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2018 Questionnaire for County Council 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

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 **no later than 5 P.M. on Friday, January 19, 2018**. Your responses will be available to the public at www.ProgressiveMaryland.org

Candidate Information

Candidate Last Name:

Shnider

Candidate First Name:

Ben

Office Seeking:

Montgomery County Council

District:

3

Party:

Democrat

Campaign Contact Information

Committee Name:

Friends of Ben Shnider

Street Address:

1125 Elmcroft Blvd, Apt.H303

City:

Rockville

Zip Code:

20850

Business Phone:

(240) 242-9451

Fax:

Campaign Website:

<https://www.shniderforcouncil.com/>

Candidate Contact Information

Cell Phone:

(240) 242-9451

Email Address:

Shniderb@gmail.com

Treasurer Contact Information

Treasurer Name:

Ashish Dhru

Street Address:

__11550 Old Georgetown Road Apt 1716_____

City:

__North Bethesda_____

Zip Code:

__20852_____

Phone:

__(240) 645-6860_____

Candidate History

Previous Elected Offices: None

Which Years Did You Serve: N/A

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| | |
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| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Have you ever received an endorsement from Progressive Maryland? | YES _____ or NO X |
|--|--------------------------|

If Yes, when:

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Have you ever assisted Progressive Maryland in achieving its goals? | YES X or NO _____ |
|---|--------------------------|

Describe:

- Active in pressing the County Council to adopt a local \$15 minimum wage, including petitioning my District 3 Councilmember (and current opponent) to support both the original \$15 proposal, plus a stronger, more reasonable timeframe in the later version that was eventually adopted by the County Council
- As the Vice Chair of Rockville’s Human Rights Commission, I successfully advocated for the City’s policy against municipal involvement in federal immigration enforcement

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

- Delegate Shane Robinson (D-39) Chair, Montgomery County House Delegation
- Delegate Andrew Platt (D-17)
- Unite Here Local 23

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?

Comments: As a Montgomery County Councilmember, I will proactively advocate in Annapolis for our community's fair share of State Education aid to meet the pressing needs of MCPS students and the growing pressure on MCPS teachers. I will also insist on the appropriation of adequate resources in the County budget as a top priority. This includes universal Pre-K and wrap around services for all students, regardless of a school's zip code.

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?

Comments: Among the steps I will advocate for as a Montgomery County Councilmember are restoring closed schools to the MCPS inventory and collaborating with all stakeholders to identify creative, non-traditional approaches, such as the use of vacant office space for instructional use. Applying lessons, in whole or in combination, from the approach of other growing jurisdictions to address infrastructure challenges in the public schools is essential, as well. For instance, I believe the School Board should re-examine its method for drawing school boundaries to ensure that -- as our system grows -- we are regularly taking steps to use existing space in an optimally efficient and equitable manner.

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

Yes No

Comments:

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

Comments: I am fundraising conventionally, while honoring my commitment not to take contributions from any corporate entities or corporate PACs. We expect considerable spending on the part of corporate interests on independent expenditures in races like ours. To remain competitive in this environment as a first-time candidate, I believe I will therefore need to raise more funds than offered by the public match.

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

Comments:

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

Comments: I will advocate for preserving and expanding the County's stock of diverse and affordable housing by strengthening the existing Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program to require at least 15% off new dense developments be set aside for affordable units. I will also advocate for rent stabilization for existing housing stock.

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

Comments: Enhancing multi-modal transportation options throughout Montgomery County is vital for all residents, including drivers. It is also important for sustainable economic development and social equity. As a County Councilmember, I will vigorously advocate for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for Routes 355 and 586 and increased express RideOn offerings — modeled after the new RideOn Extra Route 101. In addition, I will press the State to work toward all-day, week-long MARC service on its Brunswick Line. If I-270, in particular, is expanded, that expansion should be limited to two lanes that reverse with the flow of traffic, and give priority to buses and carpools.

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?

Comments: First, it is prudent to explore companion legislation to that which created the County's Small Business Assistance program (Bill 6-12), to address the impact of redevelopment on nearby residences, as well — not just businesses. Such legislation may also go beyond projects that occur on County property. The County should also reconsider legislation requiring Community Benefit Agreements between developers and nearby communities (residential and small business) when otherwise feasible and appropriate, as was unsuccessfully attempted by former Councilmember Valerie Ervin via Bill 33-11. Finally, as a County Councilmember, I will advocate for a countywide rent stabilization law.

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

Comments: First, I will work with all applicable stakeholders to decommission the County's Refuse Recover Facility (a.k.a, the incinerator) and push the State to hold the adjacent, private NRG power plant to the highest possible environmental standards. I will push for the timely implementation of curbside food composting as a means of working toward zero-waste. Finally, I will advocate for enhanced transportation options beyond driving, including transit, pedestrian and bike facilities.

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

Comments: Refocusing the County's Economic Development Fund so that it focuses as much on small businesses as large corporations is one important approach for improving the overall economic well-being of our community. Preserving and expanding our affordable housing stock and creating a new rent stabilization policy are other necessary steps. So too is the redevelopment of existing, underused office parks and the expansion of multi-modal transportation options. Finally, we must stabilize Metro through a dedicated source of funding and increased oversight.

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

Yes No

Comments: As a County Councilmember, I will:

- Oppose the privatization of County Government jobs;
- Support amending Bill 19-12 to cover sanitation workers working under a County contract and authorizing the County's Director of Procurement to determine if a labor peace agreement on a County Service contract is in the best interest of the County
- Advocate for Project Labor Agreement legislation in Montgomery County
- Support holding the utility contractors to the same standards as MCDOT and WSSC regarding the payment of the local prevailing wage (provided there are no legal issues at the State level), along with actively encouraging utilities to hire Montgomery County residents
- Support applying the County's local prevailing wage law to school construction contracts, within the parameters established by existing State law (and working to expand State law accordingly, if necessary).

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

Comments: Montgomery County is fortunate to have a highly professional police department, which focuses on the community policing model. However, there is always room for improvement. We should ensure that civilians are represented on Police Review Boards. It is also critical for MCPD to expand the diversity of its recruit classes. Further, the Department should regularly reexamine its training procedures (for both new recruits and in-service training for existing officers at all levels), with careful attention to our diverse community. Additional resources to facilitate more foot patrols, where practical, countywide would also improve community exposure to MCPD outside of literal enforcement operations.

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

Comments: I believe civilian oversight of our police is an important component of fostering trust between MCPD and the community and proactively working to prevent misconduct. I would work with my colleagues in County government and all stakeholders to implement a scheme for achieving such oversight.

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

Comments: I support efforts in the Maryland General Assembly to transition from cannabis prohibition to an appropriate regulatory scheme (like that currently in place regarding alcohol). I also support the State's current medical cannabis program. I feel strongly enough about this issue that I would commit to testifying and lobbying in Annapolis. We should not be wasting money on sending non-violent drug offenders to jail, particularly when research has demonstrated that such laws are enforced in a racially biased manner.

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?

Comments: I do not agree with across the board "marks." Instead, as a County Councilmember I will prioritize the social safety net, education, maintaining existing public infrastructure, expanding multi-modal transportation and affordable housing. I will support cuts that do not conflict with these priorities. I will also lobby the General Assembly for authorization to make our local income tax, in particular, more progressive.

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?

Comments: I will propose legislation that codifies existing County policy against proactive enforcement of Federal immigration reform at the local level. I will also continue to participate in peaceful civil disobedience against the Trump Administration's immoral policies on DACA and TPS, specifically, and immigration generally.

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

Comments: Implementing universal Pre-K, expanding wrap around services and making Montgomery College tuition-free for all MCPS students are key measures to ensure women and children in our community have access to equal opportunities. The same point applies to keeping the County out of proactive immigration enforcement, as discussed above. It is also vital for the County to actively support the full range of services provided by the Commission for Women and take steps to continually review its sexual harassment guidelines to ensure they remain up-to-date.

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

Comments: I've spent my career in the progressive movement. On the national level, I helped grow J Street as voice for prioritizing diplomacy over war and helped launch Bend the Arc's political arm -- which has grown into a key voice for immigration reform, economic justice, and racial justice on Capitol Hill. I also worked on President Obama's 2008 campaign. Locally, I served on Rockville's Human Rights Commission, where I advocated for a local Trust Ordinance, and the Board of the Action Committee for Transit, where I lobbied for increasing our investment in transit -- particularly in our underserved communities.

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

Yes **X** No

Comments: It is both moral and practical to only hold persons arrested in custody if they are a flight risk and there is no viable alternative to track them or if the District Court Commissioner or a judge determines that a prisoner is an immediate threat to public safety.

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

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

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

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