

Sweat Responses to Questions for County Executive Candidates

- **Public Safety:** How do you propose to make neighborhoods, transit stations, and public areas safer? What specific strategies do you plan to launch or enhance?

I am a proponent of community policing. Understanding that our police force is short-handed, I will encourage the establishment of neighborhood watches, encourage utility companies and property owners to install brighter lighting in spaces for public use, and encourage the police to get the consent of residents to access their home security cameras to investigate and prosecute crimes. As criminals learn Prince George's County is serious about reducing crime and protecting residents, more criminal activity will be deterred.

- **Affordability & Cost of Living:** We are all suffering an increase in costs of necessities like food, housing, utility bills, healthcare, and gasoline. The federal government does not seem to be poised to cover our shortfalls, and the state is suffering withdrawal of federal funding. What exact plans do you have to decrease day-to-day costs or increase financial support for residents of the county? How will you offset the loss of federal funding for healthcare, especially for people who need to use the Exchange?

Prince George's County has a lot of unused and unusable land from which we can raise revenue. I will work with the County Department of Environment and others to come up with creative ways to raise revenue from unused and unusable land. The County's "unusable" land can be used to implement the Climate Action Plan, create renewable energy, and reduce energy costs for residents while creating revenue for the County's budget.

Affordable housing requires the availability of equitable housing. We must ensure new development includes accessible housing for seniors and disabled residents, low and moderate-income housing, and transitional housing for the unhoused. I will work with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to acquire grants to reduce homelessness and construct homes for residents of all income levels. I will also ensure the County applies for Community Development Block Grants to renovate and remodel existing homes so that seniors can age in place or lower-income residents can remain housed.

To reduce food costs, I will work with the Economic Development Corporation to recruit grocery stores that buy locally and transfer savings to shoppers, and explore opening more cooperative groceries and farmers' markets. I am also open to any merchant who wants to invest in helping reduce the food deserts in the County while providing affordable, healthy food options.

MedStar has plans to open a 5-star trauma center in Southern Prince George's County. I intend to investigate the stall of this plan and advocate for its completion. Such a healthcare center will bring more primary and specialized care. For residents who cannot afford health insurance, we must revive our health departments to provide:

- immunizations
- basic dental, eye, and health exams
- early-stage prenatal care and birth control
- health education

Unfortunately, there is nothing the County Executive can do to reduce the cost of gasoline. However, if I can provide cost savings to residents in other areas of their household budgets, the increased cost of gasoline might become bearable. I will also require the Department of Public Works and Transportation to review the County's mass transit plan and update local bus routes. With the completion of the Purple Line in northern County, we must review access to public transportation in southern County and the rural tier. Further, repairing our roadways will help reduce maintenance and repair costs for residents' vehicles.

- **Government Accountability & Transparency:** I've been in Prince George's County since 1985, and like others, I see the roulette wheel of the same faces being propped up, promoted, and appointed to our county government, with no dramatic improvement in transparency, routing our corruption, and "scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" politics. Do you want new, fresh, younger, more progressive legislators, or do you feel that everything is ok as it is? Why or why not?

As your County Executive, I will appoint and hire new faces in leadership. We must permit those in the County with the skills, experience, and innovative ideas to serve in local government. We cannot improve things if we are not open to new people with fresh, new ideas. This will allow us to retain the experience removed from the federal government as well as our best and brightest graduates in the County.

To further ensure government accountability and transparency, I will ensure that all policies and procedures used in the County's executive branch are publicly accessible. I will require public review and comment of amendments before they become effective. I will also disclose the collection and use of taxpayer funds, starting with a much-needed audit of the County's finances.

- **Economic Development & Fiscal Management:** Every election, candidates pledge investment in local businesses, fiscal accountability, and government efficiency. What specific strategies will you use to help local businesses? How will you demand fiscal accountability, when just this week, we had two episodes of corruption and misuse of county funds?

Prince George's County has a large debt service that is creating a significant tax burden for homeowners. One of my priorities is to diversify the County's revenue to pay the debt service, reduce real estate taxes, and balance the budget.

Prince George's County also needs new careers and jobs that pay living wages. We must recruit trade and tourism to increase employment tax revenue and allow County residents to succeed. The economic climate is geared toward big tech and housing development, lobbyists, and special interests, while creating higher real estate taxes to support it. By recruiting more businesses in the trades, manufacturing, entertainment, and tourism industries, Prince George's County will be able to diversify its revenue, increase income tax revenue, and reduce the real estate tax burden. We will also be better able to invest in small businesses.

Fiscal management starts with a competent government that understands its purpose is to maximize human potential and protect human rights. Elected officials and government employees must understand, accept, and appreciate that the people's interests come before their

personal ambitions and desires. This requires discipline, selflessness, and belief in the greater good. When public servants violate the public trust, they must suffer consequences that do not include immediate reentry into government service.

- Education: Given the tight fiscal climate, what parts of the Blueprint for Education will you push to implement over the next 4 years? How do you propose to fund these aspects?

As a PGCPS parent, I am tired of our school system being ranked last or next-to-last in the State. With the employment of a qualified, experienced, servant, and empathetic superintendent, I believe we can have a school system that educates and prepares the County's children for a successful adulthood. More education funding must go to the classroom and less to high-paid administrators.

I intend to encourage the Board of Education to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Specifically, we must offer special education services to prekindergarten students starting with testing, diagnosis, and development of Individualized Education Programs. If PGCPS will not implement the early education requirements of the Blueprint, I will research and apply for grants to offer the services in our health departments and procure services through certified nonprofits.

I will also work with the Board of Education to determine what we can do to better support educators. I will invest in family and social services to help those who need help with the stressors and affordability of life and support the academic success of our children. The public schools cannot provide effective wraparound services because they do not have the authority to go into students' homes. We must support our children in- and outside the academic environment.