

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: Chris Hyser

Submitted By: Chris Hyser Date: 04/14/2024

1. Policy and Budget Priorities:

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

1. **Fiscal Responsibility:** I will prioritize responsible spending and budgeting to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently and effectively. This means scrutinizing government programs for waste and inefficiency, while also looking for opportunities to reduce taxes and regulatory burdens on small businesses to stimulate economic growth.
2. **Public Safety:** Keeping our communities safe is paramount. I will work to support law enforcement agencies and ensure they have the resources and support they need to protect our neighborhoods. This includes funding for training (initial and continual), equipment (body cameras), and technology to combat crime and keep our streets safe.
3. **Education Reform:** Parents will have a voice of what gets taught and when it gets taught. I believe in empowering parents with choices in their children's education. I will advocate for policies that expand school choice options, including charter schools, religious schools, and voucher programs, to ensure that every child has access to a quality education that meets their needs. The money will follow the child no matter what they choose.
4. **Economic Development:** I will focus on policies that promote job growth and economic opportunity in District 6. This includes reducing burdensome regulations on businesses, investing in infrastructure projects that improve transportation and connectivity, and fostering an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation.
5. **Healthcare Reform:** I believe in market-based solutions to healthcare reform that prioritize patient choice and affordability. I will rein in big pharma with profit caps on drugs. I will rein in insurance companies with overpriced plans, yet still providing premier care. I will work to repeal and replace burdensome healthcare regulations, promote competition among insurance providers, and support initiatives that increase access to affordable healthcare options for all residents of District 6.

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?

1. **Advocating for Eid Holidays:** I would work with local government officials, school boards, and community organizations to advocate for the recognition of Eid holidays as official school holidays. This would involve raising awareness about the importance of Eid celebrations to the Muslim community and highlighting the significance of religious diversity and inclusion in our public institutions.
2. **Educational Outreach:** I would collaborate with schools to provide educational resources and workshops on Islam and Muslim culture to increase understanding and foster dialogue among students, teachers, and administrators. By promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity, we can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for Muslim students and families.
3. **Policy Advocacy:** I would engage in policy advocacy efforts to ensure that schools have policies in place to accommodate the religious needs of Muslim students, such as providing space for prayer and allowing for excused absences on religious holidays. Additionally, I would work to address issues of

religious discrimination and bullying in schools through the implementation of anti-bullying policies and diversity training programs.

4. **Community Engagement:** I would organize community events and forums to bring together members of the Muslim community, school officials, and other stakeholders to discuss concerns and develop solutions collaboratively. By fostering open communication and building relationships, we can work together to address the needs of Muslim students and promote religious freedom and tolerance within our schools.
5. **Legal Advocacy:** In cases where the rights of Muslim students are infringed upon or discrimination occurs, I would provide legal advocacy and support to ensure that their rights are protected and upheld. This may involve working with civil rights organizations, legal experts, and advocacy groups to address instances of discrimination and pursue legal remedies when necessary.

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?

1. **Education and Awareness:** I advocate for educational programs in schools, workplaces, and communities that promote understanding and respect for diverse cultures and religions, including Islam. These programs should include curriculum development, workshops, and community dialogues aimed at dispelling stereotypes and fostering empathy.
2. **Community Engagement:** I support initiatives that bring together people of different backgrounds, including interfaith events, cultural exchanges, and community service projects. By fostering meaningful relationships and dialogue, we can break down barriers and promote solidarity.
3. **Advocacy and Policy Reform:** I advocate for the implementation and enforcement of policies that prohibit discrimination and hate speech based on religion or ethnicity. This includes advocating for hate crime legislation, strengthening anti-discrimination laws, and holding institutions accountable for discriminatory practices. Additionally, I support efforts to reform law enforcement practices to end racial and religious profiling.
4. **Support for Victims:** It's crucial to provide support and resources to victims of anti-Muslim hate crimes and discrimination. This includes establishing support networks, counseling services, and legal assistance for individuals and communities affected by hate incidents. By offering tangible support and solidarity, we empower victims and send a clear message that hate will not be tolerated.
5. **Promoting Positive Representation:** I advocate for promoting positive portrayals of Muslims and diverse communities in the media, arts, and entertainment industry. By highlighting the contributions and diversity of Muslim individuals and communities, we challenge stereotypes and humanize marginalized groups.
6. **Empowering Voices:** It's essential to amplify the voices of marginalized communities, especially Muslims in district 6, in decision-making processes and public discourse. I support initiatives that empower Muslim leaders, activists, and organizations to advocate for their rights and address issues of concern. By centering marginalized voices, we ensure that their perspectives and experiences are heard and respected.

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?

1. **Border Security:** I advocate for strengthening border security measures, including the construction of physical barriers, increasing surveillance technology, and enhancing border patrol resources. Securing our borders is essential for preventing illegal immigration and protecting national security.
2. **Legal Immigration Reform:** I support reforming our legal immigration system to prioritize merit-based immigration that benefits our economy and society. This includes streamlining the visa process for high-skilled workers, attracting talent in critical sectors (farming, agriculture, IT, Health Care), and implementing a fair and transparent pathway to legal residency and citizenship.

3. **Enforcement of Immigration Laws:** I believe in enforcing existing immigration laws and holding individuals accountable for violating them. This includes cracking down on employers who hire undocumented workers, strengthening cooperation between federal and local law enforcement agencies, and prioritizing the removal of criminal aliens who pose a threat to public safety.
4. **Refugee Resettlement:** While I recognize the importance of providing refuge to those fleeing persecution, I believe it should be done in a controlled and responsible manner. I support robust vetting procedures to ensure the safety and security of our communities while also providing assistance and support to refugees once they are resettled in the United States. This includes access to language and job training programs, healthcare services, and integration support to help refugees become self-sufficient and productive members of society.
5. **Addressing Root Causes of Migration:** To address the root causes of migration, I support initiatives that promote stability, economic development, and good governance in countries experiencing conflict, poverty, and instability. By addressing the underlying factors driving migration, we can reduce the need for individuals to flee their homes in search of safety and opportunity.

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? **Yes and reopen UNRWA.**
2. Do you support conditioning/halting U.S. aid to Israel due to Israel's war crimes in Gaza? **Yes to include any further weapons sales.**
3. How can the U.S. help achieve the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the next two years?

I receive mixed feedback regarding the viability of both a single state governed by both Palestinians and Israelis and a two-state solution where Israel returns a certain amount of land. Given this complexity, the U.S. can play a crucial role in facilitating direct negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, exploring various potential solutions, including those mentioned. This includes encouraging both parties to return to the negotiating table and providing diplomatic support to help bridge the gaps between their respective positions.

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?

I will approach promoting these values in the Middle East, Burma (Myanmar), China, and India:

1. **Diplomatic Engagement:** I will engage in constructive dialogue with governments in these regions, emphasizing the importance of respecting human rights and freedoms. This will involve diplomatic pressure, including public statements, private negotiations, and diplomatic initiatives aimed at encouraging positive reforms.
2. **Multilateral Cooperation:** I will work closely with international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and regional bodies to coordinate efforts and leverage collective influence. Multilateral engagement can increase the effectiveness of diplomatic efforts and apply pressure on governments to address human rights violations.
3. **Targeted Sanctions and Accountability Measures:** In cases where governments persistently violate human rights, I will support targeted sanctions and accountability measures. This will include imposing travel bans, freezing assets, and implementing arms embargoes against individuals and entities responsible for human rights abuses. Additionally, I will advocate for the establishment of mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable, such as international tribunals or independent investigations.
4. **Support for Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders:** I will provide support and assistance to civil society organizations and human rights defenders working to promote freedom and human rights in these regions. This will include funding for capacity-building programs, legal assistance, and advocacy initiatives aimed at empowering local actors to effect positive change from within.

5. **Engagement with Economic and Strategic Partners:** I will engage with economic and strategic partners in these regions, such as China and India, to demand human rights and freedom as integral components of bilateral relations. This will involve incorporating human rights considerations into trade agreements, investment decisions, and strategic partnerships, and using diplomatic leverage to encourage positive reforms.
6. **Public Diplomacy and Advocacy:** I will leverage public diplomacy and advocacy efforts to raise awareness about human rights violations and promote international solidarity in support of freedom and human rights. This will include media campaigns, public statements, and grassroots mobilization efforts aimed at rallying public support for human rights causes and holding governments accountable for their actions.

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?

1. **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** I will support educational initiatives and awareness campaigns that highlight the positive contributions of Muslims to American society. This will include curriculum development in schools, public service announcements, and community events aimed at showcasing the achievements and talents of Muslim Americans.
2. **Media Representation:** I will advocate for more accurate and positive representation of Muslims in the media, including film, television, and literature. By showcasing diverse and authentic portrayals of Muslim characters and stories, we can challenge stereotypes and promote understanding and empathy.
3. **Community Engagement:** I will work to foster dialogue and collaboration between Muslim communities and broader society. This will involve organizing community events, cultural exchanges, and interfaith dialogues that highlight the positive contributions of Muslims and promote mutual respect and understanding.
4. **Recognition and Awards:** I will support initiatives that recognize and celebrate the achievements of Muslim Americans in various fields, including business, academia, arts, and activism. By highlighting success stories and role models, we can inspire future generations of Muslim Americans and showcase the valuable contributions they make to our country. I will push to have one month dedicated to this like Black history, Hispanic History months we currently celebrate.
5. **Policy Advocacy:** I will advocate for policies that promote diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity for all Americans, regardless of their religion or background. This includes supporting anti-discrimination laws, diversity initiatives in the workplace, and policies that address systemic barriers faced by Muslim communities.

8. Housing Crisis:

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

As a chaplain working with the homelessness task force, I believe addressing the housing crisis and lack of affordable housing across the country, including in District 6, requires a multifaceted approach that combines immediate relief measures with long-term solutions. Here are some proposals I will advocate for:

1. **Affordable Housing Development:** I will support initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing through the development of low-income housing units, mixed-income developments, and supportive housing for vulnerable populations such as veterans, individuals with disabilities, and those experiencing chronic homelessness. I will not allow developers a pathway for them to pay a fee to not build affordable housing as currently practiced in many areas. The developer will be required to provide these units without exception. This will involve partnering with developers, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to prioritize affordable housing projects and streamline the approval process.
2. **Housing Vouchers and Rental Assistance:** I will advocate for expanding access to housing vouchers and rental assistance programs to help low-income individuals and families afford housing. This may

include increasing funding for existing programs such as Section 8, as well as exploring new initiatives to provide targeted assistance to those most in need. This is only a temporary step as work with the individual's moving towards actual home ownership.

3. **Tenant Protections and Rent Control:** I support policies that protect tenants from unjust eviction, displacement, and unfair rent increases. This will involve enacting stronger tenant protections, such as regulations against unjust evictions and rent gouging. Implementing rent control measures can also help stabilize housing costs for residents. Additionally, providing legal assistance and advocacy for tenants facing housing insecurity is crucial. These protections aim to support individuals striving to improve their circumstances, while ensuring that those who fulfill their obligations are not disadvantaged. It's also important to address concerns of homeowners, such as protecting them from non-paying squatters or unfair practices, through separate measures.
4. **Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing:** I will prioritize homelessness prevention efforts by providing financial assistance, case management, and supportive services to individuals and families at risk of homelessness. Additionally, I will advocate for rapid rehousing programs that provide short-term rental assistance and supportive services to help individuals and families transition out of homelessness and into stable housing and eventual home ownership.
5. **Collaboration and Community Engagement:** I will work to build partnerships and collaborations between government agencies, non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, and community stakeholders to address the housing crisis comprehensively. This will involve convening task forces, holding community forums, and facilitating dialogue to identify local needs and develop tailored solutions.
6. **Addressing Systemic Inequities:** I will advocate for policies that address systemic inequities and disparities that contribute to housing insecurity, including income inequality, racial discrimination, and lack of access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. By addressing these underlying issues, we can create more equitable and inclusive communities where everyone has access to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

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?

1. **Enforcement of Existing Laws:** With thousands of laws and ordinances currently in place, it's crucial to focus on reforming and enforcing existing legislation rather than constantly introducing new laws. I will prioritize the enforcement of existing gun laws to prevent firearms from falling into the wrong hands. This includes cracking down on illegal gun trafficking, prosecuting prohibited persons attempting to purchase firearms, and ensuring that background check systems are thorough and effective.
2. **Mental Health Initiatives:** I will advocate for increased funding and resources for mental health services and initiatives aimed at identifying and treating individuals at risk of committing acts of violence. By addressing underlying mental health issues, we can help prevent tragedies and improve public safety.
3. **School Safety Measures:** I will support efforts to improve school safety and security, including the implementation of measures such as increased funding for school resource officers, enhanced security protocols, and training for educators and students on how to respond to active shooter situations. Protecting our children and ensuring that they have a safe learning environment is paramount.
4. **Promoting Responsible Gun Ownership:** I will advocate for initiatives that promote responsible gun ownership and firearms safety education. This includes supporting programs that provide training and resources to gun owners on safe storage practices, firearm handling, and the importance of keeping firearms out of the hands of unauthorized users, particularly children.
5. **Addressing Root Causes of Violence:** I will work to address the root causes of violence in our society, including poverty, substance abuse, and gang activity. This may involve implementing community-based initiatives aimed at providing economic opportunities, access to education and job training, and support services for individuals and families at risk.
6. **Opposition to Blanket Gun Control Measures:** While I recognize the need for sensible gun regulations, I will oppose blanket gun control measures that infringe upon the rights of law-abiding

citizens without effectively addressing the root causes of gun violence. Instead, I will focus on targeted policies that are evidence-based and respect constitutional rights.

10. Unique Qualifications:

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

With my extensive background as a decorated retired Maryland State trooper and my dedication to serving my community as an Islamic Chaplain, I have firsthand knowledge of the needs of District 6. My experiences include serving multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has provided me with a deep understanding of the challenges faced by veterans, particularly those dealing with PTSD and suicidal ideation.

As a volunteer chaplain at various organizations, including the veterans service center/Platoon community, Family Rights for Religious Freedom, Frederick Health, and the Frederick County/Frederick City Homelessness Task Force, I have witnessed the struggles of our community members firsthand. Additionally, my involvement in petitioning both Frederick City and Frederick County to become a Ceasefire City signer reflects my commitment to promoting peace and safety in our neighborhoods.

As a father of four, grandfather of four, and loving husband, I understand the importance of creating a safe and prosperous environment for families in District 6. I recognize the diversity of our communities, from Montgomery County in the east to Garrett County in the west, and the unique needs of each area.

Based on my experiences and dedication to serving my community, I am committed to addressing the pressing issues facing District 6. This includes advocating for improved mental health services for veterans, supporting initiatives to combat homelessness, promoting religious freedom, and working towards peace and safety for all residents. As a retired law enforcement officer and chaplain, I am uniquely positioned to understand and address the needs of our district, and I am ready to serve as a voice for our community in government.