



AIM County Council Candidate Questionnaire

Responses from Shruti Bhatnagar candidate for At-Large

Affordable Housing

How would you work with AIM to increase the Housing Initiative Fund to \$100M by the year 2022?
Investing in affordable housing is one of my top priorities. As a council member I will support increased funding for the Housing Initiative Program to expand more affordable units and investing in the Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU) program. I would invest in 3-4 bedroom family sized units and believe we must preserve rental units, keep them affordable and protect tenant rights. We need more mixed income housing and keep housing affordable for our working families and those who serve our County. I will work with AIM to support such initiatives and ensure that we can make Montgomery County a place where everyone feels welcome.

How would you work with AIM to put 200 units of affordable housing on public land, in the development pipeline each year?

We must have regulations that require developers to invest in creating affordable housing. We should consider projects to be financed with Low Income Housing Tax Credits, tax exempt bonds, private financing, and affordable housing investment. We also need to utilize the unused office space to create affordable housing units. Organizing local community members and leaders, to weigh in and demand that affordable housing is maximized specially for minimum wage families. I will work with AIM on initiatives that will help us move forward with reaching those goals.

Equity in Schools

How will you work with AIM to expand the Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary program to four additional Title I elementary schools each year so that the program serves 2,400 students by the year 2022?

My goal is to ensure equity & opportunity for all. One of my top priorities is quality education for all students. Excel Beyond Bell is a great program that supports quality education & helps reduce the achievement / opportunity gap. We must invest in such programs that work in collaboration with schools & various organizations. As a Council member I will work with AIM & all stakeholders to strongly advocate & fight for resources needed to expand this program so its accessible to more students, schools and communities, as an after school & summer program. I have been a strong advocate for public education as a leader at the local, County and State Parent Teacher Association, part time educator at MCPS & as the Commissioner of Children and Youth. I have led initiatives on racial equity, strengthening family school partnerships, expanding afterschool programs and advocated for funding at county & state to support the diverse needs of students and families. This experience will also help.

Protecting Immigrants and Refugees

Many Montgomery County families are living in fear of one or more parent being separated from their children because of deportation. How will you work with AIM to include funding for deportation defense



and family preparedness in the county budget, as well as work with AIM to find private funding for these efforts?

My own experience as someone who moved to this Country from India 18 years ago gives me a unique perspective and great understanding of these issues. I am also a founding member or a state and local immigration group and have been working with resettlement agencies and non-profits to support resettlement of refugees. The county needs to fund the legal deportation defense fund to ensure that resources are available for families to have access to legal services and wrap-around including resources for mental well-being. As the President of Takoma Foundation, I have enabled grants to organizations like Ayuda , Impact Silver Spring, CHEER etc that act as fiscal agents and support needs of our local communities including those of immigrants. As the Commissioner of Children and Youth I am currently working on Mental Health and DACA issues. I am willing to testify at public hearings, support legislation for funding in the County budget and advocacy efforts led by AIM.

Will you commit to work with AIM and Montgomery County landlords to house refugees in Montgomery County?

Yes.

Transportation

Will you work with AIM to protect good transportation jobs from privatization?

Yes.

How will you hold WMATA accountable to prevent cutting bus service in the county, particularly to low-income areas?

One of my priorities is to ensure that all communities across Montgomery County have access to public transportation. As a member of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Committee I have been participating in the process to ensure that BRT can be an affordable and efficient transit system for all residents. I believe in working with all stakeholders and finding common grounds to address the issues that are important to our community. I will work with community members to represent their concerns and needs to ensure that all areas have access to WMATA service. All residents must have access to similar opportunities and resources and we cannot discriminate or make decisions that are based on socio-economic or racial factors. Decision makes must be responsible and transparent in their decision making process to ensure we are serving all residents in fair manner.

Democracy with Accountability

Do you commit to meeting with AIM within a month of taking office, and on a quarterly basis subsequently?

Yes.