



AIM County Executive Candidate Questionnaire

Responses from David Blair candidate for County Executive

Affordable Housing

How would you work with AIM to increase the Housing Initiative Fund to \$100M by the year 2022?

According to the HOC, there are over 33,000 people on the affordable housing waiting list, a big spike from the approximately 20,000 who were on the list 10 years ago. As County Executive, I will consider increasing funding for the HIF as a potential way to address our affordable housing crisis as part of a larger initiative.

But how will we pay for this? Our economy is stagnant. Our county leaders have created an unfriendly business environment. We've added fewer than 4,000 private sector jobs over the past 15 years while our population has increased by 150,000 – that's one job for every 38 people. It is no wonder that 200,000 of our residents' commute to places like DC and Virginia for work. There's no greater urgency facing our county now than our economy and I've developed a comprehensive Jobs and Economic Plan with real solutions to get our economy growing. As a successful businessman, I know how to create jobs, balance a budget, innovate and get things done.

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

Reports say that we are currently 45,000 units short of addressing our affordable housing crisis. Our MPDU requirements are not working fast enough to accommodate our current needs. To have affordable housing, we need affordable land. As County Executive, I'll make better use of existing county assets, like parking lots, that hold valuable air rights that we could lease to create more affordable housing and to generate revenue. We need creative solutions like in Fairfax, Virginia where the county leased county-owned land for one dollar to subsidize a 100% affordable housing development.

The Bonifant in Silver Spring is a stellar example of affordable housing creativity. This affordable housing hub offers diverse options like 15 units for households earning at or below 30% AMI, 43 units for below 50% AMI, 81 units at or below 60% AMI, and 10 with no income restrictions. As County Executive, I would like to explore more innovative solutions like this.

Equity in Education

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?

As County Executive, I will work to close the achievement gap by increasing funding for students in low-income areas, including expanding afterschool programs, creating more summer learning programs, and providing more apprenticeship and internship programs. I want to recognize and expand upon our existing programs like Linkages to Learning, with a goal of making Pre-K available in all our Title I schools.



I also want to ensure that every high school student graduates career- or college-ready. Excel Beyond the Bell is a program that I want to expand because it teaches students to innovate and learn leadership skills that will help them with their future careers. I spent my career building a business in Montgomery County that created hundreds of jobs – I will bring our education and business leaders together to strengthen career readiness programs, so that all Montgomery County high school graduates are on sustainable pathways to economic success.

How will you work with AIM and the MCPS School Board and Superintendent to address bullying in schools, particularly the increased bullying of Muslim students, and to ensure access to Friday afternoon and daily prayers for Muslim students?

Everyone should feel safe in his or her community. Threats against temples, mosques and other houses of worship have no place here. And certainly, there will be no tolerance for bullying or hate crimes against members of our community. Addressing this challenge must begin with the ideology that our diversity is a strength. President Trump's embrace of a politics of fear and division nationally makes it all the more important that we foster a community of inclusion at the local level.

As County Executive, I'll advocate for targeted interventions in situations of bullying. I'll also collaborate with MCPS to launch screening programs in schools, and ensure schools are connected to community support networks for mental health services. Many students get their information and news from social media. I'll work with MCPS to develop new platforms for student engagement using technology, such as an anonymous tip line that can be utilized to report suicidal behavior or instances of bullying.

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?

I've met several times with the MoCo Deportation Defense Coalition to discuss deportation defense funding at the county level. When TPS expires in 2019 and 2020, thousands of MoCo residents will face deportation which will decimate our communities and our local economy. We should show that we support them with universal representation and the support services they need through our thriving nonprofit sector. We can't allow beloved members of our community to be rounded up simply because they cannot afford legal defense. I'll ensure that a fund is established to help offset the costs of lawyer's fees for undocumented immigrants.

Transportation

How will you work with AIM to hold WMATA accountable to NOT privatize its workforce, and NOT cut bus service in our region?

The County Executive has an obligation to keep promises to our county workers, including meeting our existing labor commitments with WMATA. I firmly support our bus system and new BRT program and would like to make it free to incentivize public transportation use, that will lead to a lower impact on our environment and infrastructure.



To address our transportation issues, I believe there are short-term and long-term solutions. Some of the short-term solutions include free BRT, reversible lanes on I-270, adaptive traffic lights, and creating a local emergency quick action response unit to manage traffic accidents and keep residents moving. The long-term solutions include following through on our transportation Master Plans and creating new transit options for Clarksburg residents, who have been struggling with severe traffic due to the county's inability to follow through.

Democracy with Accountability

If you are elected, will you commit to meeting with AIM in the first 30 days of your term, and to personally attending an AIM Accountability action in the first 3 months of 2019?

Yes. I am looking to convey a message to the voters that a good county government should work for everyone. Montgomery County residents are raising their voices about many important issues, and I will listen and provide leadership – throughout this campaign and after I'm elected.