

# Metro DC DSA

## CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

(approved by the General Body, August 2021)

### Basic information

1. Name: *Brandy H. M. Brooks*
2. Current Occupation (if applicable): *Environmental Justice and Racial Justice Consultant and Trainer*
3. Party Affiliation: *Democratic*
4. Have you been a public servant before? What positions and when?  
*I have previously served on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the Zoning Board of Appeals in Somerville, MA.*
5. How long have you lived in your jurisdiction? *I have lived in Montgomery County since 2015.*
6. Which office are you seeking?  
  
*Montgomery County Council At-Large*
7. Why are you seeking this office?

*The County Council is an incredibly powerful body that has a huge impact on the lives of over 1 million people - that's one in six Marylanders. The council determines local taxes to fund the annual operating budget of over \$6 billion, which includes education, health services, housing, environmental protection, construction permitting services, county liquor stores, fire, EMS, policing, and the county jail. The legislative branch has wide regulatory authority over public health, environmental, and employment issues. We need a County Council that centers the needs of all of our residents over the desire to generate endless profit for the benefit of a few.*

*A key point of interest for me is the Council's central role in zoning and land use policy, which needs to be re-centered around securing housing as a human right for all residents regardless of income or background, and climate justice to ensure equitable access to transit, employment, services, and community in an ecologically sound manner.*

*I see this campaign as an opportunity to continue building a countywide movement that can develop political and civic leaders from all of our communities - especially in communities that have been historically underserved and underrepresented by our political process. I want to*

*grow the progressive coalition that was put together in 2018 and connect even more residents to a deeper understanding of their power to shape politics and policy.*

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

*Metro DC DSA was one of my first endorsements in the 2018 cycle. I was proud to run with the backing of chapter membership then and would be honored to do so again. I am proud of the work the Montgomery County branch has done to fight against austerity politics, to demand housing justice and tax justice, and in demanding reallocation of our public safety resources towards the investment in the services that reduce harm, interrupt violence, support economic justice and that will allow our communities to thrive.*

*Seeking the endorsement of Metro DC DSA is more than a transactional exercise to win an election. I want to build power with the progressive movements in our region to combat xenophobia and white supremacy, and work collectively to demand workers' rights and economic justice, housing as a human right, healthcare as a human right, and a democracy where working people and the most marginalized communities in our county have a say in the decisions that impact their daily lives. That means organizing and developing community leaders and candidates that share our values to make our vision a reality.*

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

*In 2018, when I ran for the same position, I was incredibly proud to receive the endorsement of the Metro DC Chapter and national organization of the Democratic Socialists of America, the Montgomery County Education Association (our teacher's union), SEIU Local 32BJ, National Nurse United, The Metro Washington Council of the AFL-CIO, UFCW Local 400, UFCW Local 1994 (MCGEO), Our Revolution, CASA in Action, Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) Campaign Fund, Montgomery County National Organization for Women PAC, The Muslim Democratic Club, Progressive Change Campaign Committee, Progressive Maryland, Progressive Neighbors, and People's Action.*

## **DSA and democratic socialism**

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

*I am a member. I joined the organization in 2017.*

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

*I believe that our County Council is a crucial arena and opportunity for progressive political organizing. The crises of housing, economic inequality, and climate change have become even more apparent in the wake of the global pandemic. I think we can build on the incredible*

*momentum from the 2018 campaign that brought together groups like DSA, progressive organizations, labor unions, environmental groups, and many people who had been previously unorganized. Our ability to address the crises that we face is determined by our ability to grow that coalition and organize our communities for the future.*

*We need to fight for a participatory model of policy-making that is fundamentally about shifting the dynamics of power - who frames the problem and the agenda? Who determines what's important and needs to be prioritized? Who decides what should happen? Who receives the tangible benefits that the policy produces, including economic benefits? If a process doesn't truly shift these dynamics, it is lip-service, not truly equitable participatory governance.*

*Throughout the campaign, we are soliciting feedback and visioning from supporters and residents we meet at community events. We actively take their feedback to incorporate their voice in our messaging and policy platform. I am putting into practice now the processes to empower residents to have a stronger voice. I also believe this creates greater accountability for me and builds the foundation for mobilizing support on policy.*

*I want to use all of the things that I have experienced and all of the struggles and the lessons I've learned from them to build the kind of world that would hold me and heal me, hold and heal my family and friends, hold and heal my community. And I am certain, just as I was in 2018, that I'm not the only person who is ready to build that world.*

*I am running because I believe that we will win.*

3. Do you identify as a democratic socialist? Why?

*Yes, I identify as a democratic socialist. I believe that a fundamental purpose and mission of our government should be to ensure that all members of our communities have their basic human needs met and their basic human rights protected so that they can build thriving lives for themselves and those they care about. I want to center the rights and voices of people of color, immigrants, working class people and others who have historically been marginalized in the governance of our communities and the social, political, and economic decisions that shape our lives. I also believe that we must develop and offer an alternative to capitalism and its racist and cisheteropatriarchal structures of dominance that have placed the livability of our planet in jeopardy while leaving millions of people struggling in poverty and oppression in this country and around the world.*

4. Are you willing to run publicly as a democratic socialist? [Yes/No]

*Yes. I ran publicly as a democratic socialist in my 2018 campaign and I have continued to do so in my current campaign. We need to educate voters about how a capitalist economy fails to provide for our needs and how we can learn from the struggles of popular and socialist*

*movements in our country and around the world to build an economy that sustains all people while preserving a livable environment for future generations.*

5. Will you be willing to run with other DSA-endorsed candidates as a slate? [Yes/No]

*Yes, as permissible by law. I am not able to form a formal "slate" as a participant in the Montgomery County Public Election Fund. In 2018, I did pilot "Team Progressive" with fellow DSA candidate Chris Wilhelm where we collaborated on events and mailers.*

*I am proud to be in an organization with local DMV leaders like Maryland State Delegate Gabriel Acevero, DC Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, and former candidates Irma Corado and Karishma Mehta in Virginia, as well as leaders across the country like India Walton. I have and will continue to use my public platform to uplift Metro DC DSA and other endorsed candidates.*

6. Will you publicize DSA's endorsement? [Yes/No]

*Yes! Absolutely.*

7. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from for-profit corporations or for-profit corporate PACs? [Yes/No]

*Yes. I am proud to once again be using the Montgomery County Public Election Fund, which prohibits any donations from corporations and political action committees. In exchange for matching funds for in-county donations, contributions by individuals are limited to \$250 per election cycle. We should protect and expand Montgomery County's public funding system to help first-time candidates, candidates of color, women and LGBTQIA+ candidates, and poor and working class candidates compete in local, state, and federal elections.*

8. Will you pledge not to take any campaign contributions from real estate developers, corporate lobbyists, and landlords? [Yes/No]

*We do not solicit individual donations from owners or managers of real estate development companies, corporate lobbying firms, or large corporate landlords, and to the best of our knowledge we have not received any contributions from such donors to date. We do not automatically screen donors for their affiliations with such organizations, but would return any contribution from such a donor when it comes to our attention.*

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. I cannot accept any union campaign contributions per county public financing restrictions. I am not seeking and would not accept endorsement from law enforcement unions such as the AFGE ICE Council, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) or the International Union of Police Associations (IUPA). Many unions such as the United Food and Commercial Workers and the*

*Services Employees International Union have some carceral workers in their membership. I will evaluate locals on a case by case basis when seeking endorsement to ensure that the majority of a local membership is not employed in the carceral system.*

10. Are you open to working with DSA when developing your platform? [Yes/No]

*Yes, absolutely. I want to have an open and transparent process of developing my platform on this campaign and developing my policy agenda while serving as a councilmember. DSA endorsed officials like Gabriel Acevero and Vaughn Stewart brought new ideas like a sovereign wealth fund for a basic income dividend for residents and transit-oriented social housing to Annapolis. I am excited to see what kinds of policy we can develop at the local level in collaboration with DSA members and other stakeholders.*

11. Will you allow Metro DC DSA to create campaign materials to distribute during its work on your campaign?

*Per public financing regulations, we cannot review or comment on any outside materials developed or paid for by Metro DC DSA, as we are prohibited from collaborating with organizations in this way.*

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?

*We cannot accept funds or in-kind contributions from outside organizations or their political action committees (PACs) due to public election fund regulations. My campaign would be proud to receive DSA volunteers as volunteers to the campaign. DSA members are welcome and encouraged to promote their organizational involvement while volunteering with the campaign.*

13. Will you allow DSA to collaborate with you on your field plan and program? [Yes/No]

*No. State and County public financing policies preclude our ability to coordinate with outside organizations on voter contact and electioneering communications.*

14. Will you allow DSA to keep copies of all data we collect through voter contact, if legal in your jurisdiction?

*State and County public financing policies preclude our ability to share campaign data with outside organizations on voter contact and electioneering communications.*

## **Goals of your campaign**

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

*We estimate 60,000 votes to secure one of four at-large seats on the County Council.*

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

*My campaign has a robust field strategy that centers on building upon our strong performance in the 2018 primary. With our fundraising advantage we have already begun voter contact efforts with canvassing, textbanking, and postcarding. Our experienced field team is applying lessons learned from running campaigns during the pandemic to do robust voter outreach while caring for the health and safety of the community. We maintain a strong presence at community events around the county. We have an endorsement and policy team that is focused on empowering leaders in membership organizations and communities to organize people in their network to turn out for Brandy and engagement on the issues. We anticipate that endorsing organizations, community groups, and labor unions will help us move towards our voter contact targets as well.*

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

*I can relate to the people struggling to meet basic needs and get basic services in our county - renters, transit riders, minimum wage and tipped workers, people who are unemployed or don't have healthcare or are worried about losing their homes - because I've been in all those situations and dealt with these systems in our county. I'm still a renter and an active tenant advocate, and I would be one of the few renters to ever serve on the Council. I am also an equity and environmental justice consultant and trainer; an organizer and facilitator; a community designer and planner; with a background in public administration and nonprofit management. I want to bring all this experience to my service on the County Council.*

*I also want to bring participatory policy making to Montgomery County: engaging community members at the decision-making table, not just the listening table or the questions and concerns table. I believe that community members must be centered as we define the problems our communities are facing, prioritize and set our legislative agenda, develop legislation, monitor implementation, and evaluate the results. I am also committed to centering the voices of people of color, immigrants, poor and working people, LGBTQIA+ people, women, seniors, and young people - those who are often missing or marginalized at the decision-making table, but who are most directly and severely affected by the issues the County Council addresses.*

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

*I am running in a multi-winner primary, competing for one of four at-large council seats. Three incumbents are running again, and the fourth is term-limited. The incumbent council has been slow or absent on a variety of critical issues facing our communities. In the midst of a global pandemic they have not extended the emergency rent stabilization measure to keep families in*

*their homes during the pandemic. Their vision of economic development and housing policies has included massive tax breaks and abatements for large corporations and developers who stand to gain billions in profits off of projects in our county, without requiring adequate investments in affordable housing or public infrastructure. The incumbents also have a mixed-track record on labor rights, voting to cut back on collective bargaining agreements with their workers and offering large tax subsidies without prevailing wage requirements.*

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

*My campaign is once again using the Montgomery County Public Election Fund and was the first campaign in the county to reach the qualifying thresholds for public matching, hitting these targets within a week of publicly launching our campaign. We were also the first campaign in the county to file for and receive certification and matching funds, doing so on the first date the program was available for the 2022 cycle.*

*Our campaign's lean budget target is \$350,000. We have already raised more than \$60,000 in direct contributions and received nearly \$114,000 in public matching, bringing us nearly 50% of the way to our goal with 8 months remaining in the campaign. We have already surpassed my 2018 campaign fundraising totals and lead among the current field of candidates..*

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

*In addition to the 21 organizational endorsements I received in 2018, I have worked as an organizer with Progressive Maryland, I am a member of the Montgomery County Branch of Metro DC DSA, I am on the board of the Montgomery County Renter's Alliance, and I helped establish the Montgomery County Racial Equity (MORE) Network and the Montgomery County Green New Deal Coalition to center the voices of BIPOC communities in county policy.*

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

*My campaign has the support of numerous elected officials around Montgomery County. I was proud to have former Maryland Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez and Takoma Park Mayor Kate Stewart at my campaign launch to support my campaign. Former Rockville City Council member and mayoral candidate Virginia Onley has joined my campaign as co-chair. I am also proud to have the support of DC Councilmember Janeese Lewis George and [more than 100 other BIPOC community leaders](#) from across the county, region, and country.*

*We are still early in the process and few organizations have endorsed any candidates in the race for County Council At-Large. I will be seeking the endorsement of the 21 progressive organizations, unions, and democratic clubs that supported me in my prior run. I hope to expand*

*my coalition to include other unions like SEIU Local 500, LiUNA, and various other political clubs and community organizations.*

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

*My campaign is proud to have many volunteers and staff from Metro DC DSA's membership. I know that the 2018 campaign cycle helped cement the Montgomery County branch as a crucial player in county politics. It was that reputation that helped DSA lead the charge in coalition against Ballot Measure B which could have imposed suffering and austerity on the county in the midst of the pandemic. My campaign will offer opportunities for the branch and chapter to further build relationships with county organizations and talk to the diverse electorate of the county about the future we envision together. As we identify more working class leaders during and after the election, we have an opportunity to bring them into my campaign and into the organization.*

*I am proud to be a member of the same organization as Gabriel Acevero, Irma Corado, Janeese Lewis George, Karishma Mehta, and so many other working class Democratic Socialist leaders in this region. These campaigns have brought socialism back into the political conversation, and have trained leaders to work on multiple issues in the DC metro area from tenant organizing, to the fight for a Green New Deal, labor solidarity, internationalism, defunding the police and reinvesting in communities, and the fight for Medicare for All.*

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

*I challenge the notion that socialist ideas or values are unpopular. The electorate of Montgomery County shares our desire for climate justice and a Green New Deal, tenants rights and housing justice, strong labor unions and fair wages, a reimagined approach to public safety, and the fight for healthcare as a human right. I think we must educate voters about the merits of our vision and organize them during and after the election to show them that another type of politics is possible when we are willing to fight for it.*

## **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. My campaign manager and deputy campaign manager are both members of DSA, and DSA members were also in key staff positions on my 2018 campaign. Throughout my campaign and while in office, I want DSA members and working groups to be partners in governance. We should be developing policies together alongside the members of our communities who are most directly impacted by those policies.*

24. Will you agree to appear periodically at DSA meetings in your district?

*Yes! As a current DSA member, I attend branch meetings whenever I am able, and I've enjoyed hearing from Montgomery County's DSA-endorsed state legislators during these meetings. Presenting to the membership regularly about critical policy issues for our community and making sure people know how and when policy decisions are being made is essential so that DSA members can be informed, engaged, and empowered to shape and successfully pass progressive legislation here in the county.*

25. Will you endorse and campaign for other DSA endorsed candidates in the future?

*Yes. I was proud to use my platform to support Irma Corado in 2019 and Karishma Mehta in 2021! We must continue to build our movement across Maryland, DC, and Virginia.*

26. How will you use your office, if elected, to build socialism and working class power?

*We need to make clear to community members what democratic socialism really is - what we actually believe and fight for, rather than the narratives promoted by scare-mongers. We have to speak about democratic socialism not in theoretical terms, but in terms of the connection to people's daily lives and experiences: the need for a safe home you can afford; the value of a job that pays you enough to provide for your loved ones and be treated with dignity; the importance of ready access to healthcare when you are sick. We have to help people see how the organizing we do, like supporting collective bargaining in the public and private sector or working to organize tenant unions, helps them achieve the things that matter. I'm excited to shift our policy conversations to really focus on the everyday needs and aspirations of our community members, and to illustrate how the policies I will advance as a Democratic Socialist are about concretely and effectively addressing the most pressing issues folks are facing in their lives.*

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

1. Housing Justice and Tenants' Rights
2. Worker Empowerment and Economy that Works for All
3. Environmental and Climate Justice

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

*We need to cultivate leaders and build relationships with other candidates for county and state office. My campaign is just one part of the movement we need to organize to make progress. I'm very clear about the kind of political power it will take to move forward on these priorities. Even the most progressive legislator will be very limited in their effectiveness if she doesn't have other progressive colleagues on Council, in the County Executive's office, and in the General*

*Assembly to build a coalition of support for progressive policies. Specifically with respect to the County Council, I consider it critical to my success to identify candidates across multiple districts who I will work with to win the June 2022 primary, so that we can establish a strong progressive governing bloc on the Council.*

*Just as importantly, we must be ready to mobilize our base to show members of the Council the public support for these policy priorities. The work of advancing justice does not end at the ballot box. In office, it will be critical to hold me and other public leaders accountable, so that all elected officials know that their job security depends on how responsive they are to the people of our communities, not to special interest groups. We must use our real-life understanding of how policy impacts our communities to make it clear to elected officials that the policies we support are not only more just, but also more fiscally responsible, more sustainable, and more supportive of the health and wellbeing of our communities - and that we will not settle for policies that claim to benefit us while making us poorer, sicker, and less safe or secure.*

### **Questions for incumbents (N/A)**

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 (Not an incumbent)*

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

*N/A (Not an incumbent)*

### **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?

*We have seen the results of decades of mass incarceration and over-policing, especially of communities of color, and that those policies have not yielded safer communities. Our focus on policing as the primary tool for ensuring public safety does not recognize the intentional disinvestment from Black, Brown, and poor and working class communities that underlies crimes motivated by poverty and the racist and classist stereotyping of these communities as more "criminal" than others. Montgomery County spends \$300 million annually on our police department, but many of the issues police are called to address actually require social and economic remedies rather than law enforcement.*

*We can and must shift resources from policing towards enhanced social services, mental and behavioral health centers, crisis intervention teams, community-centered economic development that generates jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities, and affordable housing. The failure of our federal, state, and local officials to take an integrated view of public safety has led to many preventable crises that too often have deadly outcomes. We must commit to centering de-escalation, restorative and transformative justice, enhanced services, and economic opportunity as the basis of real public safety.*

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

*I am committed to ensuring that Montgomery County is a safe, welcoming place for all people. We must end institutional racism and other forms of structural oppression in the policies and practices of our county that perpetuate inequality under the law. We need to change the reality that our black and brown young people are directed into the juvenile and criminal justice system instead of receiving the education they deserve; that communities of color experience police harassment and brutality because they are presumed to be more "criminal" than white residents; and that people with mental illnesses or with disabilities are threatened and mistreated by police who are not trained to support community members who have special needs.*

*We need to ensure that the reforms enacted by the Montgomery County Council, the Maryland General Assembly, and recommended by the County Executive's Reimagining Public Safety task force are implemented, and continue to press for reforms as needed. I support the creation of civilian boards to review use of force incidents by police. I applaud the successful efforts of students to get School Resource Officers out of school buildings and echo their calls for critical supportive resources such as additional*

*counselors. We should look at reimagining traffic enforcement under the purview of the County's Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and invest in mental health services that can de-escalate mental health crises. We should also recenter public safety activity away from the criminalization of poverty, substance use, and mental crises, instead focusing on the prevention of violent crime and increasing resources and supports for survivors of violence.*

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

*We need to acknowledge that for too many of our young people the pipeline to prison begins in our schools with racially inequitable application of school discipline. In addition to removing school resource officers, we must shift our focus within the educational system toward restorative and transformative justice, trauma-informed education, and accountability for teachers and administrators who demonstrate racial bias in their treatment of students.*

*Beyond schools, we need to shift the focus of policing away from nonviolent offenses; work to decriminalize poverty and homelessness, substance use, and sex work; and reorient resources toward physical and behavioral health services, affordable housing, and other identified community needs. We also need to expand funding to county recreational programs, community-based nonprofits, and youth employment programs that offer young people alternatives to gang involvement and support for their social, emotional, and economic well being.*

*As the state of Maryland considers cannabis legalization, we must demand automatic expungement of nonviolent drug offenses from criminal records; licensure opportunities and access to capital for neighbors returning from incarceration; and reinvestment of funds generated by the cannabis industry into community support services and reparations.*

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

*Yes. I want to laud the incredible student leadership, especially from students of color in Montgomery County Public Schools, in organizing with allies like the Silver Spring Justice Coalition and the Montgomery County Branch of DSA for police-free schools and the allocation of additional resources for counselors and support staff for students. We need to secure a permanent fiscal commitment for a minimum staffing level of counselors as demanded by student and community organizers.*

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. We need to move away from a framework where police are engaging in warfare against our communities. This includes ending the purchase and use of military hardware and military*

*exchange programs abroad. We must also take a clear look at the human rights records of any organization that we conduct exchange programs with.*

6. Which demands of the Defund MPD coalition do you support? Why?

*While I am not a resident of the District of Columbia, I do support the intentional reframing of public safety from centering punishment, mass incarceration, and over-policing communities of color to a collective effort to create fully-funded, thriving, and safe communities. Policing is not a substitute for addressing the social factors behind violence in our neighborhoods.*

*Economic opportunity including family-sustaining union employment; housing as a human right; clinical support for mental health and substance abuse; decriminalization of poverty and homelessness; public safety rooted in de-escalation of crises, support for survivors of violence; and diversion from mass incarceration towards a focus on public health, harm reduction, and transformative and restorative justice must be the central objective of public safety moving forward.*

7. Do you disagree with the ideas behind the demands of the Defund MPD coalition? Why?

*No. As stated above, I believe that public safety comes from fully-resourced, thriving, connected communities. The War on Drugs, mass incarceration, and broken windows policing have been failures from the perspective of making us safer or deterring violence. We must make the long overdue essential investments in community wellbeing to truly achieve safety and security in our communities.*

### ***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?

*Yes. As a renter and a board member of the Montgomery County Renter's Alliance this is not an abstract issue for me. My mother, sister, brother-in-law, niece, and I deeply love this county, but will only be able to stay in our community if we address the need for affordable housing for all. Securing housing as a human right must be a central focus of the County Council.*

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

*We need a variety of protections at the state and local level. I will advocate for statewide protections like just cause eviction protections for renters; reinstatement of the evictions moratorium while our communities continue to deal with and recover from the pandemic; increased funding for rent relief; increased fees for landlords filing for eviction; and a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction. I will also work to introduce and strengthen tenant protections at the county level including rent stabilization, improved code enforcement, and enforcement of tenant rights in existing landlord-tenant law.*

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

*Permanent rent stabilization and control have not existed since the 1970s in Montgomery County - except in the city of Takoma Park, which has some of the lowest rents in the county and some of the lowest average rents in the region. In terms of immediate relief, I support the version of bill 30-21E that was passed out of the Planning, Housing, Economic Development Committee to the County Council in September 2021. While it is not the rent freeze advocates called for in April of 2020, it will offer all tenants protection from price gouging increases above the voluntary rent guideline. Longer-term, we must create a countywide stabilization policy that protects the affordability of rental housing as part of a wider project of affordable, cooperative, and social housing construction.*

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

*Montgomery County has a variety of tools at its disposal that can be strengthened. We can raise the requirements on the Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU) program that currently only mandates 12.5% of the units in new housing developments be reserved for households earning 60-80% of area median income. Montgomery County also has a dual right of first refusal that allows tenants or the county government to purchase rental properties before they can be sold to a third party. The County should allocate more funds to help facilitate tenant or community land trust purchases, support cooperative conversion, and exercise the right directly for the creation and preservation of affordable and social housing. The county can also leverage its publicly owned real estate, especially underutilized properties such as the space above parking lots and garages, to build affordable and social housing.*

5. Do you support ending exclusionary zoning?

*Yes. The plurality of land in the county is zoned for single-family use; we must move towards denser, more transit oriented and walkable neighborhoods while making sure we have adequate affordable housing and resources to fund additional transit and school infrastructure.*

*New development must be accompanied by adequate revenue for transit, infrastructure, and school construction to support that development. We must ensure developers who profit from new construction pay for those increased services. When planning new communities or rezoning existing communities we should center the creation of complete, safely walkable, and transit-oriented communities with housing for every income level.*

**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. Privatization of utilities has continuously failed to deliver on the promises of efficiencies that would lead to lower consumer prices or improved service.*

*We should look at public or cooperative ownership models to advance our climate targets and lower prices for consumers. Access to water, internet service, heating, and electricity should be human rights, not sources of shareholder profit.*

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

*Yes. The lifting of the state shutoff moratorium has laid bare the greed of utility companies and their central drive of pursuing shareholder profit rather than delivering essential services to the*

*public. Ending shutoffs and canceling utility debt is the right thing to do, and the right choice to aid our economic recovery.*

3. Will you accept donations from energy utilities?

*No. I only receive contributions from individuals and matching contributions from the county public election fund. I support action at the state level to forbid political contributions by energy utilities and private government contractors.*

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

*To ensure the survival of our species and avoid a devastating societal breakdown, we will need an historic mobilization that includes an integrated response at the local, state, federal, and international levels. We must center the principles of a just transition for all people, especially poor and working class people, in a Green New Deal, as we radically seek to transform our economy away from fossil energy to a zero carbon economy. We must ensure that, unlike our current economic system, this economic transformation respects the needs of all our communities, especially historically marginalized Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, and working class communities whose voices have been ignored in our economic decision making.*

*The transportation sector is the largest source of emissions in the county. We need to reduce the number of single occupancy vehicle trips through telework, alternative work schedules, improved neighborhood planning that creates safe, efficient connections to neighborhood amenities for pedestrians and cyclists. We need to support electrification of all vehicles, starting with the county and school system fleets, while also ensuring we provide training and employment transition opportunities for employees and vendors who maintain the gasoline and diesel fleet.*

*Residential and commercial sector energy efficiency improvements and decarbonization will require making direct financial and technical assistance available to owners and tenants, in addition to other incentives. Electrification of gas appliances will not occur in the timeline we require without a government mandate, and must also be accompanied by financial assistance for households who would struggle to make that switch. As we look at new models of providing affordable housing such as cooperatives, community land trusts, and social housing we should provide support and financing to ensure those developments are built with union labor and set new standards for sustainability and energy efficiency.*

### **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?

*I was proud to join county workers in May 2020 to protest the County Council's vote against funding their collectively bargained agreement. I will respect the collective bargaining process and work to be a constructive partner with our county workforce in aiming to improve working conditions. Montgomery County should be a model employer for the region and that begins by building a constructive relationship with our public sector unions.*

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

*The County Council, in addition to supporting its own employees and their collective bargaining rights, can leverage its spending power to encourage union employment in the private sector. I support adopting a \$25 million threshold for the use of project labor agreements on county funded construction projects. We must also consider the track record on working conditions and respect for labor rights of county vendors and contractors when issuing requests for service.*

*At the state level, Maryland has a significantly lower rate of public sector unionization than other blue states like New York or New Jersey. It is long overdue that we recognize the right of all workers in the public and private sector to collectively bargain. Those rights should be codified in state law and the Maryland constitution.*

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

*My campaign team and I have been proud to join Metro DC DSA's labor working group at multiple informational pickets at the Strathmore Music Hall in Bethesda. I will continue to show up in solidarity with workers across Montgomery County. The County Council should condition grants and funds to county contractors and partnerships like Strathmore based upon their track record of working conditions and fairly bargaining with their employees.*

*Montgomery County Government workers are currently are forbidden to strike in Montgomery County by the county charter. School system employees are precluded to strike by state law. I would support an amendment to the county charter that reforms the rights of county workers, especially in light of the Council's unwillingness to respect the outcomes of the collective bargaining process.*

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

*Yes. While workers in Montgomery County are on their way to \$15 an hour, that was never the end point. I said in my 2018 campaign that a true living wage is closer to \$30 an hour, and that number continues to rise. We must raise standards for the workers at the bottom of the*

*economic ladder. We should also organize across the jurisdictions, and leverage increases in Montgomery County, the District of Columbia, and Prince George's County to help raise the minimum wage across the entire region.*

## **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?

*I support the call of Palestinian civil society against the violence of military occupation and displacement as well as their demands for equal rights and justice for all people in the region*

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?

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 government should be above criticism when it comes to its record on human rights. We must not marginalize activists who speak up against unjust policies. We can absolutely resist the rise of bigotry and antisemitism around the globe while criticizing the activities of the Israeli government.*

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?

*The right to boycott injustice is a fundamental human right that was exercised in the abolitionist movement, the labor movement, the civil rights movement, and many other struggles in the history of this country and around the world. I support the immediate repeal of Maryland's executive order and strongly oppose any efforts to codify boycott bans in local, state, or federal law.*

### **Racial justice**

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

*In addition to diverting funding from school resource officers (SROs) to fund additional educational supports and mental and behavioral health resources for our students, I believe that we need to tackle the deep racial and class inequities in Maryland's largest school system. I will fight for wraparound services for students and families with low incomes and limited English proficiency. We must continue to press for an equitable process for school redistricting that doesn't reinforce race and class divisions and isolate our communities and young people from one another. I will work with the stakeholders and the board of education to advocate for a focus on restorative justice training for all educators and administrators, and accountability around the targeting of students of color for disciplinary action. I will promote a culture of recognition and support for the value of both college and career pathways for all students, including resources*

*for students interested in pursuing trades and technical careers, care careers, agriculture, and other career pathways that are typically undervalued.*

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

*We must ensure that our office of Human Rights has the resources it needs to educate community members of their rights under county, state, and federal law. While the County Council expanded employment discrimination protections for our neighbors returning from incarceration, and passed legislation banning discrimination based upon racialized hair types with the CROWN Act, we must make sure employers and employees are aware of new legislation and feel empowered to report discrimination.*

*Unions play a critical role in narrowing income gaps based upon race and gender. We must fight for union employment in the public and private sector so workers can bargain for higher wages, fair promotional practices, and strong medical and retirement benefits. We must also work to support unions in addressing histories of racial discrimination within their trades, so that they support economic and leadership opportunities for all workers.*

*A large portion of the racial wealth gap is due to the history of discriminatory housing policies in this county and across the country. Historic preferential policies supporting homeownership for white residents continue to widen the gaps between communities. Rising rents make it difficult for the disproportionately BIPOC tenants of the county to build wealth. We can help all community members increase their savings and build equity and wealth when we support permanently affordable housing through community land trusts (CLTs), cooperative housing, and social housing.*

### **Health justice**

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

*Yes. In my 2018 campaign I was proud to be endorsed by National Nurses United who have been strong champions of a universal healthcare system. As someone who has needed Maryland Medicaid to provide vital healthcare access when I couldn't afford it, I know how essential universal healthcare is for individual and community health.*

*When I relocated from the Boston area to the DC metro area several years ago, I didn't anticipate the enormous change in healthcare access my move entailed. Massachusetts pioneered state expansion of healthcare coverage that was the predecessor for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Combined with the exceptional network of community health centers in the Boston metro area, I always felt assured that I could get the medical treatment I needed, without having to choose between healthcare and food or housing. Virginia is a state that doesn't have a system of community health centers and I spent 9 months without health insurance coverage. As someone with chronic*

*health conditions, that was 9 months without doctor's visits, months of trying to make durable medical equipment that's supposed to be replaced every 3 months last for nearly a year, and 9 months of wondering whether I'd be able to fill necessary prescriptions. Once I moved to Maryland, having easy access to healthcare and good transportation made all the difference for my health and my livelihood.*

*I would support a state-level or federal single-payer health insurance program like Delegate Gabriel Acevero's Healthy Maryland Act. Montgomery County government is also a key provider of medical and behavioral health services, and I will support increased funding for initiatives to ensure that low-income residents can easily access preventative and urgent care. I also support increasing funding for initiatives like the African-American Health Program and the Latino Health Initiative that address health disparities in communities of color.*

2. How would you support ending medical debt?

*I support the efforts of the statewide medical debt coalition to pass legislation at the state level that would curb the coercive billing measures of the hospital sector. We need to dramatically expand and improve insurance coverage and ultimately, as noted above, we must move towards a single payer system to finally eliminate the tragedies occurring every day in our country as a result of medical debt and bankruptcy.*

3. How would you support expanding abortion rights?

*Maryland is on the frontline of the struggle for abortion access and reproductive justice. Providers have already reported a surge in out-of-state visitors from West Virginia and other states with restrictions on access to care. Maryland can expand access to pregnant people on Medicaid who currently can only receive funding in limited circumstances. When the county considers partnering with private medical providers, it should prioritize providers that offer the full spectrum of care including abortion services.*

*On a systemic level, we must note the intersections with housing, employment, and transit equity. We must fight for a strong transportation that connects residents to service providers so that residents without access to a vehicle can still access the care they need in a timely manner. Abortion and the full spectrum of reproductive care must be included in any universal healthcare system adopted at the state and federal level. Montgomery County in partnership with existing organizations should secure funding for people seeking abortion services to reimburse the cost of services, travel, lodging, and lost wages support for those without paid leave.*

### **Migrant justice**

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

*Yes. Our immigrant neighbors should not fear potential deportation when working with or interacting with local law enforcement. Every member of the community should expect a right to justice and protection from violence without the fear of retaliation by federal agents. Montgomery County has taken steps to end collaboration with ICE in the deportation of our immigrant neighbors; however current law doesn't prevent county agencies - such as the Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation - from cooperating with ICE and sharing data about those in their custody. I will fight to ensure that non-cooperation with ICE is codified into county law and to advocate for a statewide Trust Act, so that residents of our county are also protected when in other Maryland jurisdictions.*

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

*Yes. The use of an internal police force for civil immigrant enforcement is a tool of intimidation against our immigrant communities. In multiple instances, ICE has been called by employers in retaliation after workers sought to exercise their right to organize against abuses and for better working conditions.*

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

*Yes. As stated above, I support codifying non-cooperation with ICE at the county level and implementing a statewide Trust Act without delay.*

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. We need to adopt the Maryland General Assembly's Dignity not Detention Act without delay to ban private detention centers and the use of local and state facilities by ICE in the state of Maryland. We should work with local organizers and federal officials to oppose the opening of new federally operated detention centers as well.*