

Metro DC DSA CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

(approved by the General Body, August 2021)

Basic information

1. Name: **Adam Cunningham**
2. Current Occupation (if applicable):
Teacher at C2Education
3. Party Affiliation:
Democrat
4. Have you been a public servant before? What positions and when?
Never
5. How long have you lived in your jurisdiction?
2 years, though I grew up in this county.
6. Which office are you seeking?
Maryland State Senate
7. Why are you seeking this office?
To affect positive change in every way I can.
8. Why are you soliciting Metro DC DSA's endorsement for this office?
I believe in the goals laid out by the DSA at large and believe that collaboration with the DSA will ensure our goals of spreading socialism and bettering the lives of Marylanders and the DMV at large are met.
9. Please list other significant endorsements you've received for this position or for prior races:
The RagTag Band

DSA and democratic socialism

1. Are you a member of DSA? If not, would you join? Why or why not?
I am a member.
2. How does the campaign you are planning and the office that you are considering relate to your theory of social change?
My campaign's structure is entirely horizontal and democratic. Those who are willing to put effort into my campaign gets an equal say in how it's run and what its goals are.
3. Do you identify as a democratic socialist? Why?
I identify as an anarchist.
4. Are you willing to run publicly as a democratic socialist? [Yes/No]
Yes.
5. Will you be willing to run with other DSA-endorsed candidates as a slate? [Yes/No]
Yes.
6. Will you publicize DSA's endorsement? [Yes/No]
Yes.

7. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from for-profit corporations or for-profit corporate PACs? *[Yes/No]*
Yes.
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.
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?
About 33,000.
16. What are your plans, beyond what Metro DC DSA can bring to the table, for obtaining the number of votes needed to win?
I've been utilizing mostly door-to-door canvassing efforts to spread awareness of the campaign, but my main efforts revolve around trying to organize local areas into mutual aid networks and spreading awareness of community-based solutions to crises, such as community gardens, free stores, community fridges, etc.
17. What are the issues that will distinguish you from other candidates? How are those issues popular with the electorate?
Besides being the only person willing to challenge the incumbent, I believe that I have the bravery to do what needs to be done, whether that's running against an otherwise unopposed incumbent or being a crucial vote for or against certain important issues we may face electorally. This is all while advocating for efforts outside of the electoral system to bring communities together and improve the lives of all Marylanders, bringing us closer to total liberation.
 - 17.1. If you are challenging an incumbent, what distinguishes you from the incumbent?
Why would you be an improvement over the incumbent?
I'm young, I'm black, I'm a leftist, I'm more in tune with issues of the working class than her, I'm not corrupt, I'm pro-worker, pro-tenant, and I'm

willing to actually engage with the community directly to advocate for what we need as a district and as a state.

18. How much money will you need to successfully compete in this race and what is your plan to raise it?
The incumbent has a war chest of about \$100,000, and has been funded by corporations and developers. The goal is to raise around \$25k, as that would be enough to fund not only standard campaign costs (Promotional material, voting data, etc.), it would also ensure that the fruit tree initiative is successful, as stated on the campaign website.
19. What relationships do you have in your district that could form a base of support, through activism, organizing, work or personal networks?
I have a good rapport with neighbors in my neighborhood due to the fruit tree initiative. I also am in contact with organizational leaders from local political clubs and organizations, such as the Young Democrats, the Germantown Democratic Club, and local mutual aid group contacts.
20. What endorsements do you have from elected officials, political organizations, unions and community leaders? What other endorsements are you seeking and why?
I am currently seeking the endorsement of my local teacher's union, the SEIU Local 500, and at least one of the delegates in my district. The union support is crucial for any political campaign, big or small, but for my district's delegates, I know that we align on the issues much more than they align with the current incumbent. One of my delegates has sponsored the Healthy Maryland Act, a bill to institute single payer healthcare to the state of Maryland, and it's been blocked (actively or otherwise) from even reaching a vote. There is also major legislation that has been blocked from passing that we all would vote favorably except for the incumbent, as proven by her voting record (and lack thereof).
21. How will you use your campaign to build Metro DC DSA? Democratic socialism in DC/ Maryland/Virginia?
I am currently using this campaign to spread the ideals of at the very least community-based direct action and mutual aid, and at most anarchism as an ideology.
22. How do you strike the balance between your positions as a socialist and your ability to appeal to the broader electorate?
A lot of the issues and challenges we are facing right now are the fault of a number of those currently in power right now, those who claim to be our leaders. The disdain for the status quo is palpable and spans those who aren't even politically active. I believe that pointing out these issues to the average person, and showing them a concrete or innovative solution to our problems can be enough to encourage any person to vote for me as a candidate. Barring that, at the very least we will have spread the ideals of horizontally structured, democratic mutual aid and progress through direct action.

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?
I plan on using my position of power and access to the bully pulpit to advocate for efforts to address the systemic inequalities we face in our state, and the country at large, in as decentralized a manner as possible. I'm an advocate of libertarian municipalism and will try to educate my constituents and anyone willing to listen on the proponents of anarchism, mutual aid, and direct action.
27. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities?
Tenant's rights, environmental justice, and raising the minimum wage to a living wage. Though I also have a major focus on systemic police reform.
28. How will you implement those priorities, given that you will likely face opposition from other elected officials?
Constant demonstration through direct action to pressure unwilling political officials to listen to the people and not their pockets.

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?
2. What obstacles did you face in office and how do you plan to address these obstacles if re-elected?

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?
Yes, because the police is a broken and corrupt institution that was founded on racism and discrimination. It can't continue to stay an institution with the power it has if we are to achieve any semblance of true justice in this state, and in this country.
2. What actions would you take in office to shift power away from the police?
Reinvesting funds that would otherwise go to police slush funds to be put into the community, such as speed trap violation funds going to the schools in the area they reside in, and shifting the annual budgets away from a militarized police force and towards social programs and social workers.
3. What actions would you take in office to end mass incarceration?
Destroying the school-to-prison pipeline by ensuring schools are properly funded and advocating for a diverse and robust curriculum that keeps students engaged and properly prepared for futures as adults. I'd also push to end the placement of police in all schools in Maryland, and investing that money in counselors, nurses, and teachers.
4. Do you support removing school resource officers from schools?
Yes.
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, wholeheartedly.
6. Which demands of the Defund MPD coalition do you support? Why?
I support all their demands, but I support their demand for funding our communities the most. It goes without saying that the money that we waste on a bloated, hypermilitaristic police force and prison industrial complex that does more harm than good can go towards much better endeavors, such as almost literally anything else.
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?
Without a doubt, yes.
2. What steps would you take to expand renter protections in your jurisdiction?
Strengthening the ability for tenants to form and organize tenant unions, expanding existing rental assistance programs and make it available to everyone who needs it.
3. What steps would you take to expand rent control in your jurisdiction?
Implement policies similar to rent stabilization laws in Takoma Park to make rentals affordable everywhere, and keep prices from skyrocketing.
4. What will you do to increase affordable housing in your jurisdiction?
I would push for upzoning for multi-family homes in crucial areas, restrict urban sprawl through legislation, and push for more funding towards social housing.
5. Do you support ending exclusionary zoning?
Yes.

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. Leaving utility needs to private companies only continues the harm on our environment and keeps prices high. Municipalizing utilities makes it easier to transition to green renewable energy, as well as opening the door for opportunities to enrich local populations through solar panel grants, stipends, etc.

2. Do you support ending utility shut offs and forgiving utility debt in your jurisdiction? Why or why not?

Yes. I've been on the receiving end of utility shutoffs in the worst times of the year, weather-wise. It's entirely unjust, in my opinion, to have people be subject to extreme temperatures and exposure because they couldn't pay a bill or afford an expense.

3. Will you accept donations from energy utilities?

No.

4. What steps should your jurisdiction take to decarbonize the economy by 2030? How will you ensure that this happens?

One of the immediate things the General Assembly could do is invest in public transit, build carbon-neutral housing and green infrastructure, and invest in planting trees, particularly fruit trees, in local community areas and wherever new-growth is sanctioned to be placed. The best way to ensure this happens is through constant pressure from the outside. I will work with all like-minded organizations so that we can organize pressure campaigns against every and all political officials who are against or are actively or passively blocking necessary legislation to reach our goal of decarbonization by 2030, by any and all means.

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?

In office, I would draft or support legislation that makes unionization efforts easier, retaliation from bosses or the respective businesses impossible, and I would fully support or actively spearhead legislation that helps worker cooperatives in this state.

2. How will you expand union density in the DC area?

Although I do not live in the DC area, I would critically support any unions that decide to form in the area.

3. How will you support collective bargaining and the right to strike in your jurisdiction?

As stated above, I'll support them by drafting or supporting legislation that bolsters and enhances collective bargaining rights, as well as the right to strike with or without a union.

4. Do you support increasing the minimum wage in your jurisdiction?

I support increasing the state minimum wage to \$25 an hour.

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?

No.

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]*

Yes.

Would you like to expand on your answer?

No.

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?

No.

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?

No.

Racial justice

1. How would you use your office to combat racism in the educational system?
I am a supporter of the Schools Not Jails organization and firmly believe that police do not belong in school. As State Senator, I would fight to get SRO's out of every school in this state, and fight for increasing funding to our public schools.
2. How would you address racism in access to employment and the racial wealth gap?
I personally believe that at this stage we need to really rethink how we approach employment and wealth, especially given the fact that race-based discrimination still persists despite the reforms made. It's why resumes with black sounding names are less likely to receive callbacks than white sounding names, which is one reason why my mother named me Adam Cunningham. Perhaps an approach to employment where the choice of hiring individuals is decided by the workforce rather than a handful of people is a better way to go to better address the issues we face.

Health justice

1. Do you believe that healthcare is a human right? What actions would you take to support universal healthcare?
I will fully support and fight to pass the Healthy Maryland Act proposed by delegates in my district, which institutes a single payer healthcare system for the state of Maryland.
2. How would you support ending medical debt?
I would support any and all efforts to eliminate medical debt on the federal level, including debt strikes, protest, etc., and on the state level I would fight to introduce every method possible to alleviate the burden of that debt on its victims, whether that's subsidies and tax breaks for those with medical debt, or a form of medical debt forgiveness on the state level.
3. How would you support expanding abortion rights?
I would fight to introduce amendments to Maryland's constitution cementing abortion rights in this state. If states run by conservatives can do it one way, we can do it the other way.

Migrant justice

1. Do you support classifying and publicly announcing your jurisdiction as a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants?
Yes.
2. Do you support the unconditional abolition of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE)?
Yes.
3. Do you support prohibiting local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE or participating in deportation activities?
Yes.
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.