



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

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| 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: City Council

Candidate’s Name: Trayon White

Current Occupation: City Councilmember

Party: Democrat

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

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1. Please explain your plan or approach to improve agency responsiveness and the accessibility of services and staff to the District’s residents. What specific actions will you take to improve the wellbeing of your constituents?

As chair and member of 4 of committees in the DC council, I have been charged to provide oversight of agencies that provide critical resources and address the needs of all district residents in Education, Housing and Neighborhood revitalization, Humans Services, Government Operation, and Recreation & Youth Affairs. Part of the oversight process entails reviewing, monitoring, and supervising the implementation of public policies, budget allocation, and the services provided by agencies. As chair of the recreation committee I have ensured improvement of the responsiveness and accessibility of over 68 recreation facilities in the district.

In my four years as councilmember, I have ensured that Performance Oversight Hearings include throughout evaluation of managerial operations and service delivery by asking the tough questions and requiring the best data to assess effectiveness. Through an evidence-based approach we were able to improve the accountability of agency staff in delivering services to district residents, and most importantly following up with boots on the ground to see the work in action.

- *Successfully added \$10 million dollars in additional funds for the United Medical Center.*



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- *Led the efforts and secured funding for violence interruption and prevention, beginning with \$750,000 in FY 18, \$3.1 million in FY 19, and \$11 million in FY 20.*
 - *Secured \$10 million dollars in additional funding for Ward 8 schools who received cuts in the Mayors FY20 proposed budget.*
 - *Secured \$11 million for a new Senior Wellness Facility in Ward 8*
 - *Secured 1.25 million for Food security and building of 2 grocery stores*
 - *Secured over 54 million in Recreation Centers*
 - *Secured 11.4 million on senior needs*
 - *Funded the office of Returning Citizens, and of the Tenant Advocate*
 - *Secured over 143 million to alleviate the housing crisis*
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?

The Caribbean community contributes positively to the social and economic development of the city and the region at-large. As a member of the committee on Government Operations which reviewed the bill, I watched the public hearing and testimonies and learned that based on a 2018 study it is estimated that there were over 6,000 immigrants from the Caribbean in the District of Columbia, representing over nine countries. The Caribbean community is a vital part of the over 95,000 immigrants who live and work in the district. In each of the testimonies I sensed great satisfaction and pride towards within the diasporic Caribbean communities and their heritage.

As a Washingtonian I can relate to that shared pride of heritage, and a request for resources for expanding community empowerment. I voted in support of the establishing the Office of the Caribbean Affairs at the most critical times, and I am very happy that as of March 3, 2020, the bill passed its final vote. It is only fair and about time for the Caribbean community to be directly vested like the offices such as the Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs and the Mayor's Office on African Affairs. Specifically with the ability to finally be legitimized as



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an official office with the same authority and responsibility as the rest of the established Community Affairs Offices. By having a dedicated office and staff to carry out advocacy and specialized fund allocation to preserve and promote the culture and help in the strengthening of Caribbean owned businesses and restaurants, many of which are struggling, and to better connected with District resources.

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

Since in office, I supported with a positive vote Caribbean-American Heritage Month Ceremonial Recognition Resolution of 2017, 2018, and 2019. Recognizing the historical contributions and valued accomplishments of the Caribbean-American community and declaring every June "Caribbean-American Heritage Month" in the District of Columbia.

In addition to supporting the Caribbean heritage and culture I also worked on budget initiatives that impact the Caribbean-American community. We are currently experiencing an affordable housing crisis in the district. The rising property taxes are threatening thousands of long-established families in the city with displacement. A 2019 report by the Urban institute found that 493,000 households in the region are at risk of displacement in coming years as rents and property taxes rise. The 2018 data profile of Caribbean immigrants by the same organization reported that approximately 41 percent of Caribbean immigrants rented, and 59 percent owned their home. It was interesting for me to learn that Caribbean immigrants had high homeownership rates, yet 48 percent were paying a mortgage on their property. Property tax hikes are a huge concern in the district, which is why I have been part of the council's efforts to secure over 143 million to alleviate the housing crisis. In my ward and across the city I am committed to ensure community stability, and I have been introducing a legislative package of housing bills that safeguard Displacement Free Zones to ensure that taxes and rents do not skyrocket for the residents, and that equitable development is paramount to our growth.

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?



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Yes, I am familiar with the status and impact of Caribbean-American owned business in ward 8 and city wide. In September of last year, I was saddened to see Caribbean Citation being pushed out of Anacostia because their landlords wouldn't sell the buildings or renew their leases. Ward 8 is a food desert, and long-established restaurants and Caribbean entrepreneurs like Mike Sterling were critical in keeping our community fed for many years. Because of these injustices and to provide some relief, my office underwent a revision process for a Community Benefits Agreement with the developers of Reunion Square located directly across from the two restaurants that were displaced. The revised agreement included the establishment of affordable retail that will have economical rents, including retail space, and a restaurant food-incubator kitchen. The agreement also includes provisions for contacting commitments for ward 8 CBE's.

In addition, over my term in council I secured funds to create the Dream Grants program which provides \$500,000 to support Wards 7 and 8 small and emerging businesses with grants of up to \$10,000. As well as secured \$400,000 in one-time local funds for the Department of Small and Local Business Development to award competitive grants for equitable food business incubator startups in Ward 8.

Through securing these funds we are able to set precedence in how to best support the viability and sustainable growth of small minority owned business, across the city. We have also introduced several bills that provide compliance and enforcement mechanisms to ensure equitable procurement and contracting opportunities. On a weekly basis my staff reviews contract list that are submitted to council to ensure that due diligence has been made to include small minority owned businesses.

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?

We as a community must address the root of the crimes, change our traditional ways of thinking, and pursue relationships with different branches of the government including law enforcement. As a father, I am devastated by the increasing youth violence. It is senseless, heartbreaking, and infuriating. However, as Ward 8 Councilmember and Chair of the Committee on Recreation and



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Youth Affairs, I know it is my duty to do more to interrupt the violent conflicts and provide supportive services for our residents, especially our young people.

I have been working with various agencies like the Attorney General's office, Cure the streets, ONSE's Office, Roving Leaders, and more to see how we can expand services, diffuse neighborhood conflicts, and make sure residents are aware of the resources they have at their disposal.

I introduced a Youth Mentoring Initiative bill to coordinate and expand programs and public/private partnerships supporting youth mentoring programs and opportunities for at risk youth and connect mentors with District Schools.

Additionally, I introduced the Safe Way Home Act of 2017 calling for violence interrupters to provide safe passage from schools in certain neighborhoods in Wards 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. This law was funded starting at \$750k in FY18. To keep violence interruption and restorative justice initiatives going & expanding, this past year the Council added \$12.1 Million in Violence Intervention Funds. We invested \$3.9 million in FY 20 budget specifically for enhancements to the cure the streets program. Further, the Council enabled the OAG to capture an additional \$3 million per fiscal year in its non-lapsing Litigation Support Fund for crime prevention purposes.

We increased funding for families of crime victims for funeral and burial assistance to \$10,000. Plus, we invested \$4.5 million in lawyers for tenants facing eviction who cannot afford an attorney. And, I introduced the Community Violence Interruption Fund Emergency bill which allows the Mayor to raise private funds for violence prevention.

As a proactive approach, I pushed for the Private Security Camera System Incentive Program that encourages residents, businesses, non-profits and religious institutions to install security camera systems on their property and register them with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). This program is intended to help deter crime and assist law enforcement with investigations.

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



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The 2018 Urban institute study found that Caribbean immigrants were more likely to depend solely on private insurance and that coverage gaps were higher for Caribbean immigrants than all DC residents. Ten percent of Caribbean immigrants had no health insurance at all, two times higher than in the rate for DC. Those health access statistics are similarly a reality for many residents in ward 8. We Especially acknowledge that we too have many families who live across the district line in Prince George's County and east. It is those grim health access realities why I focused much of my work on successfully adding \$10 million dollars in additional funds to keep the subsidy for United Medical Center stable. One of the few hospitals East of the River which serves both the district and county residents.

Public safety is a complicated issue that has been on my radar for a long time. I have taken a community-based and legislative approach to address these issues.

We need to invest additional funding in the budget for mental health services (\$6 million is not enough funding for mental health services), more youth programs, and access to affordable mental and physical health care services throughout the district but especially in low income neighborhoods. We also need improved mental health resources coordination. One legislative solution that I'm studying is to establish a program designed to coordinate mental and behavioral health services for individuals in priority neighborhoods, especially those who are a part of the violence intervention programs.

During my time in council, we approved more than \$26 million in grants for domestic violence housing, sexual assault survivors' services, healthy relationship education, and hospital-based violence prevention programming.

We approved \$1.6 million for three new Place-Based Trauma-Informed Care Services Centers in neighborhoods with high rates of violent crime and trauma – these sites will link to existing violence prevention programming and provide trauma support.

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?

Yes, I support comprehensive immigration reform.



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My voting record on immigrant-based protection legislature has been very supportive. Over my time in council I voted positively on several resolutions and legislation that move the needle forward towards immigration reform at the local level, in providing sanctuary for district immigrants, and providing protections and support for DREAMERS.

- *Legislation which passed related to challenges and concerns faced by immigrants such as:*
- *PR23-0555 - Sense of the Council Supporting the Protection of Immigrant Families Resolution of 2019*
- *PR22-0448 - Sense of the Council in Support of Legislative Action to Protect Dreamers Resolution of 2017*
- *B22-0075 - Language Access for Education Amendment Act of 2017*

I understand that over 900 DREAMERS in the District are threatened by the suspension of protective status. Thus, it is imperative that Congress pass legislation to protect DACA recipients. During the hearings and in the committee reports it was determined that there is very little if any adverse effect on employment in, or the economy of, the District of Columbia as a result of DACA. In fact, we see the benefits of DACA on the streets as it has promoted diversity and family stability. It is those benefits, and lack of negative impacts, that propelled my support for PR 22-448.

Continuing to introduce measures such as the sense of the council and continuing to monitor and evaluate the adherence of district policing agencies to our sanctuary status and laws. Continuing to support legislation that strengthens the immigrant community and expands human rights such as language access and anti-discrimination or anti-street harassment laws will also help. My commitment to the immigrant community is strong, I hired a long time district resident immigrant as part of my legislative team, to bring forth the community's perspective and on the ground experience. My support will remain steadfast with the district's immigrant community, we share struggles and we also share hope.



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8. 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?

I am happy to inform your committee that I have recently been endorsed by WTU. My vision for public education in the District of Columbia is to ensure that we are closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged youth and increasing support for schools, teachers, and parents. On a micro level, I have prioritized transparency and adequate financial support across all DCPS schools and on a macro level, I have worked to increase PTAs/PTOs and safety in schools.

Over the last 3 years that I have served on the Council, I have worked with organizations like WTU to pass impactful legislation that addresses critical needs in DC Public Schools. The Equitable Evaluations for D.C. Public School Employees Amendment Act of 2019 is an example of that as it requires the District of Columbia Public Schools employees' evaluation process be subject to collective bargaining, and prohibits DCPS from penalizing any employee represented by a union, outside of the collective bargaining agreement guidelines. Legislation like the Equitable Evaluations for D.C. Public School Employees Amendment Act of 2019 helps us to ensure that teachers are doing their job but are not being overburdened. Teachers are the key to closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged youth and this legislation is an example of how we strike a balance between accountability and support.

Another challenge facing DCPS is the inequities related to the oversight of at-risk funding. I have introduced and co-sponsored bills to address this issue but our children who are at-risk will not receive the adequate services that they need until things change. Namely, with my colleagues, I introduced the At-Risk School Funding Transparency Amendment Act of 2019. This bill requires District of Columbia Public Schools to include in its budget submission to the Council detailed information for each school's funding, a separate line-item for at-risk funding for each school, and a narrative description of programs and services funded by at-risk funds retained by the Chancellor. It also requires that Public Charter Schools make publicly available a report that delineates all programs or services supported by funds allocated during the previous fiscal year. A final challenge facing DCPS is closing the gap for boys of color. Across the country, we see that African American boys, on average, score lower on tests and are given lower grades than Asian, White, Latino, and Immigrant students. In adolescence, many of them fail courses and drop out of school. I have been a long advocate for more support to young men of color and am working with my colleagues to address this issue.



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9. 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 was quite surprised at the 2018 data report which determined that DC's Caribbean immigrants specifically seniors aged 65 and older represent a growing share of DC's Caribbean immigrants, having risen from 15 to 25 percent. One of the special budget priorities has been to address the needs of seniors, especially their need to age in place.

I am very proud of my work to support the ward's senior population, especially since I was able to secure \$150 million in funds to serve this community. As a result of this effort the city will provide more than \$11 million to construct two new senior wellness facilities, one of which is on track to be completed two years ahead of schedule.

A legislation I introduced called Close Relative Caregivers Subsidies Amendment Act was passed into law, which will provide resources for uncles, aunts and siblings who are guardians of their relatives.

Through my efforts I was able to secure the funding for a position of Elder Abuse Section Chief at the Office of the Attorney General.

And I have introduced several bills related to the housing needs of seniors.

B23-0061 Senior Citizen Tax Cap Transfer Act of 2019, which allows for the transferability of the tax cap for properties owned at least 50% by a person 65 years of age older

B23-0060 Pension Exclusion Restoration and Expansion Act of 2019, which clarifies the abolition of rent ceilings applies to all unimplemented and expired rent increases; to resent rents charged based on the rent charged and any unexpired rent surcharges.

B23-0056 Senior Citizen Real Property Tax Relief Amendment Act of 2019, which provides additional real property tax relief for lower income District seniors and eliminates the tax notch



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that currently exists when a household's adjusted gross income reaches \$128,950 by phasing out the deduction up to \$180,000.

B23-0037 Care for LGBTQ Seniors and Seniors with HIV Amendment Act of 2019 , which requires the Mayor or designee to interpret groups of greatest social need to include LGBTQ seniors and seniors with HIV for the purpose of allocating funds provided to the District under the federal Older Americans Act, and amends the Human Rights Act to establish an LGBTQ HIV long-term care bill of rights to establish explicit rights and legal protections for LGBTQ seniors and people with HIV in long-term care.

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

My campaign motto is don't just stand there Do Something. That call to social and community action is the inspiration to my campaign and work as a public servant. I was inspired to run for office through my own experiences as a young man who grew up in Ward 8 and have carried those experiences into my work and have focused specifically on combating crime, housing affordability, workforce development and equitable education. I continue to be inspired by my neighbors and family who live in Ward 8 and will always fight on behalf of my constituents.