

Metro DC DSA
CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

(approved by the General Body, August 2021)

Basic information

1. Name:

Mckayla Wilkes

2. Current Occupation (if applicable):

Executive Director of Schools Not Jails and Program Analyst.

3. Party Affiliation:

Democrat

4. Have you been a public servant before? What positions and when?

I have not held elected office before.

5. How long have you lived in your jurisdiction?

I've lived in the DMV my whole life. Most of my earliest years were in Prince George's County. I've lived in Waldorf for the past twenty years, since I was ten years old.

6. Which office are you seeking?

U.S. House of Representatives, MD-05.

7. Why are you seeking this office?

I'm running to represent Maryland's 5th Congressional District because we deserve a representative who will fight for environmental, economic, and racial justice. When I was a child, I was incarcerated for missing class while dealing with grief undiagnosed depression after losing my aunt in the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the Pentagon. When I was pregnant with my daughter, I nearly died due to deep-vein thrombosis after my pain was repeatedly dismissed, then watched as my insurance company attempted to deny covering life-saving medication. I've had to support my family while living paycheck-to-paycheck. All of these experiences are how I know firsthand it's time for change.

I first ran against Steny Hoyer for this seat last cycle to fight for working-class people who feel disenfranchised by our political system. With the help of a great team behind me, we built a grassroots movement unlike any seen before in MD-05. We knocked on over 57,000 doors (before the pandemic hit) and made over 400,000 calls to voters. Every conversation began the same way: "What issues are most important to you?" Our campaign won more votes than any challenger in Steny Hoyer's 40-year congressional career and even beat him in the in-person vote on Election Day. Since

then, I co-founded the nonprofit advocacy organization Schools Not Jails to ensure no one experiences the school-to-prison pipeline like I was forced to.

Now, I'm running for Congress again – because it's time for some damn change. Without a doubt, our political system has been and continues to be dominated by corporate money and lobbying. As your representative, I will work to serve the interests of everyday people and will listen to the concerns of my constituents, not special interests with deep pockets. It's time to prioritize the concerns of working families in our district. We need a clear voice for bold, progressive policies. We need a representative who hears our voices, feels our pain, and lives our struggles. There is so much at stake: our children's future, the health of our communities, and the livelihoods of our families are all on the line

8. Why are you soliciting Metro DC DSA's endorsement for this office?

I am soliciting Metro DC DSA's endorsement for this office because I believe in movement building. As a working-class Black woman, I know all too well how our society is failing regular people. We need transformative change, not incrementalism, and I'm asking for Metro DC DSA's endorsement so we can work together in making that happen. Additionally, and more concretely, we have close relationships with many people in the new Prince George's County DSA branch, and they are looking to become actively involved with our campaign as a branch – but that requires an endorsement from Metro DC DSA first.

9. Please list other significant endorsements you've received for this position or for prior races:

Democracy for America, Sunrise Movement Maryland, RootsAction, local officials including Prince George's County School Board Members Raaheela Ahmed and Shayla Adams-Stafford, Greenbelt Mayor Colin Byrd, Mt. Rainier Vice Mayor Scott Cecil, over thirty local community leaders, and additional currently unannounced organizations. Those are all for the current campaign, there are others who endorsed last cycle, including MDC DSA. :)

DSA and democratic socialism

1. Are you a member of DSA? If not, would you join? Why or why not?

Yes, I am.

2. How does the campaign you are planning and the office that you are considering relate to your theory of social change?

I have an all-of-the-above theory of social change. Electoralism, labor organizing, direct action, mutual aid. We have to pursue every option at our disposal. My campaign hopes to defeat a 42-year incumbent – one of the most powerful and conservative Democrats in the House – while simultaneously building long-term power on the ground here in Maryland by supporting non-electoral tactics.

3. Do you identify as a democratic socialist? Why?
Yes, I do. I identify as a democratic socialist because I believe that healthcare, housing, food security, a good wage, and a livable planet are human rights. Our current system is not set up to ensure that these are actually treated as human rights for everyone, and we need a fundamentally different system to achieve this.
4. Are you willing to run publicly as a democratic socialist?
Yes, I am and I have.
5. Will you be willing to run with other DSA-endorsed candidates as a slate?
Yes
6. Will you publicize DSA's endorsement?
Yes
7. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from for-profit corporations or for-profit corporate PACs?
Yes
8. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from real estate developers, corporate lobbyists, and landlords?
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
10. Are you open to working with DSA when developing your platform?
Yes
11. Will you allow Metro DC DSA to create campaign materials to distribute during its work on your campaign?
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
13. Will you allow DSA to collaborate with you on your field plan and program?
Yes
14. Will you allow DSA to keep copies of all data we collect through voter contact, if legal in your jurisdiction?

Yes

Goals of your campaign

15. What is your estimated number of votes needed to win?

Depends on the results of redistricting, but approximately 38,000 based on the current lines of the district and turnout in past midterms.

16. What are your plans, beyond what Metro DC DSA can bring to the table, for obtaining the number of votes needed to win?

We learned a great deal from our first campaign against Steny Hoyer in 2020, during which we saw an influx of support at the very end of the race. We ultimately won over 40,000 votes, including the Election Day vote. However, it all came too late – by the time we were able to get on TV, for example, half the votes had already been cast. Our plan this time around is to do everything earlier, hit the ground harder, and build on the momentum we have from our first run. The fundamentals will also be stronger this time around, due to the lower win number and we will be able to canvass in the final stretch, which wasn't possible last cycle due to COVID-19.

17. What are the issues that will distinguish you from other candidates? How are those issues popular with the electorate?

17.1. If you are challenging an incumbent, what distinguishes you from the incumbent? Why would you be an improvement over the incumbent?

There are a huge number of issues that distinguish me from the incumbent, Steny Hoyer. I support Medicare-for-All, the Green New Deal, ending mass incarceration, legalizing marijuana, reparations, and a homes guarantee. Steny Hoyer, in contrast, opposes all of those things. He's taken over a million dollars from the fossil fuel industry, private health insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, and weapons manufacturers. Additionally, and perhaps even more importantly, I am actually part of the MD-05 community. I know what it's like to be a regular person living in Southern Maryland. Hoyer has been in Congress for over 40 years now, and he's so obsessed with becoming Speaker that he's forgotten to speak with his constituents.

18. How much money will you need to successfully compete in this race and what is your plan to raise it?

We will need to raise approximately \$1.2 million to compete in this race. Our plan to raise it is a combination of call-time, digital, email, earned media, and events. We are happy to discuss details in a more private context.

19. What relationships do you have in your district that could form a base of support, through activism, organizing, work or personal networks?

We have a wide and meaningful range of relationships in our district to form a base of support through years of organizing. We worked with many community leaders, local electeds, and activists through Schools Not Jails organizing, environmental

organizing around the fossil fuel plants in Brandywine MD, and Southern Maryland coalition building. Some of these relationships were the basis of endorsements from over thirty local community leaders last cycle, and there will be a significantly larger number this cycle, since there's been two additional years of organizing work happening since then.

20. What endorsements do you have from elected officials, political organizations, unions and community leaders? What other endorsements are you seeking and why?

Democracy for America, Sunrise Movement Maryland, RootsAction, local officials including Prince George's County School Board Members Raaheela Ahmed and Shayla Adams-Stafford, Greenbelt Mayor Colin Byrd, Mt. Rainier Vice Mayor Scott Cecil, over thirty local community leaders, and additional currently unannounced organizations. We are seeking a number of other endorsements, primarily elected officials, unions, and constituency groups local to Maryland's 5th District. This race will be won on the ground, so we're focusing more heavily on local endorsements than national ones.

21. How will you use your campaign to build Metro DC DSA? Democratic socialism in DC/Maryland/Virginia?

We're all about movement building. We will use our campaign to build Metro DC DSA by elevating state and local candidates, building capacity and relationships among organizers, volunteers, and activists in the area, and ultimately contributing to a cycle-over-cycle project of lasting power-building among leftists, progressives, and working-class people in the DC/Maryland/Virginia area.

22. How do you strike the balance between your positions as a socialist and your ability to appeal to the broader electorate?

It helps to speak in terms of my experiences and connect with people on the issues they care most about. When we canvass and phonebank, we use "deep canvassing" techniques that involve us asking each person "what issues do you care most about?" at the start of the conversation. This allows a meaningful and impactful conversation to occur, which is often more effective than starting with a pre-planned spiel.

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, we would be open to having DSA, and other organizers, as a part of our staff. It is important to have people close to the struggle, who recognize what the impacts of policy are. To add on, collaboration on policy will be a big priority for us. We want to make sure that whatever policy we introduce or support, relevant groups have taken a look and talked to us about it. We need all the help we can and DSA is certainly part of it.

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 will use my office to build socialism and working class power by continuing to organize in and outside the halls of Congress and being a relentless voice for working class people. Even when it means bucking or angering my own party.

27. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities?

My top 3 priorities are healthcare, education, and climate.

28. How will you implement those priorities, given that you will likely face opposition from other elected officials?

I will implement these priorities by continuing to organize when I get to Congress. Once I'm elected, the work isn't over – it's only just begun. Achieving universal healthcare, high-quality and well-funded public schools, and real climate action are widely popular policies that are opposed mainly by corporate interests and the ultrawealthy. If my colleagues refuse to get on board, I will openly support primary challenges against them. The stakes are too high for anything else.

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?

I support redirecting funding from bloated police budgets to social services and infrastructures of care that will help prevent the root causes of crime. Currently, police departments are used to address social issues and it's both ineffective and unjust for our communities. Wellness checks, substance abuse, homelessness, traffic law enforcement: these are all areas currently handled by the police that should not be.

2. What actions would you take in office to shift power away from the police?

I would support demilitarizing police forces, ending qualified immunity, implementing community oversight, and shifting funds to social services. I am involved in the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability, which was able to do some of the above this past year at the state level (but not all, and there's a lot left to do.)

3. What actions would you take in office to end mass incarceration?

Mass incarceration is personal for me. I was incarcerated as a child for missing class while dealing with undiagnosed depression due to the death of my aunt. I would take actions to end mass incarceration by abolishing mandatory minimums, ending the war on drugs, ending cash bail, abolishing private prisons, and rolling back other provisions of the horrific crime bills supported by Steny Hoyer in '82, '84, '86, '88 and 1994.

4. Do you support removing school resource officers from schools?

Yes, I do. Police in schools have been a huge part of the rise of the school-to-prison pipeline over the past thirty years, and have results in disproportionate numbers of Black and brown students being sent into the criminal justice system for normal student behavior.

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 of them, for the aforementioned reasons: we need a system of public safety that actually keeps us safe. The current one doesn't. We must redirect funding from

bloated police budgets to social services and infrastructures of care that will help prevent the root causes of crime.

7. Do you disagree with the ideas behind the demands of the Defund MPD coalition? Why?
No, I don't disagree.

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?

Housing is a human right. Beyond addressing the immediate housing crisis, our vision of guaranteeing housing for all will create millions of good-paying jobs, tackle the climate crisis, and address at the root the racism that has prevented Black Americans from building generational wealth. I support a Homes Guarantee, a comprehensive framework for enshrining housing as a right for all.

2. What steps would you take to expand renter protections in your jurisdiction?

There are many steps I will take to expand renter protections in my jurisdiction. I will protect renters and bank tenants by passing the A Place to Prosper Act, establishing a National Tenants Bill of Rights, and ending housing and lending discrimination.

3. What steps would you take to expand rent control in your jurisdiction?

The expansion of rent control is crucial. I will support building 12 million social housing units and eradicating homelessness by passing the Homes for All Act. I also fully support the Green New Deal for Public Housing which will reinvest public housing and reimagine it as well.

4. What will do to increase affordable housing in your jurisdiction?

Affordable housing is a top priority for me as I have dealt with housing struggles in my life. More and more developers are creating housing that is simply not affordable and the government is not doing enough to fight back. I will support ending land and real estate speculation and de-commodifying housing by instituting taxes that fully disincentivize such speculative practices.

5. Do you support ending exclusionary zoning?

I do. Ending exclusionary single-family zoning is key to ensuring equitable and sustainable housing.

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?

I do, and I spoke at We Power DC's event this past February. Utilities, like housing, are a human right. It is unacceptable that people have to live without heat or electricity because of inability to pay.

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

I do, for the same reason.

3. Will you accept donations from energy utilities?

No, I will not.

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

My jurisdiction, as a member of Congress, would be the country at large. At the federal level, the climate crisis demands the kind of society-wide mobilization unseen in American history since World War II. Given the United States' historic and ongoing role as the largest greenhouse gas emitter, we have a special obligation to the Global South and the rest of the planet to lead an unprecedented transformation toward a decarbonized global economy. We can win a Green New Deal that decarbonizes the US economy by 2030, repairs the generational harms of racism, and guarantees economic security for all. We can do this by investing in a 100 percent renewable energy sector that is democratically controlled through the expansion of federal Power Marketing Administration (PMAs). These PMAs would generate renewable power for all 50 states, distributed by publicly and cooperatively owned electric utilities. We simultaneously must guarantee a just transition to workers in extractive sectors (such as oil, gas, shale, and industrial agriculture) by nationalizing dominant actors and incorporating their quick wind down into the national strategy.

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?

Economic inequality today is both the cause and the result of decades of policies that have attacked the poor and working class. Corporations have successfully organized and lobbied for anti-worker policies that decimated organized labor. I would support unions by fighting to repeal Taft-Hartley, legalize secondary strikes, and passing the PRO Act.

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

The number one way to expand union density in the DC area is to enact federal policies that make unions stronger. The number two way is to actively support unions – whether that means respecting picket lines and donating to strike funds or any other methods of solidarity – and encouraging constituents to do the same.

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

As stated, I will support collective bargaining and the right to strike by repealing Taft-Hartley, passing the PRO act, and legalizing secondary strikes.

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

I do support increasing the minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour indexed to inflation federally, and much higher in many places across the country.

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. The status quo of the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians (and the United States' active support for it) is morally wrong. Steny Hoyer has fought his entire career against any kind of accountability or even balance on this issue. He's one of the most relentlessly and unconditionally anti-Palestinian people in government, from either party.

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

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

4. Do you oppose state legislative and executive efforts that penalize individuals, universities and entities that boycott Israel?

Yes

Racial justice

1. How would you use your office to combat racism in the educational system?

I would use my office to combat racism in the educational system by fighting to end the school-to-prison pipeline and for federal oversight to ensure that students aren't taught inaccurate and racially biased depictions of U.S. history. There is currently a widespread right-wing push to eliminate any discussion of racism in schools. This must be tackled head-on and called out for what it is: modern-day racism. That's what it is.

2. How would you address racism in access to employment and the racial wealth gap?

I would address racism in access to employment and the racial wealth gap through several means. First, I support reparations for descendants of slaves starting with H.R.40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act. H.R. 40 is a means to not only inform the public about the congenital effects of slavery that affect the African-American community but also prescribe measures of restorative and rehabilitative justice. Second, I support investing federal dollars to reduce tuition and fees at both public and private institutions that educate historically marginalized groups, such as HBCUs. Finally, I support programs to ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals, a disproportionate number of which are Black, are not shut out of formal employment. This includes both banning the box and active jobs programs for returning citizens.

Health justice

1. Do you believe that healthcare is a human right? What actions would you take to support universal healthcare?

Yes, I absolutely believe that healthcare is a human right. I would be an outspoken advocate for single payer healthcare, by expanding Medicare to cover everyone and improving it to include dental, vision, hearing, and long-term care.

2. How would you support ending medical debt?

I support ending medical debt in whatever ways we can. I have been involved in Maryland's End Medical Debt coalition on the state level, but ultimately the best way to end medical debt in this country is federally, at the same time we implement a universal healthcare system so there is no need for medical debt in the future.

3. How would you support expanding abortion rights?

I would support expanding abortion rights by achieving reproductive justice, by ensuring that working-class women have the ability to control their own bodies. I opposed the Hyde Amendment and consider abortion to be healthcare. Like all other forms of healthcare, it's a human right.

Migrant justice

1. Do you support classifying and publicly announcing your jurisdiction as a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants?

Yes, absolutely. Generally speaking congressional districts don't become sanctuaries in that way, but I would support any jurisdiction within MD-05 doing so.

2. Do you support the unconditional abolition of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE)?

Immigrant communities should be able to live, work, and attend school free of fear. That reality is impossible as long as ICE roams our communities tearing families apart, border officials put young children in cages, and millions of undocumented Americans are forced to live in the shadows. We are calling for the abolition of ICE.

3. Do you support prohibiting local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE or participating in deportation activities?

ICE uses its partnership with local law enforcement to terrorize our immigrant community members. For decades, cruelty toward immigrants has been a matter of bipartisan consensus. But, we will support prohibiting local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE and participating in deportation activities.

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?

We will oppose the operation or construction of any migrant detention facilities and the transfer of migrants to these facilities, regardless of it being private or public-owned. There is no place in my jurisdiction for this type of hate. We will fight moratorium on deportations, the decriminalization of border crossing, and even a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and holders of Temporary Protected Status. There is a lot to do but we are ready to fight for the immigrant community, especially undocumented members.