

# 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: Joe Vogel

Submitted By: Oren Adam Date: 04/23/2024

### 1. Policy and Budget Priorities:

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

After meeting with voters across this district, from Oakland to Gaithersburg, the three district specific causes I'll prioritize are economic growth, mental health, and the opioid epidemic. We need to bolster collective organizing, incentivize entrepreneurship, and expand diversity pipelines in education and the private sector. We need to expand access to mental healthcare providers while also allocating more funds for research on preventative steps for our communities to take. And we need to stem the flow of illicit opioids while expanding treatment services in our communities. Thinking about Maryland more broadly, two additional issues I intend to champion are education and infrastructure. These are issues that impact all Marylanders and as such deserve federal and state cooperation to deliver progress. Education is the greatest tool for economic mobility in America, and ensuring equal access to high-quality schooling has been a top priority for me. I support programs to increase educator salaries, roll-out community school models, and proactively fund language learning and special need support programs. Infrastructure is the connective tissue of our communities, an essential pillar of decarbonization, and an invaluable tool for job creation. Increasing public transit options within and between Maryland communities, improving the safety and resiliency of ports and airports, and expanding broadband connectivity will be a top priority for me.

### 2. Understanding of Muslim Community Issues:

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

Up and down the district, I've made it my mission to meet voters where they are, recognizing that to fight for Marylanders in this election and beyond, one has to build personal trust across the district. I've done that since day one, and will keep doing so in the days ahead. It is from conversations with individual members of the community that it has become increasingly clear that standing with the Muslim community does not come down to a single issue; this community deserves a leader who listens and can see how the community is impacted in much broader policy efforts as well. Whether it's cosponsoring the Refugee Protection Act to welcome

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refugees fleeing violence, understanding the personal connections many in this community have to distressed regions overseas, or increasing federal support for minority entrepreneurship, mobilizing the entrepreneurial potential of this community; whether it's ensuring access to housing, education, and public transportation, addressing the historical shortcomings of services in predominantly-minority neighborhoods or prioritizing the combatting of anti-muslim prejudice, appreciating the unique struggle faced by many Muslims in America, I pledge to hear the needs and uplift the values of this community as your representative in Congress.

### **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?

Hate and prejudice are the undoing of democracies. My grandparents fled the holocaust; I understand the stakes of these matters. As such, combating these forces of division will be a top priority. The Muslim community in America has been a target of baseless, cruel prejudice for decades now, and I pledge to be an ally for the community in every way I can. In Maryland I worked to establish a Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention to protect our communities from extremism and hate. I also sponsored and passed subsequent legislation to make sure those who are hateful, have no place on that commission. I was the lead sponsor of the Hate Crimes Graffiti Removal Act, which requires that hate crime graffiti be removed within 24 hours. As a member of Congress I would continue this work. I am strongly in favor of the Combating International Islamophobia Act that establishes an Office to Monitor and Combat Islamophobia and requires annual reports to Congress about human rights and religious freedom to include information about Islamophobia. I would also support legislation that is purely domestically focused, proposing a White House National Coordinator to Counter Anti-Muslim hate, chartering an annual threat assessment of anti-Muslim extremism and discrimination, and making it a Department of Justice Priority to root out discriminatory practices across political, social, and economic institutions. Finally, I hope to be part of building a future of coexistence and community. By consistently reaching out to, providing a platform for, and joining in the community with the Muslim community, I hope that we together can be a model for the nation, where American Muslims and Jews come together to stand for the values we share.

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

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?

Like many Maryland families, my family immigrated to the United States and fell in love with this country. Our country is one of immigrants, and immigration has enriched our community, our state, and our country in countless ways. My story, however, is different from the stories of many immigrants who I have met and organized with, who come here under far more challenging circumstances and face great adversity. Cruel anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies pose real dangers to immigrant families in Maryland. We can fix our immigration system, protect our border, and promote fairness in immigration while still treating all immigrants with dignity and respect. As a member of Congress, I would work towards establishing a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and DACA recipients, cosponsor the Refugee Protection Act to eliminate the statutory time limit for applying for asylum and require the goal for refugee admissions for any given year to be no fewer than 125,000, and support measures like the U.S. Citizenship Act of

that ensure all immigrants, regardless of their documentation status, have legal protections and access to critical services that protect their safety and dignity while here in the United States.

### **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?

Helping craft a sustainable resolution to the ongoing conflict in Gaza must be a top priority for American foreign policy, but an entirely unconditional and one sided ceasefire is not the way to do it. Hamas has pledged to repeat October 7th hundreds of times over. For there to be any possibility of peace, Hamas must be dislodged from power, and any bilateral ceasefire must come with the release of all the remaining hostages. The U.S. must support Israel's right to defend itself as it dismantles Hamas, but we also must demand restraint and civilian protections. The actions of the Netanyahu government in the West Bank and Gaza have presented major obstacles to peace, and I believe Israel and the region would be best served by new leadership. I support a move toward an eventual bilateral ceasefire in exchange for all hostages, and increasing the flow of aid to Gaza.

2. Do you support conditioning/halting U.S. aid to Israel due to Israel's war crimes in Gaza?

I believe in Israel's right to defend itself, and in our responsibility to support that defense. The close defense coordination was vital when responding to Iran's recent attack. For that reason, I do not support conditioning aid. Despite the close friendship between the United States and Israel, these two nations – and their leaders – do not always agree. I have concerns about the Netanyahu government, and their actions in Gaza and the West Bank. The benefit of a close friendship is that we have the ability to encourage our friends to change their actions if we deem them to be harmful. Conditioning aid not only leads to immediate security concerns for Israel, but also undermines our ability to encourage Israel to change its tactics in Gaza and prevent further civilian suffering as it pursues the dismantling of Hamas.

3. How can the U.S. help achieve the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the next two years?

Neither Jews nor Muslims will rest easy until we, together, overcome generations of mistrust to build a better future in the Middle East. This cannot be done until there is a recognized Palestinian state with the legitimacy and authority to engage in bilateral talks with Israel. U.S. recognition of statehood would confer this legitimacy and introduce opportunities for direct communication between the U.S., the Palestinian people, and Israel; it would undercut Hamas as the leader of the Palestinian cause and strengthen the Palestinian Authority; and it would send a strong message repudiating the actions of the Netanyahu government. The Biden Administration has the constitutional authority to open diplomatic channels and recognize new states, as it has done with South Sudan, Kosovo, and Israel itself. From here, I believe the United States and Israel should build on the progress of the Abraham Accords to promote regional stability and the normalization of relations between Israel and Arab countries such that as Israeli-Palestinian peace is secured, so too is stability and diplomacy in the broader neighborhood. As a member of Congress, I would encourage the Biden Administration to

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take these steps and work with the U.N. to facilitate negotiations that produce a just, sustainable two-state solution, and pave the path to peace that all parties seek.

### **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?

Our foreign policy should reflect the interests and values of the American people as we engage with our allies and adversaries. This includes being a consistent voice for human rights, democracy, and peace. In Congress, I will be a strong voice in support of increased investment in effective global democracy assistance spending through the Department of State, USAID, and independent democracy assistance agencies. I will work to ensure the United States, both independently and in cooperation with our international partners, prioritizes building up the rule of law, promoting good governance and political competition, and supporting the growth of civil society and a free press to help advance democracies and secure human rights. Investing in more stable and democratic countries is in the long-term interest of the United States, and all who seek a more peaceful and stable world. I believe that through the careful use of sanctions, negotiations, and incentives, the U.S. has an unparalleled ability to promote human rights and civil liberties around the world. By applying pressure, determining necessary reforms, and then rewarding progress towards those goals, we can build a viable, favorable path to sustained reform. To be successful in this work, however, we need to rebuild American leadership legitimacy. Our credibility as a champion of democracy, human rights, and civil liberties around the world depends on us taking steps to address these same issues at home. Working to set shared goals with our democratic partners that we ourselves work towards as well ensures that we actively move the needle on international human rights while also addressing the need for domestic accountability and progress. Credibility strengthens our leadership, allowing us to mobilize the international community in pursuit of a more just and humane future.

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

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

The Muslim community in America has shown not just resilience, but truly admirable success. Recent studies show that Muslim Americans have higher rates of entrepreneurship, military service, and college graduation than the population at large. Muslim business owners each hire an average of eight workers, supporting an estimated 1.37 million U.S. jobs. Muslim Americans are leaders across American communities when it comes to interfaith solidarity and activism, and despite facing discrimination, 92% of Muslim in the U.S. say they are proud to be American. These statistics and the story they speak to are something for the Muslim community, and all of us Americans, to be deeply proud of. The example set by members of this community should be an inspiration to us all, and as such I believe deeply that political leaders have a responsibility to broadcast these stories. Whether it's nominating individuals for Congressional Award Certificates and Medals, ideating political appointments and confirmations, or establishing a District specific award for contributing members of our community, I pledge to honor the contributions of Muslims across the country and share their stories to encourage more Americans to follow their lead.

### **8. Housing Crisis:**

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

We have a housing problem here in Maryland, both in terms of supply and affordability. These challenges go hand in hand though, and I am committed to working across federal, state, and local levels to develop solutions. Many important zoning restrictions are made at the local level, and while I would work to be actively engaged in advocating for greater affordable housing options, there is also important work I would spearhead specifically at the Congressional level. First, I would cosponsor the End Hedge Fund Control of American Homes Act of 2023, increasing the housing supply by mandating that large private equity firms and hedge funds sell off all single-family homes over a 10-year period. Ensuring that Wall Street firms aren't buying up housing options at the expense of American families. Second, I would cosponsor the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, expanding the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit to encourage investment in the development and maintenance of affordable housing. Third, I would support the American Housing and Economic Mobility Act, bringing down costs for renters and buyers, and leveling the playing field so working families everywhere can find a decent place to live at a decent price, helping American families find the solid foundation required for economic success. Finally, I would work to incentivize the redevelopment of vacant office buildings as new housing units, increasing the supply of housing options and driving down the price.

### **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?

Growing up with school shootings being a regular occurrence left a deep mark on me. I'll never forget the fear of going to school as part of the school shooting generation. This reality shouldn't be our new normal. When no sensible gun safety laws were passed after the Sandy Hook tragedy, I knew I had to get involved in politics. In the legislature, I've actively championed common sense gun safety laws. My commitment is to extend this advocacy to Congress, relentlessly pursuing the safety our communities deserve. We can achieve all of this while respecting the Second Amendment, and without undermining the rights of responsible gun owners. I will fight for the long overdue passage of a national assault weapons ban, for widely-supported universal background checks, for red flag laws, and for greater funding of local community violence intervention programs. On top of this, I support bills like Ethan's Law, creating federal guidelines that mandate gun owners safely and securely store their firearms, and the Handgun Permit to Purchase Act, authorizing a grant program for states, local governments, and Native American tribes to implement and evaluate handgun purchaser licensing requirements.

### **10. Unique Qualifications:**

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

I have a record as a legislator, and have demonstrated my ability to deliver results for this community. I have worked with my colleagues, often across the aisle, to author and pass legislation to address the fentanyl overdose epidemic, recruit more mental health professionals to

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work in our schools, make historic investments in climate tech innovation, ensure children in the foster care system are treated with dignity, and better address hate crimes. I live in the district I am running to represent, and have built a campaign with support in all five counties – from Garrett County to Gaithersburg. I am backed by the teachers, the Sierra Club, several unions, seven Members of Congress, and dozens of local officials. These are folks who I've worked with, and who know what it takes to be effective in Congress – and they know I have what it takes to get the job done.