



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, March 5, 2020. Responses will be shared with C-PAC’s membership.

Office Sought: Councilmember Ward 8

Candidate’s Name: Yaida Ford

Current Occupation: Lawyer, Managing Partner, Ford Law Pros PC

Party: Democrat

Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website):

Elect Yaida Ford

224 Malcolm X Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20032

Campaign Manager – Alfreda V. Davis Phone (202) 297-0445

Email: dcward8@yaidford.com

Website: www.yaidaford.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?

Ward 8, which I am seeking to represent, is among the most historically underserved and poorly resourced areas of our City. The daily challenges that confront the poor, and predominantly non-White population of Ward 8 are the same as those experienced by peoples of color throughout our City. As a Councilmember, my first year will focus on the following:

***Access to Education.* There is a tension regarding public charter schools vs. public schools and the lack of funding for the public schools. Because of historic racial biases, discriminatory practices and inequitable resourcing, the general mindset of public schools in the poorest sections of the City is that their mission is to serve students who are “left behind” and who have less potential. The impact of the wholesale and unchecked placement of public charters in Ward 8, has been to create a false “choice” for students and their families who feel underserved in public schools. However, public charters are often under-performing and the outcomes for students in public charter schools are marginally better, if at all.**



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

The issue is this—students of color are most often suffering from unaddressed trauma that is inhibiting their ability to learn. They are focused on surviving and managing emotions from unthinkable circumstances, so they are not focused on doing well in school. Because educators are often ill-equipped to recognize these issues, they have improperly relied on punitive disciplinary measures that widen the achievement gap between Black and White children. White children are not being suspended from school for going to the bathroom without permission. White children are not being placed in a mental hospital for getting into a fight with another student. Black children are being punished in a manner that is disproportionate to the behavior that they may display at school and all this does is remove them from the learning environment with no supports in place to address the root cause of the behavior (trauma) so that the child can do what s/he was born to do—thrive.

Access to quality childcare. I would explore private funding to create a financial assistance pool matched with government funds for single working mothers who cannot work the jobs without affordable care; create a separate fund for minority owned businesses who will provide high quality childcare services to families. For construction of facilities, I would explore TIF funding, matching grants and other sources.

Access to jobs that pay living wages. The absence of living wage jobs leads to chronic stress, health challenges and generational economic peril. I will work with our courts, DC jail, DYRS and CSOSA on implementing mandatory cognitive behavioral therapy pre-release and as a condition of release so that our returning citizens can hold down quality jobs. For immediate employment opportunities, I will work to develop partnerships with the construction companies and developers to establish a hiring process for our hardest to employ residents. I will create opportunities for workforce programs in non-traditional fields that will attract our residents to higher-paying jobs that will break the cycle of poverty.

Access to quality grocery stores and retail for our seniors and families. Out of 49 grocery stores in DC, Wards 7 and 8 have three between them. There are far too many food deserts in our City of prosperity. The absence of quality grocery stores triggers higher transportation costs for those who can least afford it and lack of access to nutritious, healthy food and basic necessities. There has been some movement in this area but not enough focus on getting stores in locations that are accessible. It will take a committed and consistent effort. Examples such as Jim Graham (former Ward 1 Councilmember) was successful in securing much-needed retail in his Ward after MUCH resistance from companies who felt that their businesses would not survive there are important to model. It is a proven fact that when there is more development coming to a Ward, it becomes much easier to attract certain retailers, but there must be a systematic, targeted approach that meets community needs and provides quality goods and services and fair, competitive prices.



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

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?

Yes, I will vigorously support the Office of Caribbean Affairs. I share the views of Councilmembers Brandon Todd, Mary Cheh, Vincent Gray and Robert White that Caribbean peoples are an important constituency and should have equal standing with other community constituencies represented within the Executive Office of the Mayor. The Office of Caribbean Affairs would provide needed focus and input on effective Government responses to the myriad of unique challenges faced by Caribbean immigrants. Notwithstanding the work to date done by the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs, they, like many of us, see the establishment of the Office as a critical next step.

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

I have worked hands on with members of the Caribbean American community for the last 10 years. This engagement has deeply affected my life. I sponsored the child of a Howard University employee from Trinidad for entry and he became a citizen 2 years ago. When the employee died, her children asked me to come to their country for the funeral. During the service, I was recognized as one of her children. This was deeply emotional for me. I have personally provided free housing to members of the Caribbean community so that they could get on their feet financially, and my investment was never wasted. As a lawyer, I have represented Caribbean business owners in civil litigation. In fact, I invested 500 pro bono hours of time in a matter for a businesswoman from Jamaica and took her matter to trial. I have had some of my greatest life experiences serving this community. And it has contributed to the woman and lawyer that I am today.

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?

In general, there are a shortage of successful, small minority-owned and operated businesses in Ward 8. We had a Jamaican restaurant owner in Anacostia but ownership changed some time ago. Ward 8 needs more businesses that are owned and operated by Caribbean-Americans because they add character to our neighborhoods. Moreover, small, locally



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

owned and operated minority businesses are the backbone of our communities. They provide employment and services that would otherwise be lacking. As communities increasingly become upwardly mobile, I believe it is essential to ensure the continued existence of these foundational institutions which have provided support to neighborhoods in the most challenging times and circumstances. I would work to ensure that there are stay-in-place grants to further develop and expand their capacity to serve community residents and increase their profitability; as well as support opportunities to attract new, minority-owned businesses to local communities and support their start-up. I would also work to increase information and access to funding opportunities through community-based training and outreach; and ensure that there is rigorous oversight and accountability regarding the beneficiaries of these programs.

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?

The pandemic of gun violence in the District must stop. Each time there is a tragedy, we tend to focus on the specific neighborhood. There needs to be a more holistic approach which of course includes reducing the immediate risks relating to guns on our streets; but we must also consider the underlying contributors to gun violence and develop a prevention infrastructure necessary to ensure effectiveness. In our City, I believe our most significant work must center around systematically reducing risks and increasing the resilience in individuals, families and communities. Gun violence is a critical and preventable public problem. We must expand access to high quality, culturally competent and coordinated social, emotional and mental health supports and address the impact of trauma to heal our communities, and to transition them from victims to proactive supporters of change. We must also support economic investment in communities and employment which will help stem anger, resentment and the sense of despair and helplessness generated by poverty.

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

I am presently advocating for bring a full service hospital East of the Anacostia to serve the more than 150,000 residents without this vital service. I believe that every resident should have access to safe, quality, and affordable mental and physical healthcare and services. As a Councilmember, I will advocate for adequate funding and elimination to barriers to accessible services.

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 Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

the challenges facing DREAMers, the administration's suspension of temporary protective status for many D.C. residents, and the constant threats facing sanctuary cities?

Yes, I support comprehensive immigration reform—covering all immigrants allowing them to have a pathway to permanent residency and ultimately citizenship. I advocate lobbying Congress to pass legislation giving permanent residency to DREAMers. I oppose the Administration's policy of having ICE raid and arrest undocumented individuals. We must continue to oppose vigorously any Administration attempts to withhold resources in order to force the City to comply with the Administration's policy of arresting undocumented individuals. We must remain a welcoming and inclusive City.

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?

I support the Debt Buying Limitation Act of 2019 as re-introduced by Councilmember Mary Cheh. Enacted, this measure will serve as an important check on the harassment of consumers and the leveling of false accusations against them-- especially those vulnerable populations—seniors and communities of color. The controls that the Act will place on debt collectors in terms of requiring specific information about the debt, accounting of the debt, and eliminating the re-starting of a debt's statute of limitations unbeknownst the consumer-- are needed and important 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 Achievement Gap

We must address the ever widening achievement gap between Black and White DC Public School students. I view that the “achievement gap” in actuality is an “opportunity gap”. The District is now beginning to focus on the vital importance of universal access to high quality early care and education during the critical development stages of birth to age three. However, for those in which the investments were not made soon enough, we must address these deficits through a lens of equity—now and into the future ensuring that educators at high poverty schools have the resources needed to help students thrive in the classroom and beyond. I will support equity in the allocation of funding.

Wrap Around Services to Promote Student Success



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

I believe it is a prerequisite to learning success for schools to provide access to wraparound service for students and their families in order to tackle the social and economic barriers to student learning. We must encourage and appropriate funds to well-designed wraparound service programs prioritizing communities and students whose health and wellness needs are not being met. A well designed program reaches a balance in providing services directly within schools while coordinating access to other services through external agencies. Tracking the outcomes of offering these services is also critical. We can accomplish this by making sure each year these programs are assessed via a cost-benefit analysis. Measuring and assessing the scale of these programs is also essential-- monitoring not just the schools that provide them, but also the number of students that have access to the services.

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?

Having programs and supports that will allow seniors to age in place with dignity and respect is a key pillar of my platform. I am advocating for expanded, low-cost care giver services; cost-free age-friendly home renovations; increased pedestrian safety and awareness; and expanded public transit and alternative transit options.

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

I am tired of the lack of action by my own elected official based on issues that disproportionately affect his residents. For example, there is no full service hospital in Ward 8. He is voting in favor of a new hospital that is NOT a full service hospital—despite the significant levels of trauma, incidents of cancer, and obstetrical needs of residents in the Ward. His lack of influence on the Council has lessened his ability to form coalition to vote against the proposal to replace United Medical Center with another facility that will not adequately serve the needs of his constituents.

I am also tired of getting calls about special needs children being abused at school--broken bones, patches of hair pulled out or being slapped and kicked by teacher's aides. I currently represent a group of parents against a school with repeated acts of violence against special needs children. There has even been press on this matter, but no action from our Council or our Chancellor. I believe it is because these children are Black. Policy makers cannot be selective in whom they serve.

Lastly, I am tired of policy makers who do the opposite of what they propose to do without explanation. For example, during the 2016 election, the Ward 8 incumbent pledged to increase violent prevention programs among youth versus using city funds to put more police



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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

on the street. But once he was elected, the first bill he signed proposed to increase funding to put more MPD officers in the street with no thought given to the more holistic approach pledged of addressing the root causes of violence in the Ward.

Ward 8 needs a leader with integrity and a strong sense of accountability to her constituents.