



MCMC: MoCo Council Candidates Questionnaire - 2026 Primary

The Montgomery County Muslim Council (MCMC) is a 501c(4) civic-engagement organization located in Montgomery County, Maryland, focused on elevating the needs and topics related to the Muslim Community and broader community in Montgomery County. MCMC engages with local elected officials, advocating for and representing our residents, institutions, children/students, and more.

On behalf of the Montgomery County Muslim Council (MCMC), we present the following set of questions to all Montgomery County Council candidates, both At-Large and District seats, who are running during the 2026 Primary elections. We greatly appreciate your participation and responses to these questions, as it will allow our community to be informed about issues pertaining to them, and the positions taken by each candidate. MCMC plans on publishing responses to its website.

Please return your responses via email to: president@mcmcmd.org

****Please return your responses by: Wednesday, April 29 2026 (COB)**

Question 1

Topic: Civil Rights

Montgomery County is one of the most diverse counties in the nation. Accordingly, many MoCo residents who are members of the Arab and Muslim community have engaged in public protests but have unfortunately experienced a curtailing of their first amendment rights to free speech. This includes doxxing, student and teacher suspensions, unequal response by local police.

1. What are your thoughts on the county's response thus far, in light of what was just shared? What has worked? What has not worked?
2. What specific steps will you take to protect the free speech of residents and students, regardless of their positions on issues? What is your stance on the county's response to peaceful advocacy and protests? How will you protect the free speech rights of residents on local and global issues?

I think we can and must do better as a County.

During my time as an elected official, both as the Mayor of Takoma Park and now on the County Council, I have worked with members of the community to ensure people can express their views and opinions safely. I find what has succeeded is working with community members to ensure spaces are safe and people can share their views. When I was Mayor and we had an event in which we were concerned about all voices being heard

respectfully I worked with all the residents and had the City hire a moderator to ensure the event went well.

As Council President, I worked with staff to make sure that when people came to Council meetings and hearings they were able to provide testimony and be heard. During the budget, I specifically worked with a number of organizations to help facilitate residents who were concerned about sharing their name and opinions publicly to be able to do so.

In addition when Council Vice President and then Council President, I was fortunate to work with a number of individuals and organizations to have the first Proclamation to recognize Muslim American Heritage Month in the County to create spaces for our Muslim community to be recognized and celebrated.

When there are instances that there is unequal response by police we must address that immediately. As the police department reports directly to the County Executive, I promised to work closely with the new County Executive to ensure our police department is upholding people's rights to free speech.

Question 2

Topic: Non-Profit Support

Many Muslim-led non-profits, like MCMF (Montgomery County Muslim Foundation), provide critical social services that the county cannot. Some may not even be aware of grant funding opportunities let alone have experience applying for competitive grants.

1. How will you ensure an equitable approach to communicating and granting funding for faith-based community organizations?

As Chair of the Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee, I have lead Many committee session regarding our Office of Grants Management and how we communicate with our grantees and organizations. We have made a great deal of progress over the last three years and if re-elected will continue to work with the next County Executive to ensure we have an equitable approach to communication and grant funding. I would welcome the opportunity to work with MCMC if there are specific areas my committee can help address.

Question 3

Topic: Housing and Displacement

Montgomery County is becoming increasingly unaffordable.

1. What do you propose to prevent current skyrocketing housing costs across Montgomery County, especially with residents facing record high interest rates?
2. What is your plan to prevent the displacement of immigrant and low-income families,

who have been disproportionately impacted?

We have a housing affordability crisis, and we need to attack this crisis through policies and programs such as rent stabilization which I supported at the Council, but we also need to encourage building more housing. It is why I introduced and the Council also supported the FAITH ZTA, allowing faith institutions to build affordable housing on their properties across the county and why I also support other efforts to build more housing. Too often these positions are framed as incompatible, but I believe they are complementary and can help those who are housing insecure.

We need to make sure we have programs in place such as the right of first refusal and that we provide the resources to help people organize tenant associations. As the district Councilmember with the most multiple family buildings in the County, we work with our non-profit partners and government staff to help residents organize and ensure they have in place the mechanism they need if faced with unfair practices or the threat of displacement.

Question 4

Topic: Housing and Displacement

For many families (1st generation, 2nd generation, immigrant, etc.), transit is a lifeline.

1. What are your specific plans to improve the reliability of public transportation (such as the Ride-On bus system and completion of Purple Line, and more), as well as pedestrian safety in all parts of the county, but especially in the Up-County region?

For many of our residents, public transit is a necessity and has the power to create possibility and progress. As the District 4 Councilmember I have worked to improve pedestrian areas around the Purple Line during construction and in other areas of my district to make sure that residents have safe pedestrian pathways. I also supported free Ride-On which gives all residents the opportunity to travel throughout the County with no fares. Reliability matters as does communication about the status of buses, ensuring we provide residents with up to date accurate information is key. I sit on the Transportation and Environment Committee and have pushed for efforts to have our current transit app work in coordination with other transportation options such as metro as well as the future Purple Line.

I was appointed to and serve on the *DMVMoves*, a workgroup of regional leaders through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. This workgroup advocates for long term funding of WMATA metro and bus service and is also looking at ways regional and local bus service can be better coordinated.

Question 5

Topic: Healthcare Access

Health insurance - and healthcare costs generally - continue to rise, making access to healthcare nearly impossible for some in our county.

1. What legislative measures will you support to bridge the gap in healthcare access for uninsured or under-insured residents in our community?
2. What legislation could you introduce or expand to bolster funding for free or reduced cost health clinics run by nonprofits in our county, such as medical clinics run by MCC (Muslim Community Center) and ICM (Islamic Center of Maryland)?

To ensure we are closing the gap on healthcare access the focus in the County needs to be on coordination and funding. I have in the past and will continue to support funding of clinics run by MCC and ICM. I have had the opportunity to tour these clinics and very much support the work being done to deliver health care to those in need. At the moment, I am not sure we need any new legislation but if there is something that would be within the jurisdiction of the county versus the state I would be happy to meet and discuss.

Question 6

Topic: County Budget

Fiscal responsibility and balancing the budget in coordination with the rest of the County Council and County Executive is a paramount responsibility of the County At-Large seat.

1. Do you support tax cuts, tax increases, or maintaining the status quo? 2. Regardless of your approach, how would you propose paying for many of the county's programs?

We are in the process of reviewing the County Executive proposed budget. This is a very difficult year as we look to make sure we can fund our social safety net programs and support residents especially those impacted by the cruel policies of the Trump Administration. We also know our residents are facing major affordability issues and so raising taxes at this time would be very difficult for many of our families. I am open to discussing making our income tax progressive and while that would slightly raise income taxes for wealthier residents in the county it would actually lower income taxes for most residents.

We also need to make ours a competitive, business-friendly jurisdiction and doing that would include both legislative measures, as well as using our position in the Council to set a different tone about how we talk about business.

It will take a team approach that aligns all levels of government and stakeholders to realize measured success. We need everyone on the team – from MCPS to Montgomery

College, to our local Chambers of Commerce, to both the Council and the County Executive, to our state and regional leadership – and we need everyone moving in the same direction.

We should also work closely with the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) on a strategy that aligns all those players, and establishes specific outcomes, benchmarks, and goals.

Another priority of the Council is responsible investment in the growth and maintenance of our county's public infrastructure, and public policies that make housing attainable and affordable for a diverse workforce. Better public transit, a flourishing public park system, a local housing market that offers affordable choices, and a thriving public school system can be significant pro-business attractions for businesses to invest in Montgomery County.

And we have to do that while keeping our county's public books balanced. Our credit rating is one of our greatest public assets, and maintaining that while we invest in our business growth strategy to increase our tax base must be top of mind for our county's political leaders.