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## 2018 Questionnaire for County Executive Montgomery County

Progressive Maryland is a grassroots community organization that acts for social and economic justice by developing civic leaders and cultivating allies in order to advance economic, racial, and environmental equity, and to change our economic system for the benefit of all people in Maryland. Learn more at [www.ProgressiveMaryland.org](http://www.ProgressiveMaryland.org)

Progressive Maryland supports candidates who will work to build a society and economy that works for all Marylanders, with special emphasis on traditionally marginalized groups—low and moderate income residents, people of color, women, LGBTQ+, and all oppressed and exploited people. Elections can have an enormous impact on our work to reduce inequity and to improve the lives of residents all over the state. It is our responsibility not only to advocate for residents but also to empower them to engage in the political process at every level, from member-led canvasses to trainings for our members who wish to run for office.

To be considered for Progressive Maryland's endorsement, please return the completed questionnaire to our Policy and Legislative Director Jennifer Dwyer at [Jennifer@progressivemaryland.org](mailto:Jennifer@progressivemaryland.org) **no later than 5 P.M. on Friday, January 19, 2018**. Your responses will be available to the public at [www.ProgressiveMaryland.org](http://www.ProgressiveMaryland.org)

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### Candidate Information

Candidate Last Name:

**Elrich**

Candidate First Name:

**Marc**

Office Seeking:

**Montgomery County Executive**

District:

**N/A**

Party:

**Democrat**

### **Campaign Contact Information**

Committee Name:

**Marc Elrich for County Executive**

Street Address:

**9511 Saint Andrews Way (Mailing)**

**8700 Georgia Ave, Suite 306 (Office)**

City:

**Silver Spring**

Zip Code:

**20901 (Mailing); 20910 (Office)**

Business Phone:

**301-287-3002**

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**N/A**

Campaign Website:

**[www.marcelrich.org](http://www.marcelrich.org)**

## Candidate Contact Information

Cell Phone:

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## Treasurer Contact Information

Treasurer Name:

**Dale Tibbitts**

Street Address:

**9511 Saint Andrews Way**

City:

**Silver Spring**

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**20901**

Phone:

**301-312-2573**

## Candidate History

Previous Elected Offices:

**Takoma Park City Council**

**Montgomery County Council**

Which Years Did You Serve:

**1987-2006 (Takoma Park City Council)**

**2006-Present (Montgomery County Council)**

Have you ever received an endorsement from Progressive Maryland?

YES  or NO

If Yes, when: **I've been honored to have Progressive Maryland's support in the past, including in the most recent election in 2014.**

Have you ever assisted Progressive Maryland in achieving its goals?

YES  or NO

Describe:

**I have worked for social justice, worker rights, and other progressive issues for decades. As a County Councilmember, I have partnered with Progressive Maryland on a range of issues, including the recent push to raise the minimum wage to \$15, the initial effort that created the \$11.50 bill, and the county's sick and safe leave bill. I feel we have a shared vision for how we go about building a more just society. I'd be honored to continue that partnership as County Executive.**

Major Endorsements (Elected Officials/Organizations/Opinion Leaders):

**I have already been endorsed by CASA in Action and the Democratic Socialists of America, the only two organizations that have announced endorsements as of the date of this submission. I am pursuing the endorsements of a wide range of other organizations that also care about economic and social justice and expect to receive more endorsements soon.**

## Issue Questions

1. As the Kirwan Commission makes its recommendation on school funding, how will you support additional school funding to address the unmet needs in the county?

**Research is clear that adequate and equitable school funding makes a big difference for kids. Maintenance of effort requirements are a start, but they don't ensure that our schools are funded equitably and adequately. The right question to ask is not "how much of the budget is going to schools?" but "how much funding for schools is required for them to accomplish what they need to get done?" As County Executive, while I would have to be cognizant of budget constraints, I would strongly advocate for schools to get the resources they need.**

**I also strongly believe that the state has to provide increased funding for school systems in general, and for poorer jurisdictions in particular. What was originally proposed as a funding policy by the commission would be a disaster for Montgomery County and would likely reduce resources available to our schools. School funding should not be a zero sum game where we only reshuffle where existing state funds go; the state has a greater ability to raise revenue than counties do and already is funding too small a share of Montgomery County's education budget (not to mention other counties' education budgets, which they struggle to fund). And despite existing funding formulas, the state hasn't funded its share of capital construction money for Montgomery County in decades, regardless of what party has held the governor's office. I don't believe that the solution was to give the county a bigger piece of the same pie - we need a bigger pie.**

2. Overcrowding in public schools in Montgomery County continues to be an issue. What are your plans to address that issue, especially considering increasing budgetary shortfalls?

**We can address school overcrowding issues by ensuring that new development pays for necessary infrastructure. Developers make millions of dollars and reap the benefits of great schools, and it is reasonable to ask them, as a condition of development, to make sure that they provide funding for necessary infrastructure such as school facilities and transportation. As your next County Executive, I would advocate for more thoughtful master plans that more closely tie growth to our ability to provide classroom space.**

3. What is your plan to close the performance gap in Montgomery County schools?

**I taught public school in the county for 17 years and this issue is very important to me. I want to embark on a comprehensive "inside/outside" strategy that builds both stronger communities and stronger schools. Previous efforts have not been sufficiently comprehensive or systematic. As County Executive, I would work to ensure that school employees have the support and resources they need to ensure top-quality educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or economic circumstances.**

**I also want to significantly expand early childhood education. Children who enter school and have experienced quality early childhood programs are better prepared in terms of background knowledge, vocabulary development, and social-emotional development, which means that they are more ready to learn and need less remediation. They are less likely to need special education services, less likely to get caught up in the criminal justice system, and more likely to thrive as adults. An investment in early childhood education up front thus yields large dividends down the line, both for the students who directly benefit and for the rest of society. As County Executive, I would fight for the investments in early childhood education our county needs.**

**But the biggest barriers to student success remain poverty and economic inequality. I have fought hard for minimum wage increases, affordable housing, and equitable resource distribution during my time on the County Council because I know how much of a difference added income and more stable living situations make to students' families, and to students' ability to thrive in school. I would continue to champion economic justice issues as your next County Executive.**

4. In general, do you support or oppose charter schools?

Support

**Oppose**

**I'm open to experimentation with different school models within the public school system, but we need to be innovative enough to experiment without relying on charter schools, especially those that are privately run by for-profit companies. Charters that are an integrated part of the public school system that don't detract from other schools' ability to serve their students can work, but they are the exception, not the norm. Of course, if charters find methodologies and/or curriculum that work to raise the achievement of at-risk youth, then those should more broadly applied.**

5. Do you support or oppose school vouchers that would allow public school students, K-12, to attend a private school instead of their local public school? Please explain your support or opposition.

Support

**Oppose**

**Public education dollars should be spent on public schools. Vouchers drain public schools of needed resources and don't account for the fact that there are large fixed costs associated with educating students. Transportation and facilities costs, for example, are not necessarily reduced when a student leaves a school, so if money that was allocated for public education is spent on students attending private school, fewer resources per student will remain for everyone attending public schools.**

6. Will you support making community college free for all county residents?

Yes

No

**I support the principle of tuition-free college. However, we do not currently have resources at the county level (and probably not at the state level, either) to fund it. We should work towards lowering the cost of college, but our ability to do that is constrained by what resources we have.**

7. Will you commit to support full funding of Montgomery County's optional public campaign financing system?

Yes

No

**I am participating in public financing and strongly support the system, which I believe has real potential to help reduce the influence developers and other big-money interests have in county government. Money is a major barrier for candidates who represent regular people to run successful campaigns, and it took me four unsuccessful tries before I finally was elected to the County Council in 2006 and became the top vote-getter in 2010 and 2014. If public financing had been around during my earlier campaigns, it may have been easier for me to compete with candidates funded by developers (I am the only candidate running for County Executive who has never taken money from developers) and get my message out to the public sooner.**

8. Are you using Montgomery County's new public financing option? Have you qualified? If not, how close are you and when do you expect to qualify? If you are not using the public option, why not and what are your funding sources?

Yes                      No

**I am using public financing and have already raised about \$440,000 (including matching funds). I've raised more money than any other candidate taking public financing.**

9. In August, the Attorney General's office notified Delegate Marc Korman that counties can legally implement a public-financing option for candidates to statewide elected office. Do you support a statewide public financing program?

Yes                      No

**We also need to lower the contribution limits for individuals in state and local races and should eliminate corporate funding.**

10. What would you do to create more affordable housing options for Montgomery County residents?

**I am a strong supporter of just-cause eviction laws and rent stabilization. I worked hard to strengthen Takoma Park's rent stabilization law when I was on the Takoma Park City Council and would like to introduce rent stabilization throughout the county. That will be particularly important in areas around the Purple Line. Montgomery County master plans have too often proposed zoning changes that would displace low-income communities of color, and I've been the one consistent voice on the County Council speaking out against these changes and in favor of preserving existing affordable housing.**

**I also want to preserve our stock of what is called "market-rate affordable housing," which fills an important gap in the housing market. Our master plans have unnecessarily targeted many of these apartments for upzoning wherein the county would get a small number of apartments with some limitations on future rent increases but lose substantial market-rate units. Market-rate units have rents substantially lower than the high-end apartments that are being built and their loss would be likely to increase competition by renters for the units that are available just below market-rate, which is why I am committed to protecting them.**

**I believe strongly in expanding affordable housing, too. I have been trying to create a pilot project to build housing for our homeless population at a feasible cost, and I plan to continue to support the nonprofit community's efforts to provide affordable housing for the special needs population as County Executive.**

11. What will you do to relieve road congestion and improve transit options?

**I developed the plan for a bus rapid transit (BRT) network and have been working hard to make it a reality for a decade. While I am happy that it is finally moving forward, as County Executive, I would make sure it is built and run cost-effectively and efficiently. One critical component of the BRT network is the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), which would finally provide the transportation infrastructure that was promised when Clarksburg was developed and has now become critical to the Life Sciences plan near Shady Grove.**

**My more general approach to congestion issues involves focusing less on road construction and more on changing "mode share" (the percent of commuters using different modes of transportation for their commutes; a 50% non-auto mode share means 50% of commuters are not traveling by car). We need to implement a combination of improved transit and policies that support transit, including comprehensive parking policies, with the goal of reducing trips by single-occupancy vehicles. We can build within the**

existing footprint of the roadways and minimize new construction by using the highly directional nature of traffic in Montgomery County to our advantage, using reversible lanes that provide capacity during the time of day and in the direction that needs traffic relief; doing so reduces both capital costs and environmental impacts. As I've said before in [commentary](#) on Governor Hogan's proposals, it makes neither environmental nor economic sense to use a sledgehammer where a scalpel will suffice.

Finding a dedicated source of funding for Metro is also essential. I believe we should raise the money by addressing "value capture." Developers have made millions - if not billions - of dollars off of this publicly owned and operated asset; if they want to be near Metro stations, they need to share in the costs as well as the benefits.

12. How will you ensure that future housing and transportation projects ensure that poor or minority neighborhoods will not be forced to bear the burden of making way for new development?

As noted above, I've been the one consistent voice on the County Council speaking out against upzoning areas around transit and in favor of preserving existing affordable housing. The County Executive doesn't have direct control over land use decisions, but I intend to be an outspoken advocate for ensuring that our development is responsible and respectful of poor neighborhoods and communities of color. I will be proposing that we start using a racial equity lens when crafting all of our county policies because we have largely ignored the impacts our policies have on these communities, or we blow off those impacts with sentences like "the county should try to mitigate displacement." The truth is that we don't have the resources to mitigate the displacement our current approach causes, which is why that approach needs to change.

13. How will you help Montgomery County become cleaner and increasingly carbon-free?

As your next County Executive, I would consistently talk about what's happening with the climate, the implications of climate change, and how we actually have the ability to address some of the challenges climate change has created. I just authored a resolution, along with several of my colleagues, calling for bold reductions in greenhouse gas emissions: we committed to pursuing an 80 percent reduction by 2027 and a complete elimination by 2035. I also pushed to make sure that a second environmental resolution stated that, by 2020, dirty sources of energy (such as energy produced by our county's waste incinerator) should lose the subsidies they currently get under state law.

There's a lot we can do to get there. BRT (and, more generally, increasing transit mode share) is one of my top priorities because implementing it right could get cars off the road, reducing greenhouse gas emissions significantly and improving the quality of life for Montgomery County residents. Correct implementation includes using electric buses and ensuring that as much of their charging infrastructure is solar-powered as possible, as regular electricity in our region is not cleanly generated.

Outside of transportation, the county should require homebuilders to offer a solar option when constructing single-family homes and townhouses and should also require commercial buildings to choose either reflective roofs, green roofs, or solar roofs - I am about to introduce legislation that would enact these requirements and hope my colleagues will support it.

The county should also encourage solar utilization by residents in existing buildings. One of the clearest ways to do that would be to aggressively pursue a residential Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program that would allow residents to include the amortized cost of solar improvements on their property tax bills. If California can figure out a way to structure such a system so that banks don't interfere with it, we can, too. We also need to get creative in thinking about ways to push properties to make use of our



commercial PACE program. Microgrids - especially publicly owned microgrids - paired with local energy generation make a lot of sense as well, and I would continue to encourage the county to develop them.

Another step we need to take is shutting down the county's waste incinerator. Even after we burn our trash at the incinerator, we still landfill 30% of the original waste. That 30% is toxic ash and we can definitely do better. I am about to introduce a resolution that will call for the non-renewal of the incinerator permit in 2022 and require us to chart a zero waste path to get there.

Lastly, we need to divest from the Carbon Underground 200, move towards zero waste by increasing our recycling goals (particularly for sectors that are not performing well) and adding food composting to our recycling program, and look at increasing funding for the Green Bank.

14. What would you do to enhance economic stability and wealth for Montgomery County residents?

I support a wide range of policies that would enhance economic stability and wealth for Montgomery County residents. The minimum wage bill I just sponsored and passed would improve economic stability for over 100,000 residents. I have long supported unions, fair scheduling laws, rent stabilization, moving communities from renting to homeownership (disparities in homeownership are a main cause of the racial wealth gap), and much more - these issues are very important to me and I would continue to fight hard for economic justice as your next County Executive.

I also support broader development of incubators to help foster small business development. I've seen very substantial projects in Baltimore that help people with product concepts develop skills needed to produce their products, provide machinery that can be used in the manufacturing process, and help develop business skills that are necessary for actually running a business. We talk a lot about how important small business is, but our current investments skew toward large corporations that already have adequate resources. I like worker-owned businesses and the formation of cooperatives. We also have a lot of aging business people who will be leaving their businesses, often simply shutting down when they retire. We should look to provide opportunities for employees of those businesses to purchase the business from the current owner - it would be a plus for the owner and a plus for the employees.

I would look forward to working with Progressive Maryland and other organizations to determine what policies in this space should be the biggest priorities.

15. Will you work to create a higher density of union jobs in Montgomery County? If so, how would you accomplish this?

Yes                      No

First, I would use the bully pulpit early and often. I believe in publicly elevating, at every opportunity, the cause of workers trying to unionize, and that includes joining workers on picket lines.

I have, for many decades, stood with workers in their struggles to organize and bargain collectively. I sent letters of support for food and commercial workers who were trying to negotiate with grocery stores in the 1990s. A few years ago, I spoke out on behalf of trash truck drivers when they were being underpaid. I recently stood with nurses trying to organize a union at Holy Cross Hospital. You can always count on me to be an advocate for unions and for working people.

**Without strong unions, we can't fight inequality. Unions raise wages and improve benefits for union and non-union workers alike. Higher union density in an area translates to better outcomes for children in that area, too, regardless of whether those children are growing up in union or non-union households.**

**While most labor law operates at the federal or state level, I would be an outspoken advocate of strengthening the National Labor Relations Board and pursuing policy ideas, like those outlined by Richard Kirsch in a 2014 paper for the Roosevelt Institute, that could help strengthen workers' ability to join unions. Among these ideas: allowing multi-employer unionization efforts, enabling workers not currently covered by labor law to organize, expanding the scope of bargainable policies, making card check elections the standard practice, increasing the penalties for violations of labor law, and requiring employers to allow union representatives to talk to employees on-site. I would like to explore further how these ideas and others could be pursued at the local level.**

16. What are your plans for implementing police reform and accountability?

**I chair Montgomery County's Public Safety Committee and have already worked with county police to drastically alter their policies on taser use and to prevent racial profiling. I give a lot of credit to our police leadership for acting proactively on these issues. They have also emphasized de-escalation training for their officers (so that interactions with suspects are not allowed to rapidly worsen) and opened up their review processes to the public. I think there's still more we can do to shed light on how they deal with discipline issues stemming from citizen complaints, and I would welcome continued dialogue about what's needed with residents who are working on these issues and observing the steps that the department has already taken.**

17. How do you plan to ensure the implementation of Civilian Review Boards for police misconduct?

**I think there's a profound lack of trust of the police in many communities, and rightfully so - decisions by local police boards and reviews of police behavior often seem inconsistent with the facts. We must have a system of oversight under which residents feel confident that officers, just like everyone else, are held accountable for their actions. I think our department is one of the better departments anywhere due to their training, the department's leadership, and to political leadership, in general, that will not tolerate the kinds of behaviors that exist elsewhere.**

**I've supported the county opening up its process so that civilians can observe police boards. State law would need to change for civilian review boards to become a reality, so I can't ensure their implementation, but I would support efforts at the state level to change the law.**

18. What are your plans, if any, to end cannabis prohibition? What are your plans to change cannabis policy in Montgomery County?

**I support marijuana legalization, but it's a state issue. Marijuana's illegal status has contributed to mass incarceration and there is no coherent justification for it.**

19. The County Executive has announced a budget shortfall of about \$120 million and has asked departments to cut 2% of their budgets in response. What cuts would you make to the budget? How would you change the county's budget process to make it more progressive?

**I want to overhaul the county's approach to budgeting. While the current budget shortfall is due largely to circumstances outside of our control, we have a bigger structural problem, which is that we simultaneously have stagnant revenues and rising needs. There is no reason to believe we can grow our way out of this**

problem, so we need to rethink the way we run the government if we want to pivot our human and capital resources to meet those rising needs.

Rather than implement across-the-board cuts or increases that punish good programs and reward poor performers, I want to focus on the outcomes county residents want - great schools, shorter commute times, reduced poverty, more affordable housing, enhanced public safety - and design the budget to achieve these outcomes. I want to move from one-year to two-year budgets so that county agencies, nonprofits, and businesses have more time to plan, and I want to review all of our county's processes and contracts to ensure that we are being intentional about how we are spending our money and accountable for getting results.

I would partner with our employee unions, who I have already discussed this idea with, to determine which ideas would work best to free up funds for essential services. We are all in this together, and anyone who's spent any time talking with county employees knows that they have plenty of thoughts on how we can do things better. They are fully aware of the budget pressures we face and understand that finding ways to work better and smarter is a benefit to them and a benefit to everyone in the county.

20. How do you intend to protect and support the undocumented community beyond what is currently being done? What would you do if the administration refuses to renew DACA and TPS?

Montgomery County already does a lot to protect and support the undocumented community - our policies are consistent with those of a sanctuary jurisdiction. Our police do not take custody of people based on legal status and do not inquire about legal status during investigations or arrests. We do not enforce federal immigration laws, and we do not cooperate with ICE unless a person is in the prison system for a serious crime. Undocumented residents already have access to county services, except in cases where federal law denies them access.

I am a longtime champion of efforts to make this county a welcoming place for immigrants and have already been endorsed by CASA in Action. Especially in the face of a federal landscape hostile to immigrants, I would look forward to working with CASA, Progressive Maryland, and other immigrant rights advocates, as I have done throughout my career, to determine what else can be done.

21. What is your plan to implement greater protections for women and children?

I fully support our policies which protect affordable and accessible abortions, programs that provide support for sexual health and access to birth control, and protections against domestic abuse. The county opened up a center for people needing shelter from domestic abuse during my time on the council and we are now opening our first safe exchange center, which will provide a safe place for parents to exchange custody of children in accordance with court custody rulings. I have also been pushing to allow courts to mandate GPS-locating bracelets for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse who have court-mandated restrictions on contact. I'm proposing a system that would alert police and victims with protective orders any time a person violates court-imposed distancing requirements.

Policies that advance economic justice - paid leave, fair scheduling, and the minimum wage, to name a few - also protect women because women make up the majority of low-wage workers affected by these policies. In a way, my entire policy agenda is about protecting women and children, as every issue of economic and social justice affects hundreds if not thousands of women and children throughout the county every day.

As County Executive, I would be happy to work with advocates to implement additional policies that protect and expand the rights of women and children.

22. Which progressive groups or organizations are you a part of, have worked with, or supported?

**I have been an activist in the progressive community for decades. I was involved in Students for a Democratic Society during my college days and have never looked back. I was also involved in the Democratic Socialists of America and the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee and was one of the founding members of Progressive Montgomery - the precursor group to Progressive Maryland. I have worked with labor unions (I used to be an active member of my teachers union), immigrant rights groups, racial justice groups, women's rights groups, LGBT groups - you name it - on making Montgomery County a more progressive place and would continue to do so as your next County Executive.**

23. Will you support ending the money-based bail system in Maryland?

**Yes**                      **No**

**I fully support bail reform. I believe incarceration should be used when people present a genuine threat to the community, not when people who would otherwise be considered safe to return to the community lack the ability to pay for bail. If we think there's a price a person can pay that would justify keeping them out of jail, then there's not a public safety justification to require bail at all.**

**Our entire criminal justice system still focuses far too much on punishment and far too little on rehabilitation. This focus too often relegates people to a lifetime of crime by leaving the issues that might get them into trouble with the law unaddressed, costing them their jobs, and making it near impossible to find new work because of their criminal records. Montgomery County needs to be a leader in fixing this problem.**

**The county already does some good work in this area which I strongly support. We have an active diversion system in which we try to keep people out of jail, in large part by directing them to community-based services that can help them address any issues they have. I also successfully sponsored ban the box legislation in the county before the state acted on the issue. Still, there is much more work to be done.**

24. For the measures above that you have agreed to support would you be willing to:

- Sign legislation? YES  or NO
- Work with our Policy and Legislative Director to help pass a bill? YES  or NO
- Speak at public events in support of legislation? YES  or NO
- Write an op-ed in support of legislation? YES  or NO

25. Would you be willing to engage with Progressive Maryland members and their communities by:

- Speaking at Progressive Maryland events? YES  or NO
- Meeting with our membership annually to report on the progress of our shared priorities and answer questions from our members? YES  or NO
- Writing a letter to unorganized workers endorsing an organizing drive by a labor union? YES  or NO