



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

1015 18th Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C., 20036 | 202-349-1498 | www.CaribbeanPac.org

Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC) District of Columbia – 2020 Candidate Questionnaire

Please return the completed form via email to cpac.dmv@gmail.com by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, August 27, 2020. Responses will be shared with C-PAC’s membership.

Office Sought: DC Council At-Large

Candidate’s Name: Alexander M. Padro

Current Occupation: Executive Director, Shaw Main Streets, Inc./Commissioner, ANC 6E01

Party: Independent

Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website): 1519 8th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-3205, (202) 518-3794, No Fax, alex@alexpadro.com, alexpadro.com

1. What specific actions will you take to improve the well-being of your constituents and improve District services and access for all residents?
2. During recent legislative sessions, the D.C. Council advanced B23-0201, a bill to establish a District of Columbia Office of Caribbean Affairs (OCA), which is a long-standing priority of the Caribbean-American Community. Please explain your position on this legislation and whether you will support efforts to staff and fund the proposed office?

My mother is an immigrant from the Dominican Republic and my father’s parents were both born in Puerto Rico. If elected to the Council, I would be the first Councilmember of Caribbean heritage. I would take great pride in supporting the establishment and funding of an Office of Caribbean Affairs. Such an office would help ensure that members of DC’s Caribbean-American community would have greater access to services from District government agencies. This would include individuals and families, as well as small businesses, all of which faced increased challenges as a result of COVID-19.

3. What initiatives did you lead or support that impact Washington, D.C.’s Caribbean-American community?

As both an Advisory neighborhood Commissioner and a fulltime economic development professional, I have helped small businesses owned by residents of Caribbean-American descent to open their businesses in the District, navigate the DC government bureaucracy, and receive services from District government agencies. As an example, when Grand Cata Latin Wine Shop was rejected in their attempt to open a store on the 500 block of K Street, NW, in the Mount Vernon Triangle, I worked with the businesses owners to locate them on the 1500 block of 7th Street, NW, in Shaw, where their business has flourished and now has



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two locations in DC. As an ANC Commissioner, I have provided support to food insecure families and school supplies to the children of hundreds of Caribbean-American families in apartment buildings in the Shaw neighborhood for the past 20 years. I have also helped connect Spanish-speaking Caribbean-American families with services when lack of English proficiency was a barrier.

4. Are you familiar with the status and impact of Caribbean-American owned businesses in your community and throughout Washington, D.C.? How will you support the viability and competitiveness of the City's small, minority, veteran, women, and especially Caribbean-owned businesses? In addition, how will you improve procurement and contract opportunities for these businesses?

I have helped small businesses access alternative funding sources, such as the SBA Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Impact Disaster Loans, and grants from private nonprofits to help address the impact of the closures necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic. More Caribbean-American entrepreneurs would start businesses in DC if there were fewer challenges imposed by the District government on new business owners. Increased equity in access to procurement and contracting opportunities, capital and grants to support small businesses can be achieved by providing additional FTEs dedicated to conducting outreach to targeted groups of businesses, including Caribbean-American entrepreneurs. Additional technical assistance can be offered by such agencies as the Department of Small and local Business Development, Department of Consumer and regulatory Affairs, and Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration. I would propose funding the necessary staff positions to help these businesses get started and grow.

5. There are increased concerns regarding violence – especially gun violence – in many parts of the District. What are your proposals to address and stem violence with 21st century tools and policies?

Policing alone will not solve the crime problems facing District residents. As an ANC Commissioner, I have worked with nonprofit organizations to bring services to at-risk youth and adults in order to provide alternatives to crime and to prevent violence, especially youth gun violence. Two examples are the Clean and Safe programs which is I helped develop in 2006 and is now active in over 30 neighborhoods throughout the District. These programs employ mostly returning citizens and former gang members, providing training and paying a living wage and benefits. These jobs also prepare participants for other employment with the DC government and the private sector. Hundreds of men and women have benefitted from this program, allowing them to, in the words of one past participant, “fix up the streets I used to tear down.” Another success story that could be expanded is the Tale of the Tape Foundation's programs, which expose District youth to the videotaped experiences of other youth who have lost their lives to crime. Countless youth are alive today as a result of having participated in presentation by the program's founder, Curtis “C-Webb” Mozie. Outside-the-



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box thinking is needed to address our city's crime challenges. I look forward to the opportunity of working with colleagues on the Council on such initiatives.

6. How do you propose increasing access to safe, quality, affordable mental and physical health care and services throughout the District of Columbia?

Although the District has come a long way in reducing the number of our residents that are uninsured, greater outreach to minority populations is needed in order to increase health insurance coverage. Connecting residents receiving housing subsidies to better healthcare, including mental health services, would help reduce the District's homeless population.

7. Unfortunately, the challenges and concerns facing immigrants are increasing at an alarming rate. Do you support comprehensive immigration reform? How do you propose addressing the challenges facing DREAMers, the administration's suspension of temporary protective status for many D.C. residents, and the constant threats facing sanctuary cities?

I personally support comprehensive immigration reform and reversing the predatory policies enacted by the Trump administration against legal and illegal immigrants, including DREAMers. The District government should continue to resist attempts to use our law enforcement personnel to support the arrest and detention of illegal immigrants.

8. There is growing attention and distress about the significant increase in lawsuits filed against District residents by debt collectors over the last few years. What is your position on the Debt Buying Limitation Amendment Act, which is pending before the D.C. Council's Committee on Business and Economic Development and the Council's Committee of the Whole?

The Council wisely ended the practice of predatory paycheck lending years ago. Increasing consumer protection from unscrupulous debt collectors would be an important next step. I would support legislation strengthening such protections.

9. What concrete steps will you take to improve the District of Columbia's Public School system – including facilities and equipment, teacher treatment, relationships with parents, as well as education standards and test scores in all wards of the City?

The District spends a significant amount of money on our schools, but the Council has not done an adequate job of providing oversight on how those funds are spent. Our students are not receiving the maximum benefit from the massive investment of taxpayer dollars in education. DCPS is not responsive to community concerns and input, and the Council has failed to demand that the agency become more accountable to parents. As a DC Councilmember, I could seek to increase the Council's oversight and would propose



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returning control of our schools to the elected Board of Education, in order to increase accountability.

10. In Washington, D.C., many seniors seek to age in their homes and/or communities. What efforts will you take to improve service accessibility, support for families, and the quality of programs offered to the City's senior citizens?

I am acutely aware of the challenges facing seniors in today's society. My mother is 99 years old and lives independently, thanks to the daily visits of a home healthcare aid. Many District seniors do not participate in programs sponsored by the DC Department of Aging and Community Living because the Department's facilities are not conveniently located. As an example, there is no convenient senior center for elders living in central Shaw, where four wards intersect (1, 2, 5, and 6). The number of senior wellness centers need to be expanded so that every senior has easy access to the services offered. This could be accomplished by creating and expanding partnerships with sister agencies such as the DC Public Library and Department of Parks and Recreation. Expanded outreach to senior buildings would also help connect seniors to much-needed services they are not aware of. Some populations, such as LGBTQ seniors, have special needs that are not currently being sufficiently addressed. As an ANC Commissioner and Board member of organizations such as Emmaus Services for the Aging and the American Classic Woman of the Year Pageant, I have helped create new affordable housing for seniors, such as The Hodge on 7th (1490 7th Street, NW) and provide opportunities for seniors to explore their creative talents and share them with other seniors and the community at large. As a Councilmember I would seek out new and innovative opportunities to enrich the lived of the District's senior population.

11. What priority issues inspired your candidacy for political office?

Affordable housing is the one of the greatest challenges facing our city's future. We must make it possible for more of our essential workers to be able to live in the city where they work, instead of having to leave for the suburbs every night. My experience in helping to create affordable housing has convinced me that the city's investment in the preservation and creation of affordable housing is not generating as many units as it should. Greater Council oversight over the DC Housing Finance Agency, DC Housing Authority, and DC Department of Housing and Community Development is needed in order to ensure that the projects selected to receive District government subsidies generate the best "bang for the buck" from mechanisms such as the Housing Production Trust Fund.

Our city's small businesses are only an important part of what defines the character of our neighborhoods, but they are important sources of jobs for our citizens and sales and commercial property taxes that support our economy. These businesses, especially legacy businesses, are threatened with extinction by the combination of rising commercial property taxes and the closures made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic. If our businesses are to



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survive, the Council will need to explore and adopt best practices from around the nation as part of the recovery process. My almost 20 years' experience working with small businesses gives me special insight into what will be needed in order to help our small, independent, locally-owned businesses survive the challenges they face in the short and long term.

Crime continues to preoccupy most District residents. While our city has made progress in reducing homicide rates and other types of crimes since the records set during the 1990s, we need to do more to help make every DC resident be able to feel comfortable walking the streets of their neighborhoods. Creative approaches are needed. I've helped to successfully implement such approaches in the neighborhood I represent. I would help to bring more such ideas to bear in areas where crime reduction is an urgent priority.

My 20 years of service as an elected official in DC have helped me understand how the district government works, and why it sometimes fails to work. Unlike some other candidates, I am ready to hit the ground running on day one, instead of having a long learning curve. I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work helping every DC neighborhood's Dreams Come True.