of Montgomery County has been our great public schools. We can't rest on this reputation and must keep working to make it even better. STEM programs, vocational training, mental health and special needs programming are needed now more than ever. Montgomery County's education budget is nearly half of the entire operating budget. We can work on smaller class sizes, improving teacher retention rates, and paying our Board of Education members a full time salary. Additionally, it is essential to maintain strong, collaborative relationships with private schools to support a high quality learning environment for all students.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I am proud to have volunteered with several nonprofits in Montgomery County across many sectors. The public private partnerships that we have built are second to none. We are facing numerous federal and state challenges, along with our own local county challenges, but through economic development and growth plans, we can have the funds to support funding for nonprofits that provide social services.

Lelia B. True

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Three of the top issues I plan to focus on are affordability, education, and more government efficiency. Housing costs are pushing teachers, firefighters, and young families out of our community. I will streamline permitting and zoning so we can build housing faster and make sure the people who serve our community can afford to live here. Education is personal to me. My mother taught for 30 years, and I've spent years working and coaching in schools. I will make sure our schools are fully funded so students get the resources they need to succeed. And we need county government to be more efficient. I have experience managing large budgets and organizations, and I will push for more transparency and operational discipline so we can protect core services and use taxpayer dollars responsibly.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I strongly believe antisemitism and all forms of hate have no place in Montgomery County. Our diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and everyone should feel safe and respected here. As a councilmember, I will speak out against antisemitism, racism, and all forms of discrimination and I will take action. I will support stronger partnerships between schools, faith communities, and civic organizations to promote education and understanding across cultures and religions. I will also support efforts to ensure hate crimes are reported, investigated, and taken seriously. Montgomery County is a welcoming and tolerant community, and I will do everything in my power as councilmember to ensure every resident feels safe, respected, and welcome.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

When I was leading my company in the military, we didn't let our differences divide us. We had a common mission. I'll bring that same approach to the County Council. I won't let any group or individual pressure me about who I can or cannot work with, because our mission is to serve the people of Montgomery County. Montgomery County is home to an amazing Jewish community, and Jewish organizations play an important role in our schools, nonprofits, and civic life. Local government should focus on bringing people together and addressing the challenges that affect all of us like housing, education, and the rising cost of living. I will work with organizations that are committed to solving local problems and lifting up our community.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Throughout my career in the military, the corporate world, and education, I've worked with immigrant communities and seen firsthand the important role they play. At McKinsey, I did pro bono work for schools that served diverse populations. At Waldorf, I managed diversity initiatives and financial aid so families from different backgrounds could access quality education and work as teachers in the school. On the Council, I'll support programs that help immigrants contribute fully to our community, whether that's through increased access to language and translation services, workforce training, or supporting small businesses. And I will do everything in my power to ensure county resources are not being used to support federal ICE raids that promote fear, tear families apart, and undermine public trust.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Education is one of the areas I feel most passionate about. Supporting public education needs to be a top priority, and I will support fully funding MCPS and push for more accountability, innovation, and increased pay for teachers. Independent schools also play an important role in our educational system and they serve thousands of our students and families. We need strong public schools and we need to support the independent schools that families depend on. And we can have both. My experience in education taught me that we need to focus on what helps students get ahead, that's great teachers, safe learning environments, and fully funded programs. Whether they're in a public school or an independent school, we need to help our young people grow, learn, and contribute to our community.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are more essential than ever in delivering services to support food assistance, housing, and mental health care. I have already begun to build connections to nonprofit agencies helping in our community through organizations like Nonprofit Montgomery. I will make it a priority to increase the partnerships between county agencies, nonprofits, and faith communities so services reach residents quickly. We need to make sure there's accountability in how funding is being used, but we also need to ensure the nonprofits that are delivering results have stable, multi-year support so they are not constantly worrying about whether their funding will disappear from one year to the next. Improving government efficiency will also free up resources that can be used to support area nonprofits. When government runs better, we can invest more in the nonprofits that help keep our community strong.

Vicki Vergagni

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Education: Only 56% of MCPS high school graduates can competently read and write English, and only 36% can do math per national standards. I would advocate for "Basics First," which means that to graduate, all high school students would be required to read, write and do math at a ninth-grade level. I also would transfer "specialty" programs" (i.e., subject immersion classes) to Montgomery College at student cost (with scholarships for lower-income students) so MCPS dollars can be spent on more high-performing teachers. Housing: The County has focused its resources on affordable "rentals" instead of "homeownership." We must help families build their financial futures through "legacy wealth" that is represented by homeownership. A revolving downpayment fund and mentoring new homeowners the first seven years are in order. We also must renovate existing housing stock instead of tearing down and creating "luxury" homes. Development: The County has adopted planning policies that mandate sacrificing the quality of life of the same neighbors again and again. Density can be achieved by building high-rise villages miles from transportation hubs and providing rapid transit to transportation hubs.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Hatred derives from ignorance. Being from a small town in Iowa with only Germans and Norwegians, I saw the conflict between Protestants and Roman Catholics. My grandmother wore a black dress to her Protestant daughter's wedding to a Roman Catholic man. Over time, Uncle Bill became a beloved son-in-law. I also saw the reaction of the community to the college providing scholarships to promising athletes who were "of color". If a star performer, initially that person's presence was "tolerated". However, as more individuals "of color" moved to the area, there was an undercurrent of fear…economic, social, etc. Ultimately the issue came out into the open; moral leaders spoke out against the bigotry and supported the victims of prejudice. Even today it is an ongoing educational process that requires an understanding of bias, the development of empathy, and the building of relationships among the parties. As pre-schoolers and for some years later, children are curious, but accepting, of difference. We need to start emphasizing early on in our schools and elsewhere that there is room for all, regardless of difference.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

My views are congruent with those of Rabbi Sharon Brous, the senior rabbi in Los Angeles who eloquently speaks of healing in the Middle East through a shared resolution with Palestinians. Regardless of orientation, if an organization is the "final and best" contractor for a particular task and is not involved in inhumane acts against others (regardless of reason), I would support approving the contract.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Montgomery County can hold its head high with regard to its support of immigrants. I would support the development of a special "hotline" for immigrants in emergency status with automatic referral to government and community-based organizations to provide comprehensive support. Individually, I currently support two immigrant families whose breadwinners were taken by ICE. In the first case, it is a contractor for the community that I manage; in the second, it is a unit owner in the community that I manage. My support includes food, limited financial support, emotional support to the family members, and collaboration with their legal counsel with regard to ICE "legal" processing. I also initiated the introduction of MSMA (Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network) to my church, Foundry United Methodist, in Washington, DC. So far, the congregation has adopted two families to which is provides a full range of support services.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I am not supportive of the Board of Education's recent decision to change school boundary lines. I am a supporter of neighborhood schools and do not think it appropriate that families be confronted with spending hours every day in vehicles transporting their children to and from school and extra-curricular activities. I would support a change in state law to allow students to earn community service hours for working in their communities (i.e., condominiums, co-ops, HOAs). In addition to conservation and other activities, there is tremendous need in these communities to assist with after-school activities, everyday challenges to the disabled, companionship for seniors, etc. I also would

like to see a serious emphasis on a mentoring program for both professional and technical career areas.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I would support the expansion of private and public funding for "safety net" services by identifying community needs and then compiling and comparing the offerings of service providers in both sectors to the community needs. At that point, I would initiate research to identify government programs and foundations in those areas of need, and collaborate with chambers of commerce and other business-based organizations to secure additional support. It also would be helpful to promote the services and the sponsoring organizations with "good news" spots in the mainstream media.

Muhammad Arif Wali

Did not submit a response.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council - At-Large - Republican:

Sherwin Wells

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Public Safety- Fully fund our Police and Emergency Services to address increase in crime and preparedness for incident response. Protect students by placing Resource Officers in schools to deter and protect against violence in the event of an issue. Provide opportunity for community input to fully address current and emerging issues. Government Accountability-1.1 million residents rely on the Montgomery County Government for various services and holding our leaders and government employees accountable is right thing to do. Conducting performance reviews of departments and a SWOT analysis Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats will uncover deficiencies that will be addressed to serve residents. Open Door Policy where residents have access to their elected officials to voice their concerns and have an advocate that will treat them and their concerns with respect and address them in a timely manner. Affordability-Make Montgomery County Maryland affordable by introducing smaller lot sizes, manufactured homes and proper zoning changes to creating housing opportunities for residents of all income levels which reduces subsidized housing programs and costs.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Strengthen Security Measures by directing additional resources including funding and Security Personnel for Jewish Institutions and other faith institutions. Establish clear policies for anti-discrimination and clear penalties for violations.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

Everyone is entitled to equal protection under the law, and I intend to enforce equal protection for all regardless of religion, race, ethnic background, faith, belief and I will not be pressured or bullied into making any decisions that goes against this stance.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I am an immigrant and I understand the struggles that families that are immigrants navigate on a daily basis. Montgomery County Maryland is one of the most diverse in the United States with over 35% of its residents foreign born. Luckily there are resources available like The Gilchrist Center and several other programs available to immigrants that they may not be aware of, but doing an education campaign and making resources available to immigrant communities is important.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Focus on literacy and additional resources for underperforming students and schools. If you do not understand the problem, then it is difficult to find a solution. Many students have underlying issues that creates an environment that is not conducive of learning whether it is in the public-school setting or independent school setting. Teachers should be empowered and trained to identify issues and make referrals to counselors so that no student is left behind.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Montgomery County has to increase sources of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services. Relying on taxes alone will not solve the problem. There must be a coordinated effort by Montgomery County Government and the nonprofit agencies to apply for and receive grants and funding instruments from local, state, federal, and international organizations that will align with priorities of Montgomery County. A Grants Department dedicated to applying for grants and also creating a reserve fund for emergency situations is prudent.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 1 - Democratic

Drew Morrison

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

We need bold leadership to make our community more affordable. I will provide tax relief to residents, use the County's leverage to fight utility increases, and get direct support to providers and parents to lower childcare costs. I oppose the proposed 6% property tax increase because it adds yet another rising cost to your pocketbook. We will grow good-paying jobs. I'll partner with employers and cut red tape to support growing businesses and unlock economic opportunity with training programs for careers in family-sustaining industries. Our school system must deliver for every student. The Council must ensure every dollar approved for MCPS drives better outcomes for every student. I will bring strong oversight, invest in early education, and demand transparency for parents and teachers.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will move to expand funding for the County's nonprofit security grant program because synagogues and Jewish institutions are being forced to spend too much of their annual budgets on needed security services because of the rampant rise in antisemitism. I will work with community leaders to demand the school system uphold Holocaust education, provide meaningful and specific anti-bias training that addresses antisemitism head on, and put adequate disciplinary procedures in place for those who make antisemitic attacks or statements that harm everyone's ability to learn in a safe and productive environment. I will also make sure that training for County government more broadly includes clear information on preventing antisemitism.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will tell them clearly and plainly that I disagree with their views. I will not agree to demands of people who, as evidenced by some of this activity I have already encountered, clearly intend to single out and target Jews, Israel, and those who support the Jewish right to self-determination.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I will stand up strongly against the Trump Administration's ICE and CBP raids. We must continue investing in legal aid and newcomer services. We must educate residents through Know Your Rights trainings. We must be partners with our state and federal elected officials as they push for reform. And as a Councilmember, I believe the County should do a better job of investing in and supporting legal staff to monitor and fight in court specific illegal and anti-immigrant actions of ICE and federal immigration authorities as they happen in our community. That requires a well-equipped Office of the County Attorney, coordination with the Attorney General, and other rapid response capabilities whenever ICE is operating in the County.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will provide accountability for outcomes in our school system through the Council's annual budget process. I will make sure that dollars are spent in the classroom and effectively - I will ask the hard questions to ensure that more dollars mean better results. My focus will be on doing better at the beginning and the end. We must invest further in early childhood education, including expansion of Pre-K, to make sure everyone is ready for school. And we must more fully embrace career training so that more people can access a family-supporting job, whether they are attending a four-year college or not. I will also support smarter policy choices to restore safety, including the School Resource Officer program. Recent incidents have shown that we must do more to guarantee safe schools.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofit agencies, particularly from or affiliated with Jewish organizations, are critical to providing a path to self-sufficiency and everyday needs for a growing number of County residents. We must continue to support these organizations, and, in many cases, must expand funding due to federal funding cuts. We need to provide fairness and predictability for nonprofits in order to sustain service levels. Our grant process must be clearer and more consistent. For service providers, the County should do more multi-year contracts to provide stability, structure contracts to cover incidental and inflationary cost increases each year, and seek more opportunities for nonprofits to partner with one another to create better collaboration, integration, and efficiency.

Debbie Spielberg

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) Planning for the future with the people who live here now: we have better outcomes when we work with our residents: we must consider affordability, parks and tree canopy, schools, traffic and parking. 2) Our talent pipeline: support our schools with sufficient staffing, accountability and transparency. 3) Economic development that lifts all families: use county resources strategically to help sustain and create jobs - through county incubators and innovation centers; support the Institute for Health Computing, which leverages graduate level research for public/private partnerships; business center outreach; improve permitting; and eliminate duplication between county agencies and planning. All of my actions are and will be inspired by Tikkun Olam, to heal (our part of) the world.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism and all forms of hate have no place in Montgomery County. This is deeply personal to me — I learned to fight for the vulnerable from my mother, a refugee from Nazi Germany who was rescued by the British via the Kindertransport. That history is a constant reminder of the consequences of silence in the face of hate. I will insist that antisemitism and all hatred is clearly condemned. I will support education - in the community and the schools - that teaches history and promotes understanding, connection and respect; it is through understanding that we prevent a repeat of history. I will work with community and faith leaders to ensure that all residents feel safe and supported. First, we are clear that hate is unacceptable, and then we find the path to embrace our shared values.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a Councilmember, my focus will be on local issues, and I will work with Jewish organizations, as well as Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, and other faith communities. My approach is grounded in inclusion, respect, and dialogue. I will always reject litmus tests that divide communities and instead focus on bringing people together around shared values. My daughter taught me "O Chevruta, O metutah": we must learn to work in community or we perish. On a more practical level, animosity is creating fear and insecurity at our religious institutions, which is why the funding for security grants to religious and nonprofit institutions at risk of hate crimes has been important.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I have long worked with immigrant communities and advocates, and I am proud to have the endorsement of CASA in Action. I will continue to strengthen policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, expand access to legal services, and support community-based programs that help families navigate county systems and build stability. My mother was a refugee from Nazi Germany who survived because of help from many good people. People living in fear of ICE enforcement need our help. I will support mobilizing our community to stand up, speak out and defend our neighbors. I will support lawsuits that challenge illegal federal actions. I will work to ensure that Montgomery County is a place where all residents feel safe, protected, and valued.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Our public schools are one of Montgomery County's greatest assets. I will support sustained funding for MCPS, including investments in teachers, staff, and student services. At the same time, I will work with colleagues on the Council and at the Board of Education on transparency and accountability. I also believe in maintaining a collaborative relationship with independent schools, which are an important part of the broader educational ecosystem. Students in independent schools should have access to certain supportive services that public schools students have. My focus will be on ensuring all students have access to high-quality education, supporting educators with the resources and respect they need to succeed, and working with families to address concerns.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are essential partners in delivering services and strengthening our communities. I will work to ensure stable and predictable funding for nonprofits, I will also work to streamline county contracting processes and lessen administrative burdens without compromising necessary reporting of information (sometimes longtime practices are no longer efficient and effective.). Additionally, I will work with county and non-profit partners to explore and expand shared services, including records and data management, to lower administrative costs.

Julie Yang

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

22 years ago, I came to Montgomery County for opportunity, strong schools, and a place to belong. I knew hardship growing up. But I was also taught that education, hard work, and a fair chance can change your life. I am living proof that the American dream is still alive. I believe if you take the elevator up, you

send it back down for the next person. That drives my priorities: First, grow our economy. We underinvest and overregulate. I will cut permitting delays and invest to attract and retain businesses. Second, connect education to jobs. We produce top talent but lose it. I will align schools, workforce programs, and employers so residents can build careers here. Third, protect the quality of life. I will support public safety, nonprofits, immigrant families, and stand against hate.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Hate is personal to me. My family experienced exclusion and persecution from the Chinese Exclusion Act to the Cultural Revolution. That history gives me moral clarity in confronting antisemitism and all hate. I act in three ways: listen, speak up, and show up. I engage with Jewish organizations like ADL and JCRC to understand concerns. When antisemitic graffiti appeared at Bethesda Elementary, I pushed for a clear Board statement naming it as antisemitism because words matter. And I show up in moments of fear, like after the Bondi Beach attack, standing with our community. Combating hate requires partnership, clarity, and action. I will always stand with communities to ensure they feel safe and protected.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I believe in the Jewish people's right to self-determination and will not allow political pressure to dictate whether I engage with Jewish organizations. My approach is grounded in relationships built over 20+ years—through friendships, shared community life, and raising our children together. These experiences make this personal, not abstract. When faced with pressure, I will be clear and consistent: I will not disengage from Jewish organizations, I will be transparent about my values, and I will reject efforts to exclude any community from civic life. Leadership requires courage and consistency. In my governance roles, I've navigated complex and contentious issues. And I am not afraid to put my name behind the right decision, even in the face of pressure.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Supporting immigrants is personal. I came here with little and navigated language and economic barriers to build a life. That experience shapes my leadership. I've led on this issue: as a Board of Education member, I've ensured schools are safe for all students; I founded a nonprofit to connect immigrant families to resources; and I've worked with MoCo IRC to help families understand their rights. As a Councilmember, I will focus on: expanding legal access and "Know Your Rights" efforts; ensuring language-accessible healthcare, education, and services; and supporting workforce, small business, and housing pathways. I will not use any county resources to cooperate with ICE. This work is about dignity. I will ensure immigrant families are safe, supported, and able to thrive.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I grew up in a home without running water. It was education that changed my life. A teacher opened the door for me and that experience shaped my belief that every child—no matter where they attend school—deserves the opportunity to be prepared for life. On the Board of Education, I've taken action—expanding financial literacy and work-based learning so students are truly life-ready. I respect the vital role of independent and community-based schools in preserving culture and identity—my own children attended weekend Chinese school. As a Councilmember, I will build bridges: encourage collaboration across schools, expand shared career pathways and internships, and support community-based programs that enrich learning. When we align across systems, every child in Montgomery County can succeed.

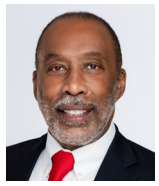
How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are essential infrastructure—employing 58,000 residents and delivering critical services daily. I've seen their impact firsthand with JSSA, JCA, and Sunflower Bakery—supporting seniors, mental health, and job pathways. The issue isn't whether we fund nonprofits, but how. As a Councilmember, I will prioritize funding in the County's $300M+ health and human services budget by: building nonprofit funding into the base budget, not year-end add-ons; shifting to multi-year contracts to reduce costly turnover; and streamlining procurement to get dollars out faster. I understand budget trade-offs, but investing in nonprofits is cost-effective—they prevent crises and reduce long-term costs. Strong nonprofits make Montgomery County stronger, more resilient, and more equitable.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 1 – Republican

Reardon "Sully" Sullivan



What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My top three priorities are public safety, affordability, and educational excellence. First, public safety is foundational. I will support fully resourced law enforcement, strengthen community policing, and ensure that hate crimes are taken seriously and prosecuted. I will champion legislation to strengthen hate crime enforcement, funding community security grants (especially for houses of worship and schools), and promote civic education that teaches tolerance and the dangers of extremism. People must feel safe in their homes, schools, and places of worship. Second, affordability. Too many families are being squeezed by rising costs and taxes. I started the "Stop the Spend" ballot petition to limit spending in Montgomery County to the prior year rate of inflation (https://controlmocospending.com/). I will work to promote responsible budgeting, support businesses, and encourage smart economic growth so Montgomery County remains a place where families can thrive. Third, education. We need to restore excellence and accountability in our schools. We need to make MCPS more efficient, making sure that a higher percentage of our education dollars make it to the classrooms. I believe that we must support teachers, focus on core academic achievement, and ensure parents have a meaningful voice in their children's education.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism and all forms of hate have no place in Montgomery County. I will take a zero-tolerance approach by supporting strong enforcement of hate crime laws and ensuring law enforcement has the tools and training to respond effectively. Equally important is leadership. I will speak out clearly and consistently against antisemitism and any form of bigotry, regardless of where it comes from. We also need education and community partnerships, working with schools, faith communities, and civic groups to promote understanding and respect. The more people talk the more common ground we find. I will confront antisemitism and all hatred head-on as unacceptable in our society. This includes: • Advocating for robust federal and state funding for security enhancements at Jewish institutions, synagogues, churches, schools, and community centers. • Supporting education initiatives in schools and workplaces to recognize and combat antisemitic biases. • Working across party lines to enforce hate crime laws vigorously and condemn rhetoric or actions that incite violence, whether from the far-right, far-left, or any source. • Building coalitions with other communities to address intersecting forms of hate, ensuring a united front against bigotry. Everyone deserves to live openly and safely without fear, and I will stand firmly for that principle.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will not allow political pressure to dictate who I engage with in our community. My responsibility is to represent all constituents fairly and respectfully. I will firmly reject any pressure to boycott, divest from, or avoid legitimate Jewish organizations simply because they support Israel's right to exist. Jewish organizations, like all community organizations, deserve a seat at the table. I believe in open dialogue, mutual respect, and constructively engaging with people even when there are differences of opinion, as that is where progress is made. Attempts to exclude or isolate groups are counterproductive and divisive. I will always choose engagement over exclusion and stand firmly for the right of every community to participate fully in civic life. I believe that the more people talk in an intellectually honest conversation, the more common ground, and ways to work together we find.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Montgomery County has long benefited from being a diverse and welcoming community. I support policies that help legal immigrants succeed. I support the "Dignity Act" and hope to bring legislation like it to Montgomery County. At the same time, I believe in clear, fair, and lawful processes. We should focus on helping people integrate, contribute, and build stable lives while ensuring that our policies are consistent and sustainable. Strong communities are built when everyone has the opportunity to succeed and contribute, and I will work to ensure that remains true here.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Every child deserves access to a high-quality education, whether in public, private, or independent schools. Unfortunately, our public schools are in decline. Whereas we used to have several schools in the top 100 nationwide we have lost that advantage. The solution proposed by the current leadership is to interpret a boundary analysis to bus our students to achieve their diversity goals. For public schools, I will focus on restoring academic excellence, supporting teachers, and increasing transparency and accountability. We need to make MCPS more efficient, making sure that a higher percentage of our education dollars make it to the classrooms. We must ensure all students are prepared for college, careers, and citizenship. I also respect the role of independent and faith-based schools. I will support policies that treat them fairly, protect their autonomy, fund them, and recognize the important contributions they make to our community. Education should not be one-size-fits-all—families deserve options that best meet their children's needs.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are essential partners in serving vulnerable populations and strengthening our community. I would work to ensure that funding is allocated transparently, efficiently, and based on measurable outcomes. We should prioritize organizations that demonstrate effectiveness and accountability. I also believe in fostering public-private partnerships and reducing unnecessary bureaucratic barriers so nonprofits can focus on delivering services rather than navigating red tape. By working collaboratively and responsibly, we can ensure these organizations have the support they need to make a real impact. Nonprofits are vital partners in delivering food assistance, mental health support, senior care, youth programs, and more. To enhance funding: • Advocate for increased federal and state grants. • Support tax incentives for charitable giving and streamlined grant processes to reduce administrative burdens. • Prioritize funding for organizations serving vulnerable populations, including Jewish community agencies, immigrant services, and interfaith efforts. • Foster public-private partnerships and advocate for sustainable, multi-year funding models to help nonprofits plan and scale effectively.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 2 - Democratic

Marilyn Balcombe

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Housing Affordability. I will continue to support initiatives to increase the supply of housing and support the MPDU program. 2. Economic Development. Invest in our recruitment and retention activities and identify and remove obstacles to bringing jobs to Montgomery County. 3. Environmental Sustainability. Continue to support our Climate Action Plan and ensure environmental activities are fully funded.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will continued to support the security grants for religious institutions to ensure that your facilities are safe for our residents. I also have a strong relationship with our police department and our school system which both have an important role in confronting antisemitism.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As an incumbent I have already had similar requests and have not wavered in my support for Jewish organizations in the County.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Our immigrant community is facing significant challenges and the Council has established a number of actions and legislation to support immigrants. The first thing we did is to clarify that while the County would obey federal law, but would not support ICE agents in their activities. We also confirmed our policy of providing County services to all residents regardless of immigration status by unanimously passing with the Trust Act. We also passed the Values Act which stipulates that ICE agents would not be allowed on County property. We also have several pieces of legislation in process to forbid ICE holding facilities in the County and to make it much easier for family members to retrieve cars that have been towed when a family member has been taken by ICE. In addition to the legislative action I have taken, my office continues to help educate the community on their rights and how to receive services from the County.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

While the County Council provides funding for the schools, we do not have control over how MCPS implements their curriculum. Our job is to hold MCPS accountable for transparency and meeting their academic metrics.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Our nonprofit organizations are critical in providing social services to our community. We need to make sure they have adequate resources. I have supported a standard annual increase in funding even during times of budgetary uncertainty. I have also monitored the grants process for our nonprofit grants which have had some difficulty in transitioning to the Office of Grants Management.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 3 - Democratic

Jud Ashman

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Economic Vitality & Diversification We must strengthen and diversify our economy, reducing reliance on the federal government. I will grow the commercial tax base by supporting small businesses, attracting innovative industries, streamlining permitting, and investing in workforce development and entrepreneurship. 2. Housing Affordability & Supply We need more housing at all income levels. I support increasing production near transit, expanding missing-middle housing, and using public-private partnerships to deliver affordable units while ensuring infrastructure and services keep pace. 3. Public Safety & Well-Being. I support a balanced approach with a well-trained police force, strong community relationships, and investments in prevention like behavioral health and youth programs, using data-driven strategies to ensure safety and fairness.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will support strong partnerships between law enforcement and vulnerable communities to ensure hate crimes are taken seriously, reported, and thoroughly investigated, with proper training and resources in place. I will also invest in prevention - education that promotes understanding, stronger relationships across communities, and efforts to counter misinformation and extremism before it takes hold. I will work to ensure local policies reflect inclusion, dignity, and respect so every resident, including our Jewish community, feels safe and supported. Finally, combating antisemitism requires dialogue - listening, addressing misinformation, and confronting the root causes of bias. That means having difficult conversations to build understanding and, where possible, change hearts and minds.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As Mayor of one of the most diverse cities in America, I've worked across differences to bring people together around shared priorities. That experience reinforces a simple truth: our strength comes from inclusion, not exclusion. Efforts to pressure officials to avoid working with Jewish organizations because they support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel are deeply concerning and often cross the line into antisemitism. I reject that premise. At the same time, Zionism and Middle East policy are not County matters. My responsibility is to serve residents here at home - ensuring safe communities, strong schools, and opportunity for all. I will continue engaging openly with Jewish organizations and stand firmly against efforts to isolate or marginalize any community.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the Mayor of Gaithersburg, I've seen that immigrant communities are central to our economic strength and cultural vibrancy. My approach is grounded in practical support and a commitment to dignity and respect. I will support continued investment in the County's safety net - food assistance, housing, healthcare, and workforce programs - so families can build stable lives. I will strengthen partnerships with trusted community organizations that deliver services effectively and in culturally competent ways. I will ensure services are accessible through language access, outreach, and clear communication, and support policies that build trust so residents can seek help without fear. Every resident should feel safe, supported, and able to fully participate in our community.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will advocate for strong investment in public schools - ensuring they are well-funded, well-staffed, and equipped for a diverse, growing population, including support for teachers, mental health resources, and aligning capacity with growth. I believe collaboration - not competition - should define the relationship with private schools, which are important partners on student well-being, extracurriculars, and service. I will ensure County policies - transportation, safety, and land use - support all students, with safe routes and strong infrastructure. I will also stay engaged with educators and families to reflect real needs. Every child deserves access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to succeed.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

After the Great Recession, Gaithersburg faced tight budgets as needs grew. We chose not to cut support for vulnerable residents. Instead, we rethought our nonprofit partnerships - creating a competitive process that encouraged collaboration and focused on outcomes. We maintained - and in some cases improved - services despite limited resources. That experience shaped my approach. We must grow funding by strengthening our economy, but also be thoughtful partners - providing stability, setting clear expectations, and recognizing nonprofits' effectiveness and cultural competence. As a Councilmember, I will protect and expand investments, support multi-year funding, and stay engaged with nonprofit leaders. Strong partnerships deliver better outcomes for those who need these services most.

Allison Eriksen

Did not submit a response.

Izola "Zola" Shaw

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My top priorities are public safety, affordable housing, and economic development. Everyone deserves to feel safe and welcome, regardless of religion or where you were born. I'll expand hate crime training, enhance protection, and support community policing. I'll address the root causes of crime with strong antipoverty measures that create real opportunity for families. I'm committed to building and preserving affordable homes, especially for seniors. I'll drive economic growth by connecting workers to good jobs, supporting small businesses, and ensuring progress benefits every resident.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Confronting antisemitism and hate takes real action. I'll expand security for synagogues, schools, and community centers, expand hate crime training, and use my platform to share resources like the hate/bias portal so everyone knows how to report incidents. I'm grateful to the JCRC for hosting a school-based antisemitism event at a local synagogue, where I listened directly to families. My leadership is inspired by Montgomery County's interfaith history going back to the 1950s—when Black and Jewish families joined to dismantle housing discrimination, as chronicled in Washington Jewish Week's "Not in My Neighborhood." True safety is built by standing together across differences.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a City Councilmember and as a future County Councilmember, I serve all residents. I declined to take a pledge barring affiliation with organizations that support Zionism because it would prevent me from representing my full community. I believe in coalition building across differences to advance housing, jobs, food security, and social justice. I've attended Shabbat services and Kiddush at local synagogues to listen and connect, and I'm honored to be endorsed by local rabbis and Jews United for Justice Campaign Fund. I'm committed to pluralism, civil discourse, and standing firmly against antisemitism and all hate.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Supporting immigrants means more than reacting to crises. It's about building a community where all can thrive. I've defended our community from unjust ICE actions by backing laws limiting ICE cooperation and presence. I've partnered with care networks to connect impacted neighbors to vital resources. In Rockville, I've worked with groups like MoCo Immigrants Rights Collective to organize Know Your Rights trainings for business owners and workers. I fight for affordable housing, fair labor, quality education, and economic opportunity so immigrant families can build stable, secure lives here.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I'm committed to fully funding our public schools so every student has the resources, support, and opportunities they need to succeed. I will work with my colleagues on the County Council and the Board of Education to ensure transparency and accountability in school funding, with strong oversight so resources directly improve classrooms, facilities, and student services. I also recognize the vital role of independent schools. I'll promote collaboration between public and independent schools, encourage sharing best practices, and support policies that honor all families' choices.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I'm grateful to the JCRC for securing vital funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which helps faith-based nonprofits keep their communities safe through staffing, training, and surveillance. As a County Councilmember, I'll work to not only maintain but increase funding for nonprofit agencies providing essential social services. I'll push for higher budget allocations, ensure transparency and accountability, and streamline grant processes to reduce burdens. I'll also collaborate with nonprofit leaders to identify emerging needs and close service gaps.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 3 – Republican

Ricky Fai Mui

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Transparent and accountable County Government: Perform routine (semi-annual) audits and oversight for all budgeted activities. Our revenue streams are eclipsed by a serious over-spending and accountability problem. 45% of the MCPS budget do not support education, instead it funds contractors, central staff salaries and duplicative central office functions. We can trim 10-15% and see negligible impact on MCPS operations. 2. Safe Communities: prioritize funding for first responders and law enforcement. When public safety departments lack sufficient manpower and equipment, we are all at risk. Once we prioritize funding, we will strive to implement neighborhood patrols. We will adequately train and revere our law enforcement. 3. Attract Employers. Encourage and nurture small businesses and large companies to invest in Montgomery County. If we can increase jobs, more families will have the financial means to purchase homes.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

We have anti-semitism and racial hatred simply because our incumbent leaders have allowed it; perpetuating a lack of social penalties for hateful actions and sentiments toward each other. Throughout my military and professional career, I espoused and enforced a culture of working and living together as children of GOD. We have no tolerance for hate-inspired criminal activities, to include graffiti and bullying based on race or gender. Right now, Montgomery County lacks this cohesion; we may be diverse, but we still don't know how to live together successfully. The only way to understand is to walk in someone's shoes. All perpetrators of anti-semitism or racial hate will be provided an opportunity to make amends or risk expulsion from our community. Detrimental behavior puts us all at risk. As adults, we must demonstrate to our children that respect is earned and that it is our responsibilities to become part of the American tapestry.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I already understand the motivations of those that seek to pressure others. These people have no effect on the educated. We must help others see the motivations behind the pressure: to disrupt the strongest alliance between a Judeo-Christian partnership, especially in the volatile Middle-East. The pressure is meant to force an isolation of Israel and the Jewish state. If one is a follower of Christ, we cannot separate out the Old Testament from our beliefs. I am fortunate to have friends of all faiths, to include Jews and Muslims. Those that fervently seek a closer bond to GOD can peacefully practice in our community. Those that take a detour and weaponize religion to control or dominate become an existential risk to peace and order of the community, often infringing on the safety of our children. I will continue to safeguard all of those that peacefully practice or strengthen their connection to their supreme being or GOD.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

The best way to strengthen a community is to put in the time, physical and mental effort to build relationships. This is not something you can do from a political dais, but rather requires investment in being present in the community, spending time at Churches, Synagogues, festivals, culturally significant observances, and memorials. The desire to help must be authentic and natural and will strengthen once you become a stakeholder in the community. That is what I've engaged in for the past 7 years; through community service, connecting with our neighbors of varying cultures and faiths, and establishing lasting relationships. At my local elementary school, we incorporated Multi-cultural nights into the PTA schedule. What's unique is that families and students showcase their backgrounds, rather than shy away or avoid representation. Acknowledgment and intentional integration is the Best way to combat xenophobia.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

The community of parents and teachers working together to drive academics has statistically resulted in higher quality students and retention of knowledge. For MCPS, we must audit where funding is truly going. The budget proposals lack clarity and transparency, nominally grouping expenses under ambiguous nomenclature. The quickest way to make changes is to hold MCPS administration and Central Office staffing accountable. The County Council must

place metrics on budget proposals. Council members must diligently represent us by truly providing routine oversight, not just around election season. We must elect intelligent and experienced leaders. As a U.S. Naval Academy graduate and the current Admission rep for multiple schools, I seek out the best and most well-rounded candidates. I will also leverage my MBA and other certifications to dissect data and make a proper analysis, instead of counting on second hand recommendations.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

We can avail funding by audit where Montgomery County spends more than 50% of its Operating Budget: MCPS. The school district has consistently failed to deliver improving results. We must limit MCPS spending to dollars directly tied to classroom and (academic, sports or arts) program performance. MCPS also attempts to build in mental health, restorative justice, private security… expanding the scope of costs completely outside of their mandate: delivering education. With the savings we will see by mitigating out of scope costs, we will increase the percentage of operating budget to support critical non-profits. I favor some those non-profits that deliver last mile services, covering needs that a local government lack capacity, manpower or expertise to provide. Raising property taxes, sales taxes, income taxes, or permitting fees are not the solution, that is a barrier for any potential private donations.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 4 - Democratic

Paula Bienenfeld

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Here are my three issues (interrelated): Shift the economic development focus to attracting high-target corporations that provide high-paying jobs and a larger tax base. Growing revenue by increasing property tax rates and fees on residents keeps us in the current downward budget spiral. True government transparency, responsiveness, fiscal accountability, to include working to stop no-bid contracts, including at MCPS; and reform the autocratic planning department; Affordability in housing and daily living. To help bring down these costs I will promote free school lunch; free weekend meals for kids no-questions-asked, available at libraries. I will not raise taxes, including property and recordation taxes or fees; will reject new fees, and will push to lower taxes and eliminate some fees.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

This is no time to keep our heads down. Jews and allies need to speak out in the public square. In office, I will continue to confront antisemitism and its newest mutation, antizionism. I am on the leadership team of the Montgomery County Jewish Parents Coalition (JPC), and was a member of MCPS's Antiracist and Hate-Bias Advisory Groups. I started the JPC library project to make sure every MCPL library has a display for Jewish American Heritage Month. JPC also celebrates JAHM with Jewish Voices Through Poetry, and Jewish Food Traditions, cosponsored with Silver Spring Town Center. I am proud of initiating the No Fear demonstration that brought thousands to the National Mall in 2021. Antisemitism and hateful attacks of all kinds must be confronted loudly and publicly.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I will speak to all groups. When I take office, I will represent all District 4 residents. However, with all audiences I will work to flip the script and confront antizionism. Zionism is the belief that Israel has a right to exist, a view that aligns with the UN Charter and the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I have never succumbed to pressure from antisemitic or antizionist groups and I will not begin once in office. As someone with a long history of activism I have been called names, been called a racist, and been called antisemitic. That has never stopped me from working on the issues that I and our community care about. Criticism of US or Israeli government policy is not out of bounds. Both countries are democracies, which is a critical basis of our alliance.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

The immigrant community in our county is stressed right now financially and psychologically. I will work on both. I support county and nonprofit programs that assist immigrants in housing, jobs, learning English, entering the workforce, and for children to excel in school. Schools are key, so broadening and enhancing MCPS's family-facing staff and services at the expense of excessive admin costs can be effective if we have the will to do it. Spending on non-essential school programs with limited need can be reduced. An effective public education program, focused on public needs, including immigrants, is the best form of social and community service. I support providing legal aid to immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, who need it. I stand with immigrants who deserve to be safe.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Students would benefit from MCPS budget oversight, saving millions to spend in classrooms and other family-facing services. MCPS has 45% overhead. There is redundancy and waste. I would point to MCPS's scandalous EV bus scheme which has cost tens of millions in misspent dollars. Also, the physical state of schools, mold, broken HVACs, is unacceptable. Meanwhile the Board approves $70 million for new bus depots and $13 million to refurbish a warehouse. I will work to support independent schools, where we can make a difference, and encourage charter schools to provide the best education for each child. Educational needs are never uniform. Unfortunately, private Jewish schools must spend funds on security. I will work to reduce their burden with greater involvement of County law enforcement.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

I would work to increase funding for nonprofits that provide critical social services to residents. This depends on a robust county budget, so we need a serious independent review of our budget to get there. My concern is that there are thousands of nonprofits in this county with little oversight. In Bethesda alone, per IRS documents, there are over 1,000 nonprofits. Though many do not provide services to the county, we also know there is almost no serious oversight of the county-funded nonprofits' efficacy, or their costs. I will work on a budget review and audit so we support those nonprofits that do the vital work, and there are no redundancies. Clarifying which nonprofit agencies are efficacious will increase funds for much-needed county services provided by nonprofits.

Kate Stewart

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1) Continue to push back on the cruel and destructive policies of the White House while ensuring residents' needs are met, especially the needs related to President Trump's attack on the social services safety net. 2) Continue the work I have begun through my mental health initiative to promote mental health wellness by reducing the stigma, addressing issues before they escalate, and creating healthier, more supportive communities. 3) Continue to work to ensure stable affordable housing is available in the county for all residents.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I have worked closely with JCRC, especially during the first year of my term when we had a number of antisemitic incidents in schools. I have worked to make sure antisemitic graffiti is removed quickly, including working with Park Police who arrested an individual who repeatedly spray painted public property along our trails. I have voted to increase funding for security grants for houses of worship. When I chaired the Board of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments the first year of my term, I organized a training on antisemitism for elected officials from MD, DC, and VA. The training took place before the horrific events of October 7th and many colleagues expressed thanks to me as the information shared helped them respond to the events of October 7th and in the months after.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a County Councilmember the last three years I have prioritized the safety and needs of residents in Montgomery County. The events across the world deeply impact our residents. Horrific things are happening every day. As a local elected official I have seen my role as serving and protecting the residents of Montgomery County. We have seen a rise in antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Blackness, anti-LQGTQ+. I have and will continue to work with organizations who share the goal of fighting the rise of hate and who put County residents' needs front and center. That is how I will decide which organizations to work with. I do not believe that an organization that supports the existence of Israel should be shunned by local leaders.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I have a strong record of working with our immigrant community, not only now but during the first Trump Admin. We work with others to provide training on how to spot and what to do if ICE is in our community and how to support residents impacted by detention. I have supported legislation including, Trust Act, Values Act, Unmask Ice Act, and ICE OUT Act. I am the lead on the Vehicle Recovery Act which will reduce barriers for families impacted by detainment to recover impounded vehicles. When our neighbors are taken, many times their vehicles are left behind and towed. Impacted families are forced to navigate one hurdle after another, and this bill would facilitate the recovery of their vehicle.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Since COVID our schools both public and independent have taken on so much to ensure not only our students but our families are supported. We are seeing a rise in students with increased needs from mental health to food insecurity and housing challenges. We need to continue to work in partnership with our schools to ensure we are meeting the needs of families. Focusing on mental health needs, as I have done the last few years, we need to ensure students and families know of the resources available and do a better job connecting the resources provided at schools with those provided by County Departments. The county has been moving forward with its Community Connect portal and is looking for ways to expand. Using tools such as this will help us connect those in need to services.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are the backbone of our community and with the policies of the federal admin we need to do more to support them. The $7.75 million supplemental I led in the fall included funding for a grant program for capacity building and technical assistance for nonprofits to pursue consolidation and continuation of services in the face of adverse Federal actions. The County must provide resources and technical assistance to support our nonprofits as they create greater coordination and collaboration to provide social services. I have also always supported the inflationary increase for nonprofits in the budget and have led efforts to create the Grants Workgroup because we need to do better in managing our grant process so it is beneficial to our community and to our nonprofit partners.

Peter "Rocky" Whitesell

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Homelessness & Housing: Homelessness and the affordability crisis must be addressed by increasing the production of affordable multi-family housing. That means significant zoning changes near transit, expanded gap financing for HOC projects, and a permitting process that is more predictable and less financially risky.

Transit & Infrastructure: I will prioritize increased bus frequency along major corridors, along with a greatly expanded rollout of transit signal priority and improved stop infrastructure.

Actively Defending Civil Rights: Non-cooperation in the face of a pattern of civil rights violations is not enough. I support active, though peaceful, intervention by county police when they witness illegal activity by federal agents, along with expanded support for the Office of Human Rights.

How will you confront antisemitism and

other forms of hatred?

I love our community because it is so amazingly diverse, and I see antisemitism and other forms of hate as direct attacks on that. As a councilmember I will use my voice to condemn hate whenever it emerges, and I will take seriously the need to document and track it so that we understand where problems are developing. Montgomery County already has a range of anti-discrimination and anti-hate programs, including work through the Office of Human Rights, but they need continual oversight to ensure they are actually effective. Strengthening that accountability will be one of my goals in office.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

The job of a councilmember is to ensure that every resident can live freely, peacefully, and safely in our county. I will engage with Jewish organizations and with every other faith-based and community organization, because I cannot do that job without listening to everyone in our community. Even where we may disagree, residents should know that I am working for them and that their voices will always be heard.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

The current federal administration has repeatedly violated the fundamental civil rights of immigrants and citizens alike. The council's stance of non-cooperation is appropriate, but in my view it does not adequately protect residents. It should also be explicit policy for county law enforcement to intervene legally and peacefully when there are clearly illegal actions by federal agents. There is long standing precedent whereby federal agents have substantial leeway in carrying out their orders, but that does not equate to unlimited power nor does it mean county police have no role in ensuring the rights of residents are respected. My goal is not to bring about conflict, but neither can we shy away from fulfilling our duty to our neighbors and I do not believe we are meeting that duty currently. Beyond that, I want to thoroughly review the state of county supports for immigrants, particularly making sure that they are able to access county programs and supported non-profits. I plan to be very active in seeking out immigrant perspectives, not just by relying on intermediaries but directly going out into our community and talking with people one on one frequently.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

The largest levers will be on ensuring quality in MCPS, though for private schools I want to make sure the county is coordinating with them wherever we can to allow them smooth operations. I will make sure private school administrations and parents are involved in planning, infrastructure and public programs throughout the county when appropriate. On the public side, I want first to ensure that the current school renovations happen as quickly, smoothly, and equitably as possible. But critically, I think that many schools throughout the county are in too poor of condition to wait for the full renovation cycles of the current plan, and we need to urgently address things like HVAC upgrades because of persistent mold and air quality issues. Kids and teachers need safe classrooms now, it doesn't matter if that is less cost efficient we cannot sacrifice them for budgetary expediency. Second, I want to make sure we maintain a high level of funding, even as we face a tougher fiscal outlook following the slashing of federal employment in our county. I want especially to ensure that we are fully funding the necessary scaffolding for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future changes, and that we are embracing the state superintendent's emphasis on early childhood education.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

The rapid rise in homelessness, particularly among children, is really the reason I decided to run for office. A key priority for me is ensuring that services to help the homeless, and to prevent homelessness are not just well funded but that they do not have to jump through unnecessary hoops to secure funding, that they are judged on real outcomes and they are given sufficient discretion. Too often the social services available to any population are too narrowly administered, and huge populations fall through the gaps or are underserved. Addressing those gaps, and making sure there is sufficient funding both for county run and non-profit run services will be a key goal of mine.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 5 - Democratic

Charles Kirchman

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Taxes - The average resident of Montgomery County is under increasing financial pressure. The answer for the county budget issues should not be to raise property and income taxes. All capital spending plans need to be prioritized for urgent projects and delay spending on others. All department budgets should be thoroughly reviewed to look for savings and cost efficiencies. Development - We need to protect our county and our communities from the push for rapid and denser development in our neighborhoods. It was understood that development would occur along the Metro corridors but now even Bus Rapid Transit Corridors are candidates for denser growth. All of this will be at the expense of the existing communities that will need to deal with overcrowded schools, more traffic congestion, noise and loss of green space. Require the use of Transfer Development Rights to protect the Agricultural Reserve. Public Safety - Need to get more patrol officers on the street in areas experiencing more violent crime and those neighborhoods dealing with persistent low level nuisance crimes.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Everyone must be protected from discrimination, fear and harassment. Unfortunately, we have a federal government that under its' current leadership normalizes the dehumanization of others for any reason that suits their political goals. We need to continue to support programs that teach empathy, critical thinking and cultural literacy in our schools and communities. When incidents arise, we should support those that are targeted and whenever possible encourage dialogue to resolve issues.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I would feel no pressure from any group as long as the organization in question does not support or condone violence or hatred toward others.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Ensure that everyone is welcomed, respected, aware of resources and opportunities that are available. Continue to support cultural events throughout the county.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

My focus would be to work on making improvements to the public schools. Many of our older school buildings are in need of repair and replacement. Although our schools are considered some of the best there is still room for improvement in academics, student conduct and safety. I would want to meet with families and school administrators to find solutions to these problems.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

With the current fiscal pressures on the county budget I would work to maintain funding at the current levels.

Kristin Mink

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

As a former MCPS and private school teacher, an MCPS grad, and an MCPS parent, I will continue using my seat on the Education & Culture Committee to push for the funding our schools need and increased transparency around exactly how those dollars are spent. I helped lead the passage of rent stabilization and wrote the amendment prohibiting properties on the Troubled Properties List (excessive code violations) from raising rents at all, driving a historic 70% decrease in Troubled Properties. I also have bills in the pipeline to increase the construction of affordable housing via our successful Housing Production Fund. Protect our social safety net programs, including nonprofits, to help residents survive federal layoffs and cuts and attacks on immigrants and our diverse community.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will continue to be vocal both publicly and privately about antisemitism and other forms of hatred. So often, acts of hate are efforts to both create fear and sow division. As a community and as elected leaders, we must be unequivocal and unapologetic in standing up for our diverse community, including in policy or budget (such as the nonprofit security grant funds) as needed, and refusing to let acts of hate divide us.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

My focus has always been on delivering what my community needs. I work with individuals, organizations, and community groups where we have shared goals and working together will help us achieve them on behalf of the community. This has meant and will continue to mean that some of the people and groups I work with vehemently disagree with each other about certain issues.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I have held Know Your Rights and now ICE Response info sessions over the last year for County housing services providers, school staff, faith communities, parents/PTAs and more. I respond to reports of ICE. This work has helped inform my legislative efforts. As a result of my recently passed County Values Act, County staff are receiving mandatory training for ICE encounters, and you'll soon see signs at all County properties, including parking lots/garages, barring immigration enforcement activities. I am currently working with frontline community groups to build and strengthen their connections with County services and nonprofits, to ensure impacted families can safely and securely access the resources our safety net provides.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

As a former public and private school teacher, I am committed to ensuring that students are able to receive a quality education, wherever they go. I will continue to use my seat on the Education and Culture Committee and my work in the community to deliver funding and improve educational pathways and opportunities from birth through graduation, recognizing that the real deliverable that matters is the ability of our young people to thrive once they exit academia.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are an absolutely essential part of our County's social services infrastructure. It is simply not possible for the government to replicate much of what our nonprofits do at the community level with the same quality, agility, and cultural fluency. So we must ensure they have what they need to keep up with dramatically increasing costs, retain their staff, and deliver services to a population that is growing in need. As the federal government robs from social services to fund tax breaks for millionaires, we must take serious steps to recognize the emergency before us and address it. This includes options like taxing the rich, making some tough cuts to other areas, and using some of our reserves.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 5 – Republican

Josephine Salazar

Did not submit a response and candidate unopposed.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 6 - Democratic

Natali Fani-Gonzalez

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

1. Bringing good paying jobs: I'm the current Chair of Economic Development for the Council. I have led the council on funding innovation programs that target the life science industry and proud to lead streamline permitting for businesses, including restaurants. Working with the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, I introduced legislation to cut the time in half of obtaining regulatory approvals that bring at least 200 employees. 2.Making our communities more affordable. I will continue to work make sure that everybody who works here can afford to live here. That means using an array of proven housing solutions to ensure every family has the opportunity to call Montgomery County home. 3.Reducing traffic and pollution: Every minute we spend in traffic is a minute away from our families. I will continue to work to make commuting efficient and safe, so we can reduce traffic and give families more time to spend together. I will continue working to invest in improving our public transportation network for people to walk, bike, roll, take transit and drive safely.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Confronting antisemitism and other forms of hatred requires a multi-faceted approach involving education, active intervention, and reporting. I have actively done all three of them. I have been a strong supporter of providing security grants per facility to nonprofits and faith-based organizations at high risk of hate crimes and will continue to do so. No one should have to worry about their safety while serving their community or practicing their faith. I have also held trainings for faith communities and the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management; one of such trainings that I organized took place at Young Israel Shomrai Emunah in Kemp Mill. Furthermore, I have been also outspoken about the need of educating our community, including non-profit organizations, about antisemitism.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As an elected official, it is critical for me to continue using my platform to unite and not further divide our community. I look forward to continuing my partnership with JCRC!

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I'm the only immigrant on the Montgomery County Council and I am currently the Council President. My first act as President was to introduce the Trust Act, legislation that puts into law that the police department cannot act as immigration agents and

that no one should be discriminated against in Montgomery County due to their immigration status. I'm proud to have been able to get all my colleagues on the Council as well as the Chief of Police in support of this bill, which is now a law. I will continue to work in the spirit of collaboration and unity for a stronger Montgomery County.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I will continue to support our public schools as well as independent schools like the awesome Berman Hebrew Academy in my district!

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

One of the great things about Montgomery County is having an incredible nonprofit sector! I will continue working to ensure nonprofits get the funding they deserve. Many of our nonprofits work with the most vulnerable communities: working with individuals with disabilities, individuals at risk of losing their homes, working to keep our water clean, and so much more. I will continue to do everything I can to fund the projects that help Montgomery County thrive.

Sonia A. Garcia

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My top priorities are restoring trust in government, strengthening economic opportunity, and protecting neighborhood stability. To restore trust, I will require early, transparent engagement by meeting with communities, including faith-based communities, before plans move forward so concerns are heard early. To strengthen economic opportunity, I will support small businesses, expand workforce development, and create broader job pathways that reflect our community's needs. To protect neighborhood stability, I will support real affordability, include anti-displacement protections, and ensure development decisions respect existing communities and their essential institutions.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Antisemitism and all forms of hate must be addressed through clear, proactive action, not just statements. I will support stronger coordination between local government, schools, and law enforcement to ensure hate incidents are reported, tracked, and responded to quickly. I will also advocate for funding for community-based safety initiatives and education focused on preventing hate. This work should not begin only when incidents rise or during election cycles. It requires consistent, ongoing engagement. We need real conversations with residents so concerns are heard early. In Kemp Mill, I helped raise awareness when a key kosher shopping center was proposed for rezoning without proper outreach. That situation should have been identified proactively. Leadership means knowing your communities and addressing concerns before plans like the University Boulevard Corridor Plan reach the full Council and create real harm for the people they affect.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

As a councilmember, I will work with all communities in Montgomery County and will not exclude or isolate any group. Jewish organizations are an important part of our district 6, and engagement should never be conditional. I will represent every single resident in my district, regardless of background, identity, or beliefs. My responsibility is to the people I serve locally, and that means showing up, listening, and working with all communities. I believe in open dialogue, not division.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As the daughter of immigrants and someone who grew up in this community, I understand the importance of safety, stability, and opportunity. Supporting immigrant communities requires more than statements; it requires policies that protect people's ability to remain in their homes. While the Council claims urgency around immigration issues, some housing policies risk replacing or targeting the homes of the very immigrant families they aim to support. Proposals like the University Boulevard Corridor Plan, More Housing N.O.W., and the redevelopment of the Americana Glenmont Apartments WILL displace families living in existing affordable housing. I will prioritize real outreach, language access, and anti-displacement protections so immigrant communities are supported in practice.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Strong schools are essential to strong communities. I will support full funding for public schools, with clear accountability and oversight to ensure resources are used effectively and students receive the support they need. I also recognize that many families rely on independent and faith-based schools. The County should work to ensure these schools are supported through safe infrastructure, coordination with public safety, and access to resources that help protect students and staff. As our communities grow, we must ensure that school capacity, transportation, and infrastructure keep pace so all students, across both public and independent schools, can learn in safe and supportive environments.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are essential partners in serving our communities. I will advocate for stable, transparent, and accessible funding processes so organizations can focus on delivering services rather than navigating barriers. After my federal layoff, I worked directly with a nonprofit to conduct outreach in communities like Kemp Mill, helping residents understand policies that would impact their homes and neighborhoods. Through that work, we distributed information, engaged residents, and helped bring the community into the conversation. That experience reinforced that nonprofits are often the bridge between government and residents. I will prioritize collaboration and ensure funding reflects community needs so these organizations can continue doing this critical work.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 6 – Republican

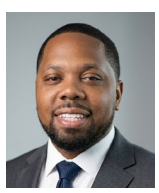
Louella Tham

Did not submit a response and candidate unopposed.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 7 - Democratic

Van Free



What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Public safety, economic opportunity, and cost of living. As a firefighter/EMT, I've seen how gaps in mental health, housing, and emergency response impact families in real time—I'll push for stronger crisis response systems and prevention. As a small business owner, I'll cut red tape and expand access to capital so local businesses can grow. And I'll prioritize affordable housing and responsible budgeting so working families can stay in Montgomery County.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

Hatred has no place in our community. This is personal for me—my two oldest children are part of the Jewish community, via their mother. As a firefighter, I've always served everyone without bias, and I'll bring that same commitment to public office. I will support strong hate crime enforcement, invest in education and prevention, and work closely with community leaders to ensure people feel safe in their schools, houses of worship, and neighborhoods.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I won't allow outside pressure to dictate who I engage with. I believe in open dialogue and working with all parts of our community, including Jewish organizations with diverse perspectives. My focus is on serving Montgomery County residents. I'll continue to engage respectfully, build relationships, and reject efforts to divide communities or exclude people based on their beliefs or identity.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

As a first responder, I've served people from every background, and I know how important trust is. I'll support policies that ensure immigrants feel safe accessing emergency services, healthcare, and education. I'll also work to expand workforce opportunities, protect against exploitation, and partner with community organizations to make sure families have the resources they need to succeed.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

Strong schools are the foundation of strong communities. I'll advocate for fully funding public education, supporting teachers, and expanding career and technical pathways. At the same time, I respect the role independent schools play and will ensure they are treated fairly in policy decisions. As someone who believes in practical solutions, I'll focus on outcomes—safe schools, strong academics, and opportunities for every student to succeed.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Nonprofits are often on the front lines—just like first responders. I've seen how critical they are in supporting families in crisis. I'll work to streamline the grant process, make funding more predictable, and ensure smaller organizations have access—not just the largest ones. We should also strengthen public-private partnerships so nonprofits can expand their impact and deliver services more effectively.

Sharif Hidayat

Did not submit a response.

Dawn Luedtke

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Affordability: On the Council, I have supported and will continue to expand the types of housing allowed to provide the supply needed to bring down rising for-sale and for-rent housing costs. While all of us understand the importance of taxes to providing quality services, we cannot continue increasing taxes and fees given how unaffordable it is becoming to live here and with all of the other cost and inflation pressures facing families. I have been a leader against tax and fee increases on this Council and will continue pushing for honest and fiscally responsible budgets. Public safety: I have been a leader through my work serving on the Council's Public Safety and Health and Human Services Committees in improving the County's public safety services by focusing on a collaborative and person-centered approach. I have worked with leaders throughout County agencies and offices on all aspects of community safety and wellness, led the Council to embrace new technologies, supported improved benefits and hiring incentives for key public safety professionals, and led legislation to protect immigrants, improve mental health crisis response, and more. Economic development: To create more opportunity for prosperity, we must grow the number of good-paying, family-sustaining job options in our County. I will continue to protect and seek to expand workforce development education in good-paying careers, such as our auto technology programs in MCPS and Montgomery College. Access to quality and affordable early childcare education is crucial to parents being able to stay and thrive in the workforce. I have been a champion for ensuring resources in our early childhood programs are being used to help create seats for kids, and will continue fighting to make childcare less expensive and easier to operate for providers. We also must diversify our economy by finding onerous or outdated overregulation - something I have done on the Council and will continue to do by working with local businesses and nonprofits.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

This area of work has been important to me predating my service on the Council. I view it as fundamental to my public safety and community wellness priorities. I support the $500,000 increase to nonprofit security grant funding, recognizing the increased antisemitic and anti-Jewish danger too many synagogues and Jewish organizations are facing. The costs of a constant security presence that is unfortunately necessary are taking up too much of the budgets of these organizations and congregations, and the County must continue to help. I bring significant personal expertise on this issue. I provide training on hate crimes and hate bias for law enforcement officers, which is required by State law. I also believe it's important to be up front and direct about the First Amendment (what speech is protected, and what speech is not), the harms caused by hate bias incidents (those which involve hate speech but do not rise to the level of criminal conduct but most certainly impact community well-being), and also to being attentive to balancing responsiveness to communities who are affected and condemning the actions while also not re-traumatizing those who were affected. I believe how we as elected officials carry ourselves matters greatly, even if national politics signals otherwise. And I believe we owe a tremendous duty to all of our residents to be mindful of that - our values should stay consistent for all.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I do not horse trade on who I serve in elected office - I am serving all members of our community. Back to my point above, I firmly believe we must balance the interests, concerns, needs, worries and fears of all of our residents in doing the best job we can for those we serve. I have been unapologetic in my dislike of "cancel culture" and knee-jerk reactions wherein one group attempts to cut off access for another group. Those kinds of demands are not collaborative, not in the best interest of the whole, and to me, personally unacceptable. In the ever-shifting world in which we live, we must stay focused on the long term balance of the needs of our beautiful, diverse community and not to "politically push aside" one group of neighbors' voices from another.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

I have sponsored several legislative items which are within Montgomery County's authority to do that will benefit our immigrant community and are designed to make sure they know our values and that we do not for one second accept the lawlessness with which the federal government is currently operating. I will continue working with our Department of Health and Human Services and nonprofit partners, faith-based partners, to share what is happening on the ground, provide resources for legal aid, and make sure that our social safety net service delivery is able to adapt to meet rapidly changing needs. Those most affected by the federal government's abuses should still receive services to help stabilize their families, and know that they are supported by their local government.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

I am proud of the almost $700 million in public education funding this Council has been able to achieve in the last four years - ensuring better pay for

educators, smaller class sizes, more special education professionals, and more focus on safety inside school buildings. We must continue to create opportunities for MCPS to thrive, and I also will continue providing crucial oversight of the system when it falls short. All students, educators, and families deserve nothing less. I will continue to support the County's nonprofit security grant program to help independent schools - especially those affiliated with religious organizations at risk of hate - provide safe and nurturing environments.

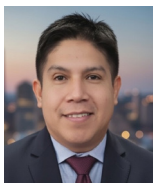
How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

Because programs and services offered by nonprofit agencies vary over time, and the County's needs shift and change, I believe that having an RFP process for contract awards is critical so that the tax dollars we do have to allocate to work performed by nonprofit agencies on behalf of the County is awarded competitively and scoped appropriately. I also support the competitive nonprofit grant process which allows the County to determine awardees based on proposals and can be adaptive from year to year to address current issues.

Candidates for Montgomery County Council:

District 7 – Republican

Harold Maldonado



What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My three main issues are crime, the economy, and the airpark. Crime: Public safety is a basic responsibility of government, and I believe Montgomery County has moved in the wrong direction. I will support stronger law enforcement resources, better staffing, and policies that prioritize enforcement, accountability, and safe neighborhoods so families can feel secure again. Economy: I will focus on making Montgomery County more affordable for working families, homeowners, and small businesses. That means pushing back against excessive taxes, costly mandates, and policies that drive up utility bills, housing costs, and the overall cost of living. Airpark: Residents living near the Montgomery County Airpark deserve to be heard and protected. I will fight for stronger oversight and real action on long-standing concerns such as noise, low-flying aircraft, safety issues, and the continued use of leaded fuel so local families are no longer ignored.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred?

I will confront antisemitism and every form of hatred with zero tolerance. That means supporting strong enforcement of hate crime laws, ensuring schools and public institutions respond seriously to antisemitism, and making clear that intimidation, harassment, and targeted violence will not be tolerated in Montgomery County. Every resident deserves to feel safe, respected, and protected in their community.

How will you handle pressure from groups urging you to avoid working with Jewish organizations that support a Jewish, democratic State of Israel ("Zionism")?

I'm an America First candidate, which means my focus is with the residents of Montgomery County and their respective needs, issues, and daily problems like high taxes, rampant crime, an airpark polluting our air, and the county becoming too expensive for working families. I'd defer to our federal government on its policies to working with other countries.

How will you work to support the immigrant community?

Everything comes down to legality. Legal immigrants deserve to be treated with respect and with dignity as they move to incorporate their families in our communities.

How will you work to enhance both public and independent schools?

My focus will be to start fixing MCPS as its problems are acute. As an economist, I don't see the return on investment being positive with the billions of our tax dollars that go to our schools' budget every year. I will call for a full audit of all county expenditures, including MCPS, to identify waste, fraud, and abuse and use the results of this audit to reassign funds to where their needed the most, like reducing the overhead of MCPS and increase the money that actually goes to classroom learning. As for independent schools, I plan to do an extensive outreach to them so we can replicate their success stories.

How would you enhance the availability of funding for nonprofit agencies that provide social services?

We have over 5,000 NGOs in the county. Are they all doing what they're supposed to? The audit will also include doing an exhaustive review of all the money/grants that go to the NGOS and see if we can identify duplicity and enhance the work of these NGOs. For example, we have a homeless crisis in the county and how can this be in we have so many NGOs working on homeless issues?

Montgomery County Public Schools Board of Education:

At-Large

Wylea Chase

Did not submit a response.

Brenda M. Diaz

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My Three Most Important Issues — And Exactly How I Will Address Them 1. Rebuilding Academic Excellence: I will restore rigorous, content-rich, knowledge-rich instruction by requiring whole books and classical literature, explicit math teaching, grade-appropriate assignments, and dramatically limiting Chromebooks and screens in elementary and middle schools. Every child — regardless of background — will be held to high standards so they graduate truly prepared for college, career, and life. 2, Prioritizing School Safety and Order: I will bring back School Resource Officers to every high school and middle school, fully enforce the revised Student Code of Conduct, and champion a Teacher's Bill of Rights so educators can maintain discipline without fear. Safe, orderly classrooms are non-negotiable — students cannot learn when chaos is tolerated. 3. Transparency, Accountability, and Parental Empowerment: I will fight for an independent Office of the Inspector General to expose waste and mismanagement, demand full public oversight of budgets and decisions in order to reinvest our funds to the full restoration of our schools' crumbling infrastructure, and treat parents and teachers as true partners — not obstacles. No more gatekeeping or hidden processes; families will finally have a seat at the table as respected members of our greater community.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the school system?

I will enforce zero tolerance through real accountability. I will demand strict enforcement of the Student Code of Conduct and bring back School Resource Officers to every middle and high school. SROs build relationships, deter incidents, and ensure swift consequences — no more turning a blind eye to threats, slurs, or violence. Discrimination in any form will not be tolerated, period. I will fix the training and curriculum failures. The current "click-through" antisemitism training is inadequate. I will require meaningful, historically accurate training for all staff and administrators. In the classroom, I will replace watered-down materials with a content-rich curriculum where students are steeped in our founding history and documents, developing a sense of a common American heritage — especially our natural-born rights as listed in the Constitution, including freedom of religion. Every student will learn the stages of genocide, with the Holocaust included as one such example, so they understand why hatred must be rejected and never repeated. I will empower parents and restore transparency. Parents will have a real voice: clear reporting systems for hate incidents, public dashboards tracking every bias event and the district's response, and an independent Inspector General to investigate failures. No more gatekeeping or protecting staff who post divisive content that students can see.

How would you ensure MCPS complies?

I will demand real oversight and results. I will vote to approve only training programs that meet the law's intent — not superficial "click-through" modules. Through the independent Office of the Inspector General I will fight to create, we will audit completion rates, training quality, and actual impact on school climate. Public dashboards will track every school's compliance, incident reports, and follow-up actions so parents and taxpayers can see exactly what is happening. I will also tie training to meaningful curriculum change. Compliance cannot stop at staff workshops. I will push the Board to integrate the required anti-bias content into a content-rich curriculum where students learn the stages of genocide (with the Holocaust as a key example), our founding history and documents, and our natural-born rights in the Constitution — including freedom of religion. This builds a shared American heritage that rejects hatred at its root.

How can MCPS make certain that when teachers who are disciplined for antisemitic-related incidents are reassigned to other schools, they do not continue to engage in impermissible, harmful conduct?

I will demand a strict "no-repeat" protocol. Every discipline case involving bias or hatred will trigger a permanent central file that travels with the employee. The new principal must receive the full record and implement a mandatory probation plan with direct oversight from Central Office. Repeat offenses will result in termination — not another transfer.

How would you bring greater quality control to ensure teaching about Jews and Israel is accurate and culturally responsive?

I will partner directly with the JCRC for vetted curriculum and resources. I will direct MCPS to adopt or integrate JCRC-recommended materials — including those from the Institute for Curriculum Services and the JCRC Antisemitism Toolkit. I will bring living voices into classrooms through JCRC speakers. These in-person presentations will make history personal and unforgettable, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of Jewish experiences while reinforcing the stages of genocide and our shared American commitment to freedom of religion. In addition, parents will have full public access to materials in advance via an online portal as part of an ongoing project to enact true curriculum transparency to the community.

Omar Lazo

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

First, I will push for a county-level version of the Stop the Hate Act. It would standardize Holocaust Education across Montgomery County, making it a requirement for graduation. Second, I will try to require all MCPS high schools to arrange a trip to the Holocaust Museum. Third, I will work with groups to provide a new way to introduce Israel to younger students. There are many misconceptions about the politics and people of Israel, and early education would be helpful to dispel some of these incorrect notions.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the school system?

Antisemitism and all forms of hate have no place in our schools. We must address this through education, training, standardized curriculum, and accountability. This includes ensuring consistent teaching about the Holocaust, antisemitism, and other forms of hatred across all schools, and making sure educators and students are trained to recognize hateful and hurtful language and behavior. We must also ensure incidents are reported, taken seriously, and handled consistently. Schools must be places where every student feels safe, respected, and able to learn. Preventing hate through education and clear expectations is just as important as responding when incidents occur.

How would you ensure MCPS complies?

Anti-bias training is important, but it must be meaningful and not just a box to check. The training should be high quality, practical, and focused on real situations educators and students face in schools, including recognizing antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, and other forms of hate and how to respond appropriately. These trainings should be developed with input from the communities most affected so they are accurate, respectful, and impactful. To ensure MCPS complies, I would push for clear standards, regular reporting to the Board of Education, and measurable outcomes so we know the training is actually making a difference in our schools. The goal should be to change school culture, improve understanding, and ensure all students feel safe and respected, not simply to meet a requirement.

How can MCPS make certain that when teachers who are disciplined for antisemitic-related incidents are reassigned to other schools, they do not continue to engage in impermissible, harmful conduct?

MCPS must ensure that when any staff member is disciplined for antisemitic or other hate-related conduct, the response includes both accountability and corrective action. This starts with clear professional standards and a code of conduct that makes it very clear what is acceptable and what is not. Educators who violate these standards should be required to undergo meaningful education and training before returning to the classroom, not just reassignment. There must also be a system of accountability, including documentation, monitoring, and consequences for repeated behavior. Reassignment alone cannot be the solution. The goal must be to correct behavior, protect students, and ensure every school environment is safe, respectful, and focused on learning.

How would you bring greater quality control to ensure teaching about Jews and Israel is accurate and culturally responsive?

It is important that curriculum and instruction about Jewish history, Jewish identity, and Israel are accurate, balanced, and culturally responsive. One way to improve quality control is by strengthening partnerships with organizations like Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington

and other nonprofits, and incorporating community input when reviewing curriculum and instructional materials. We also need more consistency across the school system so instruction is not overly dependent on an individual teacher's interpretation. MCPS should provide clearer curriculum guidance, approved instructional resources, and professional development so educators teach these topics accurately, respectfully, and consistently across all schools.

Tiffany E. Wicks

Did not submit a response.

Montgomery County Public Schools Board of Education:

District 1

Grace Rivera-Oven

Did not submit a response and candidate unopposed.

Montgomery County Public Schools Board of Education:

District 3

Sharon Creed

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

First, student safety and combating hate. Every student deserves to feel safe at school. With rising antisemitism across the country, I am committed to ensuring Jewish students feel protected and respected. I will support stronger anti-hate policies, improved reporting systems, and staff training to recognize and respond to antisemitism and all forms of discrimination.

Second, inclusion and cultural respect. Our schools must honor the identities of all students. I will advocate for recognizing major religious holidays, including Jewish holidays, improving cultural competency training, and ensuring Jewish families feel heard and included in school decisions.

Third, academic excellence for all. Supporting students means giving every child access to rigorous academics and opportunities to succeed. I will work to expand enrichment programs, strengthen curriculum, and ensure all students—including those from minority communities—have the resources they need to thrive.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the school system?

I will stand firmly against antisemitism and all forms of hatred, and I will make sure Jewish students feel safe, respected, and supported in our schools. Antisemitism is not just unacceptable—it must be addressed directly and consistently. I support clear consequences for hate-based behavior, stronger education about Jewish history and the Holocaust, and better training for teachers to recognize and respond to bias. I will also work with Jewish community organizations and families to ensure their voices are heard. Our schools must be places where Jewish students—and all students—can learn without fear and with pride in who they are.

How would you ensure MCPS complies?

I will ensure MCPS fully complies with anti-bias training requirements while making the protection of Jewish students a clear priority. Antisemitism has been rising, and our response must be serious and consistent. I will require 100% participation, track completion publicly, and ensure the training includes meaningful education about antisemitism and Jewish identity. I will also review its effectiveness and require follow-up actions so staff can respond quickly to incidents. Compliance is not just a requirement—it is a commitment to making sure Jewish students feel safe, respected, and supported in every school.

How can MCPS make certain that when teachers who are disciplined for antisemitic-related incidents are reassigned to other schools, they do not continue to engage in impermissible, harmful conduct?

MCPS must ensure that protecting Jewish students is the top priority, not simply moving problems from one school to another. Any teacher involved in antisemitic conduct should face thorough investigation and meaningful consequences. If reassigned, they must complete strong, specific training on antisemitism and be placed under close administrative oversight with clear behavior expectations. Their conduct should be carefully monitored, with documented evaluations. Any repeat behavior must lead to escalating consequences, including termination if necessary. Jewish students deserve to feel safe in every school, and accountability must follow the individual wherever they go.

How would you bring greater quality control to ensure teaching about Jews and Israel is accurate and culturally responsive?

I will make accurate and respectful teaching about Jewish history and Israel a clear priority in MCPS. Jewish students deserve to see their identity represented truthfully—not erased or mischaracterized. I would establish a strong review process with credible experts and Jewish community organizations to ensure materials are accurate and balanced. I would also require teacher training so these topics are taught with sensitivity and care. In addition, I would create a clear system for families to report concerns, with prompt review and correction. Our classrooms must reflect respect for Jewish history, identity, and lived experience.

Brett DiResta

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

The three most important issues are fixing the crumbling school infrastructure, reducing class sizes, and formulating a forward-thinking Artificial Intelligence policy that teaches our children to use AI without becoming overly reliant on it.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the school system?

Two of the main reasons my wife and I moved to Montgomery County are MCPS and the Jewish Community. We wanted our children to have an incredible public education experience, alongside a vibrant Jewish Community. Nearly a quarter century later, our synagogue, Beth-El, and the High School of my children, Winston Churchill, have been defiled with antisemitic graffiti. These incidents, along with similar instances around the county, inspired me to run. The first step in confronting the problem is to get the Board of Education and MCPS to acknowledge it. Too often, antisemitism isn't named. The County must admit that antisemitism is a growing problem before they can get it under control. Second, MCPS needs to encourage policies, like peer-to-peer education, to help stem the rise in antisemitism and other forms of hate.

How would you ensure MCPS complies?

I will make anti-bias training an in-person course required for getting a license in the County, and required for those taking office. Online training courses can be easily gamed, and do not require attention from the attendees. By making it an in-person required course, we can not only ensure that MCPS complies, but also be certain that the attendees learn from the course.

How can MCPS make certain that when teachers who are disciplined for antisemitic-related incidents are reassigned to other schools, they do not continue to engage in impermissible, harmful conduct?

To ensure that disciplined teachers refrain from antisemitic activities, MCPS needs to; Provide resources to monitor teacher activity. Guarantee parents have an open channel to MCPS to report any problematic behavior. Work with the teacher's union to guarantee that the next contract provides real consequences for repeatedly violating MCPS anti-bias rules.

How would you bring greater quality control to ensure teaching about Jews and Israel is accurate and culturally responsive?

First, I will push for a county-level version of the Stop the Hate Act. It would standardize Holocaust Education across Montgomery County, making it a requirement for graduation. Second, I will try to require all MCPS high schools to arrange a trip to the Holocaust Museum. Third, I will work with groups to provide a new way to introduce Israel to younger students. There are many misconceptions about the politics and people of Israel, and early education would be helpful to dispel some of these incorrect notions.

Andrew Frykman

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Restoring Academic Excellence to MCPS. Parents and teachers alike know that, over time, MCPS has let standards slip, and the Board has become less focused. I am laser-focused on delivering a Board that fights for students and families by providing an honest assessment of where students stand, setting rigorous expectations, and pairing that with a curriculum that prepares students for what comes next.

Safe, Orderly Classrooms. Learning simply cannot happen in a chaotic environment. Chaos happens when teachers aren't supported, expectations aren't upheld consistently, and students feel unsafe at school. I strongly advocate for a Student Code of Conduct that is applied fairly and consistently.

Transparency and Parent Partnership. Parents deserve straight answers about how their child is performing and what is being taught. I strongly believe in the push for clear, honest communication from MCPS.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the school system?

I will be unequivocal: hatred towards anyone has no place in MCPS. And that absolutely includes antisemitism.

Statements are not enough, however. The Student Code of Conduct needs to be enforced consistently and without exception; when it isn't, the Board must ask, "Why?" Transparency when incidents occur is imperative. Families need to know not just that something happened, but how it was handled and what followed.

In recent instances of HBI, especially relating to recent global conflict, the local school administration doesn't necessarily fail to follow procedure, but there is a gap in sustained attention and accountability over time. As a Board member, I can't catch perpetrators, but what I can do is make sure these incidents don't just quietly disappear, and I am willing to publicly call out when the response is insufficient.

How would you ensure MCPS complies?

The Board must comply with state law; it is its duty to ensure this happens. MCPS should report publicly on implementation: who has been trained, on what timeline, and how completion is being tracked, etcetera. I can also tell you that training that gets quietly rolled out without an accountability arm doesn't stick.

I would also want to understand the quality of the training and not just the completion rate. Anti-bias training that is generic or performative doesn't serve anyone, and certainly isn't in the spirit the law intends. MCPS should easily be able to demonstrate that what is being delivered is substantive and that it is actually reaching staff at every level.

How can MCPS make certain that when teachers who are disciplined for antisemitic-related incidents are reassigned to other schools, they do not continue to engage in impermissible, harmful conduct?

This is more of a systemic integrity question. If a staff member has been disciplined for a bias-related incident, that record must follow them. MCPS should ensure that receiving schools are informed when a staff member arrives with a record of this nature, and should make it clear that this isn't a second chance, there is a structured monitoring period, and that any subsequent incident will be treated as a pattern.

But the deeper question here is: why is reassignment even considered in serious cases? Discipline that simply moves a problem to another community is avoidance. I would not be satisfied with that as a resolution.

How would you bring greater quality control to ensure teaching about Jews and Israel is accurate and culturally responsive?

There is an important question here: What else is an institution lacking when it fails at its fundamental purpose?

The Board has a duty to take action when MCPS creates instructional materials that misrepresent or obscure the history and experiences of any community. Simply put, it is a failure, and families and community organizations like JCRC should have a genuine avenue to address it.

The answer is obvious: the only way forward is to provide a clear procedure for affected parties to identify specific materials for Board review.

Sally A. McCarthy

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

The three most important BOE oversight issues to me are: 1) Enacting budgets that prioritize school building safety and well-being for all students and staff. Working toward this

means seeking collaboration within MCPS and across the County Council, law enforcement, emergency management, DHS as well as a commitment to exploring alternative funding for the MCPS Capital Improvement Plans 2) Improving literacy and math achievement, especially for the youngest and most vulnerable learners. Improving student achievement, especially in grades k-3 requires a budget commitment to Special Education Resource Teachers in every ES, considering adding Math specialists and reducing student to counselor ratios. 3) Establishing systemwide accountability and community engagement in the process. I would seek monthly data reports on key MCPS strategic plan indicators be made public at Board business meetings, encourage the BOE to hold public hearings for the budget (not just "town halls") in the community and ask MCPS to adhere to community engagement regulations such as the currently dormant, Facility Advisory Committee.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the school system?

Confronting all forms of hate in MCPS requires a layered approach because the system is so large. First and foremost, it requires MCPS to name and communicate incidents publicly, and seek input from affected communities when issuing communications. I also would ask MCPS to present publicly to the BOE, on a continuous basis, data about hate/bias incidents, required training for teachers and revised curriculum content. I also believe that MCPS should be partnering with community groups for input and expertise on content and training, especially when revising and considering changes. To me, authentic engagement means seeking out the counsel and advice of those with lived experiences.

How would you ensure MCPS complies?

Anti-Bias training is a critical piece of MCPS's 2025-26 Strategic Plan to grow a "high quality, diverse workforce," by engaging employees in inclusive and anti-racist practices. It is my understanding that MCPS is not currently in compliance with this new state requirement. Accountability to stated plans and implementing state law with fidelity means asking for data not just annually, but rather insisting on data sharing and improvement until the goals are met. As a BOE member, I would ask that training data be reported and shared publicly at monthly Board business meetings and require all BOE members to complete the training.

How can MCPS make certain that when teachers who are disciplined for antisemitic-related incidents are reassigned to other schools, they do not continue to engage in impermissible, harmful conduct?

Teachers who are disciplined and reassigned for committing antisemitic incidents remain contractually obligated to professional standards. MCPS must reinforce this commitment when reassignment is made, incorporating it into professional growth plans, required classroom observations and continued anti-hate/bias training.

How would you bring greater quality control to ensure teaching about Jews and Israel is accurate and culturally responsive?

Greater quality control for instruction and culturally responsive content begins with engaging the communities themselves. I don't believe MCPS should construct guidelines and implement content that has not been reviewed by and received input from affected communities. Community engagement also holds the potential to add depth of understanding/build knowledge for those instructional leaders responsible for implementing and monitoring curriculum across the system.

Cassandra "Cassi" Sung

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

Montgomery County's schools are strongest when every child is supported and every family feels invested in their community. Safety: Every student deserves to feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe. I'll advocate for anti-bullying policies, trauma-informed practices, and mental health supports that protect all students, especially those targeted for their identity or background. Inclusion & Diversity: Our diversity is our strength. I'll push for curricula where every student - regardless of race, religion, or ability - feels seen and valued, because belonging drives academic excellence. Early Childhood Education: Early investment yields lifelong results. I'll fight for expanded pre-K access, literacy programming, and wraparound family supports so every child starts school ready to thrive.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the school system?

Hate has no place in our schools — and silence is not neutrality. As a mom of biracial children entering MCPS, I know firsthand how much it matters that every child feels protected and affirmed. I will advocate for comprehensive, age-appropriate education on antisemitism, racism, Islamophobia, and all forms of hatred, grounded in history and human dignity. I'll push for clear, consistently enforced reporting protocols so families know incidents are taken seriously, and for mandatory, ongoing educator training so teachers feel equipped to recognize and address bias when they see it.

How would you ensure MCPS complies?

Compliance cannot be checkbox culture - it must be meaningful. I will push for transparent reporting on training completion rates, presented publicly to the Board, so our community can hold MCPS accountable. I'll advocate for high-quality, vetted curriculum that goes beyond awareness to build real skills for addressing bias in the classroom. Training must be ongoing, not a one-time event, and new employees should be onboarded with the same standard. Where gaps exist, I'll work to identify and close them swiftly. As a Board member, my job is to ensure state mandates translate into real cultural change, not just compliance on paper.

How can MCPS make certain that when teachers who are disciplined for antisemitic-related incidents are reassigned to other schools, they do not continue to engage in impermissible, harmful conduct?

Reassignment cannot become a reset button. MCPS's own Employee Code of Conduct requires that disciplinary records be maintained and inform future actions — I will ensure that standard is enforced. When educators are disciplined for antisemitic or bias-related conduct, receiving administrators must be fully informed before any reassignment occurs. I'll advocate for mandatory conditions including administrative oversight, continued bias training, and clear behavioral benchmarks. The Department of Compliance and Investigations must remain actively involved — not just at the point of discipline, but through any transition. Our students deserve accountability that follows, not disappears.

How would you bring greater quality control to ensure teaching about Jews and Israel is accurate and culturally responsive?

Teaching history well means teaching it honestly, inclusively, and with dignity. I will advocate for an approach rooted in truth and empathy - one that goes beyond textbooks to incorporate primary sources, oral histories, photographs, and literature from varied perspectives. When teaching hard history, including Jewish history and the Israeli experience, we must honor not only struggle and oppression, but also resistance, resilience, and agency. This standard should apply across all communities. Where the Jewish community raises concerns about erasure or mischaracterization, those voices will have a seat at the table.

Montgomery County Public Schools Board of Education:

District 5

Elma-Lorraine Diggs

What are the three most important issues to you and how will you address each?

My platform is grounded in three core commitments: engage through equity, empower through partnership, and elevate through accountability. Equity is a verb, not merely a policy position, and while MCPS has taken steps forward, there are still communities that have been left behind after years of inequitable investment. Every scholar deserves access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, and I will hold MCPS accountable for ensuring all districts receive equitable support, not just in theory but in practice, by addressing disparities, ensuring policies are implemented, and strengthening direct touchpoints between the Board and schools so decisions are informed by real conditions on the ground. At the same time, meaningful family engagement is essential to student success. Montgomery County's demographics are changing, and we must meet families where they are. Parents should not be spectators but strategic partners, which requires moving beyond traditional engagement methods that are not reaching all communities, prioritizing inclusive and culturally responsive outreach, and ensuring that when families provide feedback, it is actually used through clear and consistent feedback loops. Finally, we must elevate oversight and accountability by being strong stewards of taxpayer dollars. This means ensuring transparency in how funds are allocated, aligning resources with student needs, and being willing to make changes when necessary. The Board of Education must focus not only on intentions, but on measurable outcomes, because every student and every family deserves a system that is both equitable and accountable.

How will you confront antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the school system?

Confronting all forms of hatred in our schools is deeply personal to me and must be a clear priority for MCPS. Recent findings show that racism, antisemitism, anti-LGBTQ+ bias, and Islamophobia are among the most significant forms of discrimination MCPS students face, and as a mother of two elementary-aged children who have already experienced racism, I know the impact this has on our students. I also carry my own experience, having been called the n-word for the first time as a senior in high school at an MCPS sporting event. This is not new, but it is unacceptable, and we must do better. Addressing this requires a culture rooted in accountability, transparency, and clear consequences. The code of conduct must be strengthened to ensure there is no ambiguity and that incidents are handled consistently across all schools. I will advocate for mandatory, high-quality training for all staff focused on recognizing and addressing all forms of hate, as well as building inclusive school environments. In addition, we must ensure stronger representation and inclusion of diverse communities within the system so that students feel seen, protected, and valued. Most importantly, we must move beyond statements and ensure that when incidents occur, they are taken seriously, addressed promptly, and followed by meaningful action. Every student deserves to feel safe, respected, and able to learn in an environment free from hate.

How would you ensure MCPS complies?

Ensuring MCPS complies with Maryland's anti-bias training requirements must be approached with intention, structure, and accountability. This training should be fully integrated into the annual review process so that completion and application are not optional, but expected and measured. It must also be prioritized within designated professional development days to ensure staff have dedicated time to engage meaningfully with the material rather than treating it as an added burden. Compliance starts with leadership, and school administrators must clearly understand their responsibility to ensure staff complete the training and apply it in practice. I would advocate for clear tracking mechanisms, accountability measures, and follow-through to ensure this is not just a check-the-box exercise, but a meaningful effort to build safer, more inclusive school environments.

How can MCPS make certain that when teachers who are disciplined for antisemitic-related incidents are reassigned to other schools, they do not continue to engage in impermissible, harmful conduct?

MCPS must ensure that when staff are disciplined for antisemitic or other hate-based incidents, accountability follows them throughout the system. Just as confirmed student bullying incidents are tracked and shared to inform appropriate supports and safeguards, the same standard must apply to all staff, not just teachers. These incidents must be formally documented, transferred, and visible to appropriate administrators when staff move between schools. I would advocate for clear policies that require coordination between MCPS and its unions to prioritize student safety while ensuring due process. There must also be structured follow-up at multiple points to monitor behavior and ensure compliance, not just a one-time response. This approach reinforces that harmful conduct will not be ignored or reset with reassignment, and it sends a clear message that MCPS will not tolerate hate in any form. Our schools must be safe, respectful environments for both students and staff, and that requires consistent accountability across the entire system.

How would you bring greater quality control to ensure teaching about Jews and Israel is accurate and culturally responsive?

Ensuring that instruction about Jewish identity and Israeli history is accurate and culturally responsive requires both stronger oversight and meaningful community partnership. MCPS must establish clearer quality control processes for curriculum review, including regular audits of instructional materials to ensure they are historically accurate, balanced, and free from bias or erasure. This work cannot happen in isolation; it must include collaboration with trusted community organizations and subject matter experts to provide informed perspectives and ensure cultural competence.

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