

# Metro DC DSA

## CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

(approved by the General Body, August 2021)

### Basic information

1. Name: **Carleah Summers**
2. Current Occupation (if applicable): **Executive Director of two non-profits which provide transitional living for those suffering from substance abuse and those returning to society from incarceration.**
3. Party Affiliation: **Democratic**
4. Have you been a public servant before? What positions and when? **N/A**
5. How long have you lived in your jurisdiction? **Spent a majority of my life being raised in Frederick County**
6. Which office are you seeking? **US House of Representatives (currently Maryland's 6th District, though that will change in unknown ways with redistricting)**
7. Why are you seeking this office? **First and foremost because someone with my firsthand experience is needed- I know what it's like to be downtrodden and ignored. Current representation often throws money at certain programs and looks the other way, but we need to provide attentive, long term resources to our citizens.**
8. Why are you soliciting Metro DC DSA's endorsement for this office? **Taking on one of the richest individual businessmen in Congress requires a lot of help, and I'm already familiar with the DSA.**
9. Please list other significant endorsements you've received for this position or for prior races: **Our campaign just launched less than a month before sending this so most endorsement connections are in their early stages.**

### DSA and democratic socialism

1. Are you a member of DSA? If not, would you join? Why or why not? **No, and potentially if I could be of help with my particular experiences.**
2. How does the campaign you are planning and the office that you are considering relate to your theory of social change? **The people need to be in control of the seats that represent them, not the out-of-touch business class that only works to benefit itself.**
3. Do you identify as a democratic socialist? Why? **Ideologically, yes, but it is not often said directly (though I'm not opposed to calling myself a democratic socialist); I find it much easier to discuss the issues with people who, in reality, do fit the bill of democratic socialism but may not recognize it if just presented with the term.**
4. Are you willing to run publicly as a democratic socialist? **[Yes/No] Yes, as a facet of the campaign**
5. Will you be willing to run with other DSA-endorsed candidates as a slate? **[Yes/No] Absolutely**
6. Will you publicize DSA's endorsement? **[Yes/No] Absolutely**

7. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from for-profit corporations or for-profit corporate PACs? [Yes/No] **Of course**
8. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from real estate developers, corporate lobbyists, and landlords? [Yes/No] **Yes**
9. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions or endorsements from organizations in the carceral system (such as law enforcement unions)? [Yes/No] **Yes**
10. Are you open to working with DSA when developing your platform? [Yes/No] **Yes. My platform is generally developed (yet to launch fully on the website but a summary is there); we'd definitely appreciate more lists of concrete bills/actions to promise to take**
11. Will you allow Metro DC DSA to create campaign materials to distribute during its work on your campaign? [Yes/No] **Yes**
12. DSA has a large and active volunteer base. Will you support DSA training our own volunteers, running our own canvases, and campaigning openly as DSA members? [Yes/No] **Yes**
13. Will you allow DSA to collaborate with you on your field plan and program? [Yes/No] **Yes**
14. Will you allow DSA to keep copies of all data we collect through voter contact, if legal in your jurisdiction? [Yes/No] **Yes**

### Goals of your campaign

15. What is your estimated number of votes needed to win? **Unknown due to redistricting, but if it were to be the current district, based on previous midterm primary voter turnout, probably around 30,000**
16. What are your plans, beyond what Metro DC DSA can bring to the table, for obtaining the number of votes needed to win? **Social media outreach, media connections, attending events, making calls, knocking doors eventually, distributing materials, word of mouth**
17. What are the issues that will distinguish you from other candidates? How are those issues popular with the electorate? **The current incumbent, David Trone, prides himself on his opioid epidemic policy as his key area, but I am in a unique position as a challenger in that I have literal firsthand experience in recovery at the grassroots level. Treatment centers receive funding but throw people out without any resources to stop themselves from relapsing- and if they are able to do that, they may still be returning to unsafe domestic conditions. This issue alone affects so many people in my district that just knowing I am a substance abuse survivor and that I do recovery work on the ground has won the interest and support of many already. This all combined with the fact that my entire platform is far more progressive than Trone's, though he often throws that word around. Centrist policies from rich incumbents like Trone are not what we need- we need policies and action and enthusiasm to meet the massive challenges of the moment.**
  - 17.1. If you are challenging an incumbent, what distinguishes you from the incumbent? Why would you be an improvement over the incumbent? **See above**
18. How much money will you need to successfully compete in this race and what is your plan to raise it? **We discussed this with McKayla Wilkes (MD-05 challenger) experienced**

campaign- they estimated approximately \$1.2 million. Obviously this will be a struggle, it always is, but we plan to hold fundraising events, hold social media fundraising drives, constantly try to get our social media out there so people are aware of us, and direct asks from voter lists as well as our volunteer lists.

19. What relationships do you have in your district that could form a base of support, through activism, organizing, work or personal networks? I'm deeply integrated into the local recovery community, prison reform community, and mediation community- needless to say we have many contacts that we're working through.
20. What endorsements do you have from elected officials, political organizations, unions and community leaders? What other endorsements are you seeking and why? None yet, as I mentioned before I am filling this out within about 2 or 3 weeks of publicly filing. We'd already researched a large list of organizations- local, state, and national- to contact and my Endorsement Director is currently working through those. There are many and they are fairly obvious, so I won't bore you with the details
21. How will you use your campaign to build Metro DC DSA? Democratic socialism in DC/Maryland/Virginia? You tell me how I can help.
22. How do you strike the balance between your positions as a socialist and your ability to appeal to the broader electorate? As I mentioned before, I rarely state such a broad label. Speaking to people on the issues shows that we are really in agreement and many are far more progressive themselves than they would otherwise expect.

## Goals in office

23. Would you be open to having DSA members as staff in policy positions and/or to collaborating with our working groups on policy? Yes
24. Will you agree to appear periodically at DSA meetings in your district? Yes
25. Will you endorse and campaign for other DSA endorsed candidates in the future? Yes
26. How will you use your office, if elected, to build socialism and working class power? Working with others in politics from the same backgrounds in solidarity will build power as we go. Teamwork makes the dream work.
27. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities? Opioid epidemic recovery, medicare for all (specifically focused as well on veteran healthcare, dental care, and mental healthcare), and criminal justice/prison reform
28. How will you implement those priorities, given that you will likely face opposition from other elected officials? With support from the people. Collective action collectively pressures, and that is what we need.

## Questions for incumbents

1. Tell us about a success/political win you championed/led that created material wins/improved conditions for the working class in your district? N/A
2. What obstacles did you face in office and how do you plan to address these obstacles if re-elected? N/A

## Metro DC DSA Priorities

In February 2021, Metro DC DSA voted to approve four priority campaigns: Defund MPD, Stomp Out Slumlords (housing justice), Green New Deal and Labor. These priorities are subject to annual changes.

### ***Defunding MPD and abolition***

MDC DSA's Defund MPD Working Group is organizing in coalition with Black-led and racial justice organizations to defund the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, remove police from schools, and free our neighbors from occupation and incarceration as a path towards abolition — a world without cops and prisons. As part of our vision for racial and economic justice, we demand that the funding removed from police and prisons be reinvested in real public safety: housing, schools, jobs, healthcare and mental health services, community-based support programs, violence interruption, and other public goods and services. This aspiration is a core part of our vision of socialism.

MDC DSA has endorsed the [demands](#) of the Defund MPD coalition, including reducing funding for MPD by 50% over the next three years. In Montgomery County, MD, Metro DC DSA participates in the Defund and Reinvest Coalition (see demands [here](#))

1. Do you support defunding the police in your jurisdiction? Why? **I support the redistribution of bloated police budgets because it's clear that militarization of police only damages the communities that are supposed to be served by them. Meanwhile, social services which really create change in our communities struggle to receive funding at all, yet they are the ones truly stopping crime at its source.**
2. What actions would you take in office to shift power away from the police? **Money is power, so shifting the funding is the most obvious way. Policies which benefit police in situations where they are in the wrong just also be addressed, such as qualified immunity which is a ridiculous idea in a country where supposedly no one is above the law.**
3. What actions would you take in office to end mass incarceration? **We need to end private prisons and the system that requires a constant feed of imprisoned people in order to make profit. We should be focused on rehabilitation over punishment anyway, so it's even more egregious that this punishment is extorted for profit and free labor as well. My husband was incarcerated himself for a long period of time, and prison reform and recovery for those returning from prison is a passion of his as well.**
4. Do you support removing school resource officers from schools? **Social workers in schools are much more important, and should obviously take precedence before any police force is introduced into schools. Having a uniformed officer patrolling school hallways and cafeterias signals to students that they aren't trusted or considered anything other than a potential liability for the school. Of course, in light of school shootings and such threats, this reform must come simultaneously with tightened gun control, universal background checks, etc.**

5. Many local police departments participate in training with Israeli military and/or police in what opponents of such programs call the “Deadly Exchange,” furthering practices of surveillance, militarization and racist violence and policing. Would you support ending these police exchanges? **Yes**
6. Which demands of the Defund MPD coalition do you support? Why? **All, because they're needed, reasonable, and actionable**
7. Do you disagree with the ideas behind the demands of the Defund MPD coalition? Why? **No**

### ***Stomp Out Slumlords and housing justice***

Stomp Out Slumlords (SOS) fights evictions and supports tenant organizing throughout the Washington metro area. The group began in 2017 as an effort to canvas tenants threatened with eviction to educate them about their rights and encourage them to defend themselves in court. Since then, SOS has gradually focused more and more on organizing tenant unions and going on the offensive to demand concessions from major landlords and developers.

During the pandemic, SOS committed to the movement to cancel rent and expanded their organizing efforts into more than 25 buildings in and around DC and supported rent strikes in most of them. Since the spring 2020, they have mobilized hundreds of people to protest politicians and landlords and stop illegal evictions through direct action.

SOS is now one of the largest and most militant tenant organizations in the region, and they have won rent forgiveness plans from big developers and played an important role in getting and defending some of the nation’s strongest emergency tenant protections.

Metro DC DSA is also a member of the [Reclaim Rent Control coalition](#), which seeks to expand and strengthen current rent control laws in DC.

1. Do you believe guaranteed housing is a human right? **Absolutely**
2. What steps would you take to expand renter protections in your jurisdiction? **Support and expand the rights, powers, and growth of tenant organizations so tenants have a community of support against the actions of potentially negligent landlords.**
3. What steps would you take to expand rent control in your jurisdiction? **Pursue legislative caps and explore universal rent control**
4. What will do to increase affordable housing in your jurisdiction? **We need massive investment in public housing to ensure that housing is supplied as the basic human right that it is**
5. Do you support ending exclusionary zoning? **Of course**

### ***Green New Deal***

Metro DC DSA’s Green New Deal campaign organizes to fight the existential crisis of capitalist-driven climate change and environmental racism in the DMV area.

As a grassroots movement, they build and exercise power through labor and tenant unions, electoral campaigns, diverse coalition-building, political education, and policy change. Their vision is to decommodify and guarantee human needs, democratize and decarbonize the economy by 2030, and repair the generational effects of oppression and displacement of Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Metro DC DSA is a member of the [We Power DC](#) (WPDC) coalition. WPDC's goal is to replace Pepco with a democratically-run municipal utility rooted in the principles of energy democracy. This coalition launched in October 2019 as the #NoPepcoPledge, which asked DC Council candidates to reject donations from Pepco and support a feasibility study on alternative utility models. The group's current demands include utility debt forgiveness, a permanent ban on utility shut offs and union wages for all Pepco contractors.

1. Do you support municipalizing utilities in your jurisdiction? Why or why not? **Yes, the hyper-privatization of industries which supply basic human needs such as utilities has only led to disaster (Texas's experience serves as a warning)**
2. Do you support ending utility shut offs and forgiving utility debt in your jurisdiction? Why or why not? **Potentially, I would have to explore the issue deeper.**
3. Will you accept donations from energy utilities? **Not unless green and decarbonized- while having these privatized is not ideal, we need action on the climate ASAP as we are losing a planet.**
4. What steps should your jurisdiction take to decarbonize the economy by 2030? How will you ensure that this happens? **Massive shift in transportation focus to clean mass transit, industrial emissions limits that meet the urgency of the moment, creation of green jobs combined with improved training to transition workers from polluting industries, green subsidies, and the exploration of a carbon tax for multinational corporations among other things; this will not be easy to fight for- it will require mass mobilization and lobbying that overpowers the hugely influential fossil fuel lobby itself.**

## ***Labor***

The Labor Working Group organizes with workers, including DSA members, from across the region to fight bad bosses, build new unions, and turn out for solidarity actions. Organizing the working class in their workplaces, whether through traditional collective bargaining and unions or other types of organizations, is central to socialist thought and practice. Especially here in the DMV, unions are diverse working-class organizations that build multi-racial solidarity through collective action for community transformation.

1. How will you support public sector unions in your jurisdiction? **Constantly keep in touch; labor policy can change rapidly while leaving the workers behind, so offering them a direct seat at the table is imperative.**
2. How will you expand union density in the DC area? **Explore a tax credit for union dues.**

3. How will you support collective bargaining and the right to strike in your jurisdiction? **Push back against so-called “Right to Work” laws and act as a megaphone for strikers working to collectively bargain so they aren’t lost and ignored.**
4. Do you support increasing the minimum wage in your jurisdiction? **Yes, at this point a national living wage of \$15 an hour is essential. We also must address the problems of tipped labor in service industries, where businesses are essentially barely paying the workers on the frontlines connecting them to the clients (and, during a pandemic, effectively risking their lives).**

## **Other issues**

### ***Palestine***

In 2017, the Democratic Socialists of America adopted a resolution at its national convention in support of Palestinian civil society’s call for a global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement until Israel ends its illegal colonization of Palestinian lands, ensures equal rights for Palestinians living within Israel, and guarantees the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

Maryland Governor Larry Hogan [issued](#) an executive order in 2017 prohibiting executive agencies from entering into procurement contracts with business entities that engage in boycotts of Israel or territories occupied by Israel. The Maryland General Assembly has also debated and passed bills declaring that it is the policy of the state to oppose public institutions’ support for boycotts for Palestinian rights.

In 2016, Virginia lawmakers [passed](#) a non-binding resolution that officially condemns boycotts for Palestinian rights. Two other measures, which would have become binding laws, have failed. These measures include a 2016 anti-boycott bill and a 2017 effort to redefine antisemitism under Virginia’s antidiscrimination law to include advocacy for Palestinian rights.

Metro DC DSA expects that any endorsed candidates and public official would oppose anti-BDS legislation and vocally support Palestinian rights.

1. Do you support the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) to pressure Israel until it complies with international law by ending the occupation, instituting equal rights for its Palestinian citizens and respecting Palestinian refugees’ right to return? **[Yes/No] Yes**

Would you like to expand on your answer? **This is an obvious case for human rights. I would also like to note that as of right now, the incumbent David Trone has 7 paragraphs of foreign policy regarding Israel on his website and does not even mention Palestine once.**

2. Do you pledge to refrain from accepting any invitation from the Israeli government or participating in any event sponsored by it, until it fully complies with its obligations under international law? [Yes/No] **Depending on the context of the invitation as direct contact and discussions with those in power is how we can change minds. Of course, they would first have to display a willingness to change which they absolutely have not thus far, so, as of right now, no.**

Would you like to expand on your answer? **See above**

3. Do you pledge to oppose any official adoption of a redefinition of antisemitism to include opposition to Israel's policies or legal system, or support for non-violent measures meant to press for changes in Israeli policies or laws? [Yes/No] **Yes.**

Would you like to expand on your answer? **Antisemitism is absolutely an important issue in our communities that needs to be addressed and we need to keep our Jewish neighbors safe in their faith. Opposition to a state such as Israel should not be considered as prejudice against social groups that live within- the actions of the Israeli government in violation of human rights are not representative of the Jewish faith and opposition to them should not be considered antisemitism.**

4. Do you oppose state legislative and executive efforts that penalize individuals, universities and entities that boycott Israel? [Yes/No] **Yes**

Would you like to expand on your answer? **N/A**

### ***Racial justice***

1. How would you use your office to combat racism in the educational system? **Racism in the modern education system stems from unequal distribution of school budgets- schools in minority neighborhoods especially suffer from lack of funding, resources, and access to help that students need such as counselors and psychologists.**
2. How would you address racism in access to employment and the racial wealth gap? **Erasing student debt and finally tackling the massive problems of ridiculously expensive higher education will itself be an effective first step at relieving much of the racial wealth gap.**

### ***Health justice***

1. Do you believe that healthcare is a human right? What actions would you take to support universal healthcare? **Yes. Passing the Medicare For All act.**
2. How would you support ending medical debt? **First and foremost address the egregious pharmaceutical prices which are putting many Americans in debilitating debt just to stay alive.**

3. How would you support expanding abortion rights? **Codify Roe v. Wade into law and the adoption of the ERA.**

### ***Migrant justice***

1. Do you support classifying and publicly announcing your jurisdiction as a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants? **Yes, it is the duty of elected congressional officials to confidentially work for their constituents regardless of any distinction between them including documented status. Congressional offices are an essential part of guiding people through the legal immigration process and I promise to provide those resources.**
2. Do you support the unconditional abolition of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE)? **The functions of ICE must be disseminated amongst the agencies which handled immigration more humanely before the creation of this now rogue police agency.**
3. Do you support prohibiting local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE or participating in deportation activities? **Yes, this is not in either forces rights or jurisdiction.**
4. Will you oppose the operation of any migrant detention facility in your jurisdiction (whether run by ICE, another government agency, or privately run), and oppose the transfer of any migrants in your jurisdiction to such facilities? **Yes, migrant detention facilities are just immigration prisons, often run especially inhumanely. Detention facilities must also be kept in mind in discussions about prison privatization and prison reform, since that is what they are.**