

# MCMC District 6 Candidate Questionnaire

## 2024 Primary Election Cycle

The Montgomery County Muslim Council (MCMC) invites you to answer this candidate questionnaire and return it to us by **Wednesday, April 23, 2024**. By completing this form, you consent to your responses being made public.

Candidate Name: \_Laurie-Anne Sayles\_\_\_\_\_

Submitted By: \_Laurie-Anne Sayles\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_4/23/2024\_\_\_\\_\_

### 1. Policy and Budget Priorities:

What are the top five policy and budget priorities you will pursue if elected to represent District 6?

The top five policy and budget priorities I will pursue if elected to represent District 6 include:

- Safety and Vibrancy. I will create safer communities through affordable housing, community policing, quality after-school programs, and comprehensive gun safety laws. Together, we can build a community we can all be proud of.
- Investing in infrastructure, providing business tax incentives, and supporting workforce development programs can promote economic development. Western Maryland's infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, is aging and needs repair. As a member of Congress, I will support initiatives to improve the region's infrastructure, such as funding transportation projects and investing in broadband internet access.
- Promoting renewable energy sources like solar and wind power can create jobs, reduce carbon footprint, protect the environment, invest in clean energy, and address climate change. The district has the potential to lead in renewable energy and become a role model for other regions.
- Support initiatives that improve access to quality education, such as increasing funding for public schools and free community college, providing resources for teacher professional development, and supporting programs that increase access to higher education. Education is essential for individuals' socio-economic mobility and the overall development of a region.
- Advancing health and sustainability. Rural areas need help accessing healthcare due to limited facilities and providers. Initiatives such as expanding Medicaid, providing resources for community health centers, negotiating lower prices for prescription drugs, and increasing access to behavioral and mental health services can help improve access to healthcare.

### 2. Understanding of Muslim Community Issues:

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Can you provide specific actions or initiatives demonstrating your understanding of the issues important to the Muslim community in District 6?

The Muslim community is incredibly diverse, with a wide range of opinions and beliefs. Therefore, it is essential to avoid generalizations or assumptions about Muslims residing in the 6th District. However, given my longstanding relationships with the interfaith community, I am committed to promoting inclusion, respect, and understanding for all individuals, regardless of race, background, or religion.

As a Congress member, I would take several actions to demonstrate my commitment to the issues that are important to the Muslims in the District. These actions include hosting interfaith dialogues, supporting hate crime prevention protections and legislation, and providing resources for organizations that promote cultural exchange and education.

Furthermore, I advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in government hiring and representation, support community service programs and youth initiatives, and condemn anti-Muslim rhetoric and discrimination. Lastly, I would establish a reporting mechanism for bullying and mandate anti-Islamophobia content in school curriculums.

Through these actions, I hope to demonstrate my understanding of the issues important to the Muslim community and promote greater inclusion, respect, and awareness.

### **3. Combatting Anti-Muslim Hate:**

What specific measures do you propose to combat anti-Muslim hate and to end ethnic and religious profiling in our society and institutions?

To combat anti-Muslim hate and to end ethnic and religious profiling in our society and institutions, we have to promote understanding, inclusion, and respect for all individuals, regardless of their race, religion, or background. To encourage respect and inclusiveness to combat hate as a member of Congress, I would

- Approach Muslims with empathy and understanding, avoiding judgment or harmful stereotypes, given the rise in islamophobia.
- Strive to treat all individuals respectfully, recognizing and celebrating the unique qualities that Muslims portray to be thoughtful, respectful, and considerate instead of perpetuating harmful narratives to encourage understanding, empathy, and unity.
- Promote diversity and inclusion to build a society that values and celebrates different backgrounds and perspectives to learn from each other proactively.
- Encourages opportunities to work together to address common challenges and find solutions that benefit everyone. It's important to remember that we all have different perspectives and beliefs, and we should always strive to respect and learn from one another.
- Model effective communication by listening, understanding, and respecting different perspectives to promote greater understanding and respect for all individuals, regardless of race, religion, or background.

### **4. Immigration & Refugee Resettlement:**

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What reforms do you support to address the country's current immigration needs and challenges; how would you approach the refugee resettlement process in the United States?

- To address the country's current immigration needs and challenges and approach the refugee resettlement process in the United States, I am committed to pursuing comprehensive immigration reform, border security, and management, improving the visa process, addressing the backlog of asylum cases, and holding foreign leaders who force their residents to flee to our shores accountable. Moreover, the humane refugee resettlement process in the United States needs to increase the number of refugees allowed into the country, provide more funding for resettlement agencies, and address the root causes of migration.

### **5. U.S. policy towards Israel-Palestine Conflict:**

What is your stance on U.S. policy towards the Israel-Palestine conflict

1. Do you support an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza?
2. Do you support conditioning/halting U.S. aid to Israel due to Israel's war crimes in Gaza?
3. How can the U.S. help achieve the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the next two years?

The conflict between Israel and Hamas has recently escalated, and urgent action is required to establish a ceasefire that focuses on the safe and immediate return of hostages and the bodies of those who have died while in captivity. Congress must prioritize the safety and well-being of all parties involved, including civilians in both Israel and Palestine. To achieve this, Congress should form a bipartisan task force to develop a permanent, robust approach to address the political, economic, and social factors driving the conflict. This approach should provide humanitarian aid to Gaza and the West Bank and explore every possible solution, including negotiations to establish a peaceful two-state solution.

All sides must consider and evaluate the decision to implement an unconditional ceasefire in Gaza. Any agreement must be comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable and address the underlying issues that led to the conflict. We must prioritize human life, human rights, and international law in decision-making. We must act now to ensure the safety of all parties involved and provide a framework for a long-term solution that considers the needs and perspectives of everyone involved.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a complex and long-standing issue, and the US has historically played a significant role in mediating the conflict and providing aid to both parties. The US has traditionally supported Israel while expressing support for a two-state solution that would enable the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Several proposals and initiatives have aimed to resolve the conflict, but a lasting solution remains complex and challenging, with tensions and conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians continuing to escalate.

Nonetheless, given the vibrant Muslim community in Montgomery County and our shared desire to coexist respectfully, I remain hopeful about de-escalating the rising tensions in the Middle East. Moreover, it's important to note that any resolution to the conflict will require difficult compromises and concessions from both sides. The support and involvement of the international community will also be necessary. The US can play a significant role in this process, but ultimately, a lasting solution will require the commitment and cooperation of all parties involved.

## **6. Foreign Policy and Human Rights Promotion:**

How would you promote a foreign policy that promotes freedom and human rights, particularly in regions where violations are prevalent?

- As a member of Congress, I would promote foreign policy that promotes freedom and human rights, by considering the unique challenges of each region when promoting a foreign policy that promotes freedom and human rights by engaging in diplomacy and maintaining open communication with governments and stakeholders to leverage public information and expert opinions, maintaining the utmost respect for civilians and human rights, promoting multilateral efforts through organizations like the United Nations, supporting civil society organizations, and imposing targeted sanctions on individuals or entities responsible for egregious human rights abuses.

## **7. Promotion of Positive Muslim Contributions:**

How do you intend to promote and highlight the wealth of positive contributions made by Muslims in the United States?

- To promote and highlight the positive contributions made by Muslims in the United States, I would build upon the work done at the county and federal levels, recognizing and celebrating Muslim achievements, supporting Muslim-led initiatives, promoting Muslim representation and inclusion, addressing Islamophobia and discrimination, and promoting cultural exchange and understanding between the United States and Muslim-majority countries.

## **8. Housing Crisis:**

How do you propose to address the housing crisis and lack of affordable housing across the country, including District 6?

- To address the housing crisis and lack of affordable housing across the country, including District 6, I would propose:
  - Increasing funding for affordable housing programs.
  - Providing incentives for affordable housing development.
  - Addressing zoning laws and regulations.
  - Providing rent controls and tenant protections.
  - Addressing homelessness.
  - Supporting community land trusts.

These solutions will help low-income families and promote community control over land use.

## **9. Gun Violence:**

Tens of thousands of Americans die each year by firearms, while mass shooting events are becoming all too common. What policies would you pursue to reduce gun violence?

To reduce gun violence while also respecting the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens, I would push for the following bipartisan policies:

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- Improve background checks to ensure that all gun buyers, including those purchasing online or at gun shows, are thoroughly screened for criminal history, mental health issues, and other red flags.
- Enact red flag laws to allow family members, law enforcement, and other concerned individuals to petition a court to temporarily remove firearms from individuals who pose a risk to themselves or others.
- Increase funding for mental health services to provide more resources for mental health treatment and support, which can help prevent some individuals from turning to violence.
- Invest in gun safety technology, like fingerprint-activated triggers, to prevent unauthorized use.
- Provide education and training programs that teach responsible gun ownership, safe storage practices, and conflict resolution skills.
- Increase coordination between law enforcement agencies to improve communication and information-sharing between local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to better track and prevent gun violence.
- Enact a waiting period for gun purchases to allow for the completion of background checks and other screening processes.
- Increase the minimum age for gun ownership to 21 or older, in line with other dangerous products such as cigarettes and alcohol.
- Ban high-capacity magazines to limit the number of rounds a gun can hold to reduce the risk of mass shootings and other violent incidents.
- Increase funding for research into the causes and prevention of gun violence to improve data collection and sharing and better understand the issue.
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### 10. Unique Qualifications:

What unique qualifications do you possess that distinguish you from the other candidates in this race?

- I am an accomplished and experienced policymaker, organizer, advocate, and public health professional with over 15 years of expertise working with some of the top health research agencies in the country, including NIH, FDA, and the Nature Conservancy. I have a proven record of making municipal and county history as a trusted, tested, and experienced public servant.
- During the pandemic, I took charge as a Gaithersburg city council member and successfully led my hometown through some of the most challenging times. I dealt with racial unrest, the pandemic, and the most extended government shutdown in history and emerged victorious. My impressive accomplishments earned me the title of Legislator of the Year from my National League of Cities colleagues for my bipartisan efforts. Recently, President Biden recognized my extensive public service to the community by awarding me a Lifetime Achievement Award. Moreover, Vote the Common Good, the country's largest coalition of interfaith leaders, endorsed our campaign and Moms Demand Action Gun Sense Candidate distinction, recognizing our campaign as an advocate for gun violence prevention who will govern with gun safety in mind!
- I am the only full-time lawmaker representing 40% of the electorate, providing constituent services for over a million residents, and responsible for managing a \$7.5B budget as a Montgomery County Councilwoman at-large. I am dedicated to advancing S.M.A.R.T.E.R. policies to ensure that Washington works for us.

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