

## MCMS Questions

### 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?**

I have spoken with Muslim students across the county who have experienced harassment and intimidation for speaking up against injustice. This is entirely anti-American. We must be proactive in protecting our free speech rights, especially when it occurs at public institutions, but also when it occurs in private institutions where maltreatment can more often go unaddressed.

As a councilmember, it would be my responsibility to advocate for my constituents and stand up for them, fighting for fairness and justice. If we cannot speak out in defense of the vulnerable, then who are we?

I will also be courageous in speaking out against hate speech, regardless of who it is targeted toward, and make it clear that there is no place for hate in our community.

#### **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?**

As a councilmember, I will be highly responsive to concerns expressed by residents and will mobilize the resources of the county to investigate and shine a light on free speech violations in our community. If organizations receiving county or state funding in any form have mistreated residents simply for speaking truth to power, I will advocate for restricting those funds until those organizations demonstrate that they have corrected their actions.

### 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?**

My goal is to establish a single, streamlined application process for all county government grants, with one deadline and uniform reporting requirements. This will ensure that any nonprofit organization that is diligent and well-organized can apply for and meet administrative requirements—without needing specialized staff or insider connections to government officials. The county government must also take a more proactive role in informing nonprofit leaders about available opportunities and be fully transparent about the criteria used for selection. Additionally, there should be routine audits to ensure that grant decisions are fair, free from bias, and aligned with the most critical needs of our community, while engaging a diverse range of organizations and perspectives.

### **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?**

My family came to this country as renters in Rockville, and over time, they were able to buy a home in Germantown. That journey reflects something fundamental: homeownership is transformational, and stable housing is a basic need on which so much else depends.

We must do everything we can to help families build generational wealth. As a councilmember, I will increase investment in the Montgomery County Homeownership Fund by expanding access to forgivable, zero-interest loans for first-time homebuyers.

I will also champion the rapid construction of multifamily housing and townhomes in a way that respects our environment and existing infrastructure. Increasing the housing supply is essential to bringing down costs. As part of that effort, I propose modifying the MPDU program to require below-market-rate housing in developments of 10 units or more, rather than the current 20-unit threshold—significantly expanding our affordable housing supply.

In addition, I will work to reform ADU (accessory dwelling unit) rules by removing the owner-occupancy requirement. This will create more flexible housing options and open additional pathways to homeownership, helping more families achieve long-term financial stability.

#### **2. What is your plan to prevent the displacement of immigrant and low-income families, who have been disproportionately impacted?**

We must proactively enforce our rent stabilization laws while also making it easier for landlords to receive credit for building upgrades, ensuring that residents have safe and well-maintained living conditions.

We must continue funding our emergency housing programs to provide temporary financial relief to families in crisis. At the same time, it is critical to work cooperatively with developers to create more opportunities to build homes for our residents.

By increasing the supply of smaller, more affordable housing units—including nonprofit-led developments for our most vulnerable residents—we can take meaningful steps toward making housing more accessible and stable for everyone in our community.

#### **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?**

I grew up in Germantown as the son of immigrants, surrounded by children from hardworking families like my own. Today, many of the residents who power our critical services and local businesses live in Upcounty and East County communities.

But population growth in these areas has far outpaced investments in roads and transit. High-traffic corridors are outdated and overwhelmed—often lacking safe sidewalks, adequate lighting, and proper crossings. As a result, residents in these communities, many of them from minority backgrounds, face a higher risk of traffic-related injuries and accidents.

We must take a data-driven approach, using crash and injury data, along with community feedback, to prioritize infrastructure improvements where they are needed most.

I strongly support expanding Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) into Upcounty and East County, creating faster, more reliable connections to Metro and unlocking economic opportunity in these communities. At the same time, we must improve the reliability and frequency of Ride On service along our busiest routes so residents can depend on public transit every day.

#### **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?**

Healthcare costs are a major burden on families, especially as Medicaid, ACA subsidies, and funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers face cuts.

As a physician and public health expert, I will work closely with the Department of Health and Human Services to expand cost-effective programs that improve community health through targeted screening, education, and outreach. Preventive care and early intervention are essential to reducing long-term costs and improving outcomes.

We must also strengthen our healthcare workforce. I will pursue a goal of growing the workforce by 25% through a grant-based incentive program, alongside expanded training pipelines in our high schools and at Montgomery College. This will help meet the rising demand for care—particularly in home health services and hospital staffing. By building a stronger workforce, we can expand hospital capacity and reduce emergency room wait times, which are currently among the worst in the region—averaging over 100 minutes longer than in neighboring Fairfax County.

**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)?**

As we prioritize funding for nonprofits, those providing healthcare and food assistance must be at the forefront, especially as gaps widen due to a lack of federal leadership.

As a county leader, I will work closely with the Department of Health and Human Services and our nonprofit partners to strengthen coordination and collaboration. This includes creating shared referral pathways for residents in need of specialized care, reducing duplication of services, and ensuring that every dollar we spend delivers the greatest possible impact. By better aligning our efforts, we can help each nonprofit scale its reach and effectiveness, maximizing the resources we have to serve those who need it most.

**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?**

We face real fiscal challenges, including the loss of federally funded safety-net services and the need to meet commitments for contracted pay increases. To address this responsibly, I propose a one-time 6% property tax increase applied only to homes valued above \$1 million, paired with a credit for other homeowners and multifamily properties to ensure costs are not passed on to renters.

In addition, I support raising the income tax rate to 3.3% for households earning \$300,000 or more, asking those who have benefited the most from our economy to contribute a fairer share to sustain essential services.

**2. Regardless of your approach, how would you propose paying for many of the county's programs?**

I will prioritize preserving funding for education, healthcare, housing, and first responders—services that are essential to the well-being and safety of our community. At the same time, we must make disciplined choices by reducing spending on administrative overhead, nonessential capital projects, and duplicative IT contracts.

I propose redirecting \$20 million toward small business programs to provide immediate economic stimulus for our struggling local economy, while we work to expand our long-term revenue base and avoid recurring fiscal shortfalls.

Additionally, I support a responsible \$100 million draw from reserves, not the proposed \$180 million or more, so that we maintain nearly \$100 million in reserve for emergencies.