

# Metro DC DSA

## CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

(approved by the General Body, August 2021)

### Basic information

1. Name: [Lisa Burnam / www.lisaforg.com](#)
2. Current Occupation (if applicable): [Design Director, CAP Action](#)
3. Party Affiliation: [Democrat \(formerly Green Party\)](#)
4. Have you been a public servant before? What positions and when? [No, I haven't.](#)
5. How long have you lived in your jurisdiction? [4 years.](#)
6. Which office are you seeking? [Prince George's County Council District 9 seat.](#)
7. Why are you seeking this office? [I'm running for this seat because the magnitude of the crises facing our nation and planet requires radical action at every level of government. And, right now, I do not see an appropriate level of progressive leadership to meet the needs of the moment in the Prince George's County council, especially in my district. The redistricting scandal, which includes my rep, is the latest example of why I'm running. We need more trustworthy people in office and better information-sharing. We need someone to fight for better wages in local jobs and worker protections, a local green economy and green schools, and a more robust social safety net that includes child care for all. I'm a life-long advocate who has worked on many issues in non-profit advocacy for almost 15 years. As an individual, I've been active in local and international grassroots organizing for nearly as long. Yet, in both cases, more often than not, I've seen elected officials reject and indefinitely put off constituent demands and progressive policy recommendations for a non-constituent-related reason or only accept them after a long-drawn-out struggle in the press. For local movements to have substantive success, its essential to have their champions in office. I want to use this office to help leverage the demands of working people in PG County.](#)
8. Why are you soliciting Metro DC DSA's endorsement for this office? [A lot of people in my community respect Bernie, AOC, Cori Bush, Ilhan Omar, etc. but few know about the recent win of India Walton or the radical leadership of Kshama Sawant, or the achievements in cities like \[Chattanooga, TN\]\(#\). An endorsement from the DSA would be a powerful signal to constituents that someone serious who is willing to go against the status quo and demand more of the county and the state is on the ballot.](#)
9. Please list other significant endorsements you've received for this position or for prior races: [I've not received any endorsements yet, but I am currently being considered by LiUNA of PG County, Working Families Party, Progressive Maryland and, \[Accokeek Mayoane and Piscataway \\(AMP\\) Creeks Council\]\(#\). And for context, I live in Accokeek.](#)

### DSA and democratic socialism

1. Are you a member of DSA? If not, would you join? Why or why not? [I am already a member of the DSA.](#)

2. How does the campaign you are planning and the office that you are considering relate to your theory of social change? I believe for the U.S. left to win permanent, non-means-tested universal programs nationally, we must win substantive forms of them locally. People must see material examples of what is possible. They also have to be directly involved in attaining those wins to develop the civic muscle and political capacity to fight for more at higher levels of government. My campaign priorities will serve as an organizing tool to demand more from the county and state.
3. Do you identify as a democratic socialist? Why? The capitalist project is responsible for the depletion and degradation of our natural world. It also undergirds the various systems of power that maintain class, racial, sexed, and gendered divisions among the majority of the world. The socialist agenda is the most practical response to mitigate some of the worst effects of the global system of exploitation and endless consumption. Work and constant production shouldn't be the driver of our lives. I believe the way we build for a fully-democratized economic system, shifting away from society's capitalistic paradigm, is to advance and normalize alternative concepts of work and living. Examples include worker cooperatives, democratically controlled workplaces, housing cooperatives, local subsistence farming, and mutual aid practices. Finding ways to lessen collective dependence on global systems of trade will be essential to saving our planet and the future of human societies.
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, provided that explicit permission is given by the voter at the time of interaction. Ex: "Is it OK if someone from the DSA of PG County contacts you?"

## Goals of your campaign

15. What is your estimated number of votes needed to win? 8,700 votes.

16. What are your plans, beyond what Metro DC DSA can bring to the table, for obtaining the number of votes needed to win?
  - 16.1. My campaign has already purchased access to VoteBuilder/VAN to strategically target democratic voters through phone/text banking and canvassing for the primary. Developing literature that includes campaign priorities AND “make a plan to vote” logistical information so it’s more likely a voter would keep it.
  - 16.2. Actively recruiting student volunteers.
  - 16.3. Reaching out to other politically-aligned candidates to see if they will help canvass this area.
  - 16.4. Earning endorsements from other civic, labor, and advocacy groups with deep roots in my district.
  - 16.5. Setting up meetings with area HOA, neighborhood and civic associations.
  - 16.6. Building out an email and social media program.
  
17. What are the issues that will distinguish you from other candidates? How are those issues popular with the electorate? Currently, I’m the only candidate on the ballot. But I know that affordable child care, paid family leave, county-owned utilities, a \$25/hr wage, participatory budgeting, and establishing town commissions are issues that voters in my area care about. Everyone with young children is in need on child care and the health of local economies is dependent on people’s ability to access that care. If people can get quality care at half the price or lower, it’s a winning issue. Like child care, people need paid family leave. We shouldn’t have to wait for the federal government to do the right thing, because (as we see playing out right now) these people won’t regardless of how popular the bill is across party lines. The idea of being able to vote on how county funds are spent in one’s own community is exciting to a lot of voters, but many have already said they’d want to learn more about how participatory budgeting works. And that’s promising. Finally, a lot of people in my area have no idea who the current district representative is or have had no contact with him. There is a deep disconnect with legislative government and the people impacted by policies coming out of that body. Developing an official local body in each city that the county representative works in partnership with is exciting to those who don’t currently see a way to engage with their local representative. Finally, county-owned utilities is a great way to bring down utility costs and bring more revenue to invest in more programs people care about.
  
18. If you are challenging an incumbent, what distinguishes you from the incumbent? Why would you be an improvement over the incumbent? I am not funded by real-estate industry and I don’t have family ties to it either. I am active in organizations committed to progressive change and have led a life of work to advance policies for social and economic justice. Sydney Harrison also is one of the members of the council who put forward the controversial alternate county map that would help disenfranchise several candidates and past challengers in the 2022 race.
  
19. How much money will you need to successfully compete in this race and what is your plan to raise it? Sydney Harrison raised \$60,000 last election but Tamara Brown, who lost by a mere 70 votes, only raised \$6,500-\$7,000. My thought is \$20-25K total. I’d like

- to pay small stipends to mileage/gas/food to canvassers and conduct one mailing to early voters.
20. What relationships do you have in your district that could form a base of support, through activism, organizing, work or personal networks? I have close relationships through Accokeek, Clinton and Upper Marlboro, and neighboring DC ready to help with doorknocking. I will be able to get support from GACA and Progressive Maryland contacts, and there is lots of promise with the Working Families Party but I won't have definitive ideas until later in November.
  21. What endorsements do you have from elected officials, political organizations, unions, and community leaders? What other endorsements are you seeking and why? As mentioned previously, actively working to gain several key endorsements. Like the Metro DSA, I would like to make it clear that I'm aligned politically and personally invested in local, grassroots movement-oriented politics and that I'm not a stereotypical candidate with status quo and petit-bourgeois institutional support. I recognize that by not having strong ties to churches and fraternities/sororities places me at a disadvantage but I do not think it is insurmountable.
  22. How will you use your campaign to build Metro DC DSA? Democratic socialism in DC/Maryland/Virginia? I would like to find natural opportunities for people to learn about us. As I get further in the campaign and begin having events, I would like to provide materials about democratic socialism and specific information to get involved in the PG DSA branch. Depending on the nature of the event, I'd bring materials/contact information for committee leads in the PG DSA. For instance, I'm going to organize a neighborhood clean-up in the coming month. I'm most active in the eco-socialists committee led by Vijay, so I'd like to bring materials about PG DSA and include a signup sheet with the option to be added to our mailing list.
  23. How do you strike the balance between your positions as a socialist and your ability to appeal to the broader electorate? Talking to people practically about issues that are important to them and using success stories from other places around the country is the best way. "If they did it there, why shouldn't we do it here?" approach. I think the moment we begin to label things as socialist in general conversations, it runs the risk of inviting voters to dismiss without hearing you out. I'm perfectly happy to discuss the merits of a socialist vs. capitalist approach for a voter, but I think that would invite a debate that wouldn't bode well for the campaign. Now, if I'm publicly speaking somewhere, then yes, this is a point worth discussing and why it's important to have more socialists in office. The issues socialist candidates and elected officials propose tend to be the most popular policy stances by any measure. Child care for all, higher living wages, worker protections, guaranteed housing, universal health care, etc. Again, talking practically about this and taking it out of the ideological realm would be the best way to make the best appeal to a broader electorate.

## Goals in office

24. Would you be open to having DSA members as staff in policy positions and/or to collaborating with our working groups on policy? Absolutely.

25. Will you agree to appear periodically at DSA meetings in your district? **Absolutely.**
26. Will you endorse and campaign for other DSA endorsed candidates in the future? **Yes.**
27. How will you use your office, if elected, to build socialism and working class power?  
**I plan to connect with existing and help establish broad-based coalitions throughout the county to advance policies of this campaign. Based on DC's ANC model, I want to develop town commissions with an elected non-partisan commissioner in each District 9 city. This effort will help build representation among a very spread-out diverse community.**
28. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities? **1) Publicly funded 8-weeks of paid and family leave and child care for all. 2) Runaway development 3) and improving transit in southern PG (extending green line to lessen commute burden, create a subsidized ride-share program, electrifying buses, no-cost bus options, support transition to personal electric vehicles, increase lighting to back roads.)**
29. How will you implement those priorities, given that you will likely face opposition from other elected officials? **Beyond internal lobbying of fellow council members, I'd want us to leverage the coalitions we're a part of in the constituent districts of the representatives who are in opposition to proposals. I'd also want to organize in those districts to educate people about the benefits and the process of establishing so they can pressure the council members to act. If someone can't be done through council votes, I'd want to work with community groups/leaders to gather signatures to put the proposal on the ballot for the next election.**

### **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?~~
- ~~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? This issue isn't clear cut. My jurisdiction has a light police presence due to this being a rural/suburban area. Generally, there is a more favorable opinion towards the need for police with voters here (who are also majority Black). While I oppose all increases to the PG County police budget, I do not support carte blanche cuts that could lead to a reduction in police in areas that might genuinely need them. I can't conscientiously support this without caveats when I know there are other communities in PG suffering from internal community violence and police are their best defense against it. The rate that we can defund the police is faster than the rate we can fix systemic issues fueling most crime like poverty, unemployment, addiction and lack of access to healthcare/mental health services and education. I support cuts that include elimination of military-training, military weapon-grade usage/access, etc. Diverting funds to create harm-reduction programs, new comprehensive training processes for cadets that include mandatory residencies and community service work, lawsuit settlements taken from police union coffers. Long-term, I'd like to work in coalition with community groups and launch a comprehensive survey covering every police district in PG to solicit insight from regular people, not just leading activists, to identify how this institution needs to serve their respective communities.
2. What actions would you take in office to shift power away from the police? I want to go after the police union, which historically has given cover to white supremacists and violent/racist and sexually abusive cops. They buy politicians and are able to effectively stymie much-needed reforms. Figure out how to end or severely limit the amount of contributions police locals can give to candidates and elected officials. Establish community oversight boards that make recommendations on the disciplinary action of officers. Make it illegal to use
3. What actions would you take in office to end mass incarceration? End money bail system and pretrial detention. Advocate for decriminalizing homelessness, petty theft, and drug use/possession, legalize marijuana recreational usage and production, and expunge all records related to those decriminalized offenses.
4. Do you support removing school resource officers from schools? Yes. 1000%.
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, absolutely.
6. Which demands of the Defund MPD coalition do you support? Why? Overall I agree with all four demands of the coalition. I think these are critical and necessary changes that will not only shift power away from the police, but the reinvestment aspect is most

exciting because it would go a long way to ameliorate the terror that the most vulnerable residents experience day to day with cops. It would also help address the social ills humanely and systematically without disrupting families and communities.

7. Do you disagree with the ideas behind the demands of the Defund MPD coalition? Why? I am aligned with most of the solutions but I think the way some of the problems are characterized is overly simplistic and unnecessarily divisive. "Police don't keep us safe." That's not true for a lot of people who would be more supportive of reining in the institution of police if the problems were described with more accuracy reflective of class analysis and substantiated with data.

### ***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 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.**
2. What steps would you take to expand renter protections in your jurisdiction? **Advance policy proposals that make it harder for landlords to evict by significantly increasing eviction filing fees and increase the burden of proof for landlords to evict their tenants. Mandate that landlords provide emergency rental assistance so it is not left to tenants to search it out on their own.**
3. What steps would you take to expand rent control in your jurisdiction? **Limit rent increases to once a year and require 6-month notice on the increase.**
4. What will do to increase affordable housing in your jurisdiction? **Develop county-owned off-market apartments in areas with the highest need. Invest in community land trusts to ensure quality off-market priced homes are available for purchase.**
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, I support municipal ownership of utilities. They are a fundamental right and shouldn't be a commodity or a privilege to access clean water, clean energy, and the internet. I want to bring about public ownership of all three of our major utilities to ensure that cost isn't a barrier to anyone. They are maintained using the most credible green standard and serve as revenue generators for the county to invest in other basic needs like affordable housing, modernizing infrastructure and improving climate-resilience of houses and schools.**
2. Do you support ending utility shut offs and forgiving utility debt in your jurisdiction? Why or why not? **Yes, I think the county's goal is to do everything it can to make sure families have access to these resources and that programs be put in place to help people with the most need.**
3. Will you accept donations from energy utilities? **I will not.**
4. What steps should your jurisdiction take to decarbonize the economy by 2030? How will you ensure that this happens? **As a member of the Residential Advisory Group with the PG County Department of Environment, it will be mission-critical to achieve several of the goals set by this body which include: deep retrofits of public and residential homes, increased reliance on grid-generated power, battery storage systems and microgrids, making sure 75% of all new housing is located near high transit areas and activity centers to reduce reliance on personal vehicles, and push for the electrification of personal vehicles and public buses. Also, unsure if it already exists, but I'd like to form a inter-county coalition of councilpersons to push for closures of remaining coal plants in the state of Maryland and advocate to the General Assembly to push for near-term lower emissions goals.**



## **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'd like to establish worker (wage) boards and fiercely advocate for use of community workforce agreements in county construction projects.*
2. How will you expand union density in the DC area? *Use of community workforce agreements will also help with expanding union density. Also, establishing partnerships with locals to make sure work standards are adhered to by companies the county works with.*
3. How will you support collective bargaining and the right to strike in your jurisdiction? *Make sure the county enforces and increases penalties for violating the rights of workers. If it doesn't already exist, develop a clear process for reporting and escalating violations.*
4. Do you support increasing the minimum wage in your jurisdiction? *I support increasing the minimum wage to \$25/hr for large corporations and \$15/hr minimum for everyone else.*

## **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 am strongly opposed to the brutal occupation of Palestinian people and the billions of US tax-payer-funded financial and military-aid used to support apartheid and maintain the ethnic-cleansing project in Israel.**

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] **I would never accept support from AIPAC or any similar body.**

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?

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

Would you like to expand on your answer? **I would publicly defend any individual, university, or other figure being wrongfully castigated for defending the human rights of Palestinians and standing up against Zionism.**

### **Racial justice**

1. How would you use your office to combat racism in the educational system? **I'd like to establish a close working relationship with the PG Board of Education and ideally my district 9 counterpart, even though she's as corporatist as they come. A healthy working relationship would assist me in getting my policy goals passed. I support the removal of SROs from schools. They are concentrated in schools with high ratios of students of color from low-income backgrounds. SROs are proven to be a direct link in the school-to-prison pipeline. Make sure schools in the majority Black and Brown PS districts**

have reliable access to high-speed internet and technology like tablets and laptops. Invest in teachers learning Spanish to support the growing Latino population in the county and make sure ESOL classes are fully funded and the teacher/student ratio is low to ensure the best outcome for students. I'd like to push for amending the curriculum to include a study of the people's history of the United States and a study of colonialism that explores resistance movements from around the world. I think this would be extremely beneficial in ameliorating racial bias even among students and how they interact with one another.

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

### ***Health justice***

1. Do you believe that healthcare is a human right? What actions would you take to support universal healthcare? I think healthcare is a human right and I support universal healthcare. I want to create a local, publicly funded care system throughout the county, starting in my jurisdiction. I'd work with the coalition piloting the health enterprise zones. I'd want to expand the current criteria to ensure every family who needs it can access quality care at no cost which would include pre-natal care and post-natal care, mental health services, and specialists.
2. How would you support ending medical debt? Create a working group with debt relief advocates, state and government agencies, and a number of community stakeholders to develop needs assessment criteria and strategies. Develop a multi-tiered strategy that includes partnering with commercial businesses to "round up" for debt relief when customers make purchases in stores, utilizing federal grants, and creating an annual budget line to address these outstanding debts.
3. How would you support expanding abortion rights? I'd like to get a better sense of what the issues are in our county and connect with reproductive health and community groups before taking a position; because I understand that abortion laws in Maryland are good for young women (under 18) and adults. Access might be the more pertinent issue, which ties back to my desire to see more free healthcare clinics that provide a range of services. Also, guaranteeing an abortion doula to accompany women and girls through the process.

### ***Migrant justice***

1. Do you support classifying and publicly announcing your jurisdiction as a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants? Prince George's County was designated a sanctuary jurisdiction in 2019 but I would certainly support and advance policies that strengthen protections for undocumented immigrants.
2. Do you support the unconditional abolition of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE)? Yes, I do.
3. Do you support prohibiting local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE or participating in deportation activities? Yes, I do.

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? **I would.**