

Council Candidate Questionnaire

Nonprofit Montgomery works closely with County Government and communicates regularly with Councilmembers and the County Executive and their team about the needs of the nonprofit sector.

Our **Council Candidate Questionnaire** questions are based on the findings and recommendations captured in the *2025 State of Nonprofits in Montgomery County* report and *Federal Impact Supplement* (shared below). Please answer the following questions, drawing on your personal and/or professional experience with nonprofits, as well as your vision for the future of Montgomery County. **Deadline to respond is March 20. Nonprofit Montgomery will share your answers, unedited, on our website, around April 1.** We will share that link and information with our members and stakeholders.

Background:

In 2025, Nonprofit Montgomery issued a [comprehensive report](#) on the state of the nonprofit sector in Montgomery County. Grounded in data gathered from multiple external sources and a community needs assessment survey shared with nonprofits, the report contextualized the issues related to nonprofits and shared 11 recommendations for how the community can support the nonprofit sector. In September 2025, NM issued a [supplement to the report](#) to capture the impacts on nonprofits of federal actions in the first six months of the Trump Administration. This also included important data as well as three recommendations for policymakers.

Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

Laurie-Anne Sayles

Email *

sayles4moco@gmail.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

Montgomery County Council At Large Re-election

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have extensive personal and professional experience with nonprofit organizations, focusing on civic engagement, youth development, and environmental stewardship. I founded the S.M.A.R.T. Youth Advisory Council and the Gaithersburg/Upcounty Breakfast Club, co-founded the Annual State of Black Montgomery, and have served on the boards of Muddy Branch Alliance, National League of Cities, Maryland Municipal League, and Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake. My leadership has been recognized with multiple awards, including NACo Achievement Awards and the U.S. President's Lifetime Achievement Award, reflecting my longstanding commitment to community-building, advocacy, and collaborative solutions through nonprofit and civic initiatives.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

I see nonprofits as essential partners in Montgomery County's growth and resilience. They provide critical services, create jobs, and foster innovation. I engage nonprofit leaders in planning and budget decisions and highlight their impact publicly. By strengthening collaboration between government, nonprofits, and the private sector, we can respond to funding uncertainties and advance equitable growth across our communities.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

I believe nonprofits are more than service providers. They are strategic partners in achieving our county's priorities. I engage them early in planning and policy discussions, value their expertise, and create opportunities for collaboration on workforce, economic, and community resilience initiatives. By leveraging their insights and innovation, I work to ensure nonprofits play a central role in shaping and advancing Montgomery County's goals.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

As Chair of the Health & Human Services Committee, I have had to make tough choices about which programs receive limited funding, always weighing impact and community need. That experience guides how I prioritize nonprofit investments. I look for organizations that deliver measurable results, align with county priorities, and strengthen partnerships that help Montgomery County thrive, even in challenging times.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

I appreciate the 2025 State of Nonprofits in Montgomery County report, which highlights the sector's role in driving economic growth, providing significant employment, and facing ongoing workforce and financial challenges. To help nonprofits thrive, we must strengthen sustainable funding, invest in infrastructure, and ensure fair contract practices. Improved coordination can increase impact while preserving organizational autonomy. I support collaborative forums, data-sharing, and capacity-building that respect each organization's mission. By fostering partnerships and reducing duplication, I aim to ensure public investments strengthen communities and deliver meaningful results.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

I believe in secure, real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofits to help us better understand community needs and measure results. I would invest in updated data systems, offer training and technical help to our nonprofit partners, and set up shared ways to track progress. By using data wisely, we can improve how we deliver services, build trust, and ensure both the county and nonprofits respond quickly when new challenges arise.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

I am committed to implementing robust policies that reinforce local safety nets, enhance access to essential health and social services, and guarantee housing, food security, and workforce support for those most vulnerable to changes in federal policy. Nonprofits are indispensable partners in this mission; they deliver critical services, engage with at-risk populations, and offer invaluable insights to guide county decisions. I will prioritize collaboration with nonprofits, champion evidence-based programs, and establish adaptable structures that empower both the county and the nonprofit sector to respond swiftly and fairly to evolving community needs.

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Google Forms

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Name *

Jud Ashman

Email *

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What Council seat are you running for? *

County Council District 3

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have worked closely with nonprofit organizations throughout my 19 years of public service. As Mayor of Gaithersburg, I've partnered with nonprofits delivering housing assistance, youth services, food access, arts programming, and workforce support - and under my leadership, the City's budget for nonprofit grants and contracts has steadily increased. On the personal side, I've also been a regular donor and frequent volunteer with area nonprofits. These experiences have given me a deep appreciation for these mission-driven institutions, community anchors, and essential partners in delivering meaningful results for residents.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits are central to Montgomery County's economy and well being .

In times of fiscal uncertainty, nonprofits serve as stabilizers. They provide workforce training, childcare, food access, housing assistance, health services, arts and cultural programming, and support for seniors and immigrant families - all of which make it possible for residents to work, for businesses to hire, and for communities to remain strong during economic disruption. They are employers themselves, they attract philanthropic dollars into the County, and they often innovate faster than government can.

From an economic development perspective, nonprofits help build the human capital that employers depend on. Whether through job training partnerships, re-entry programs, language access services, or youth development initiatives, they expand the pipeline of skilled, work-ready residents. They also anchor neighborhood vitality - strong arts, human services, and community organizations make Montgomery County a place where families and businesses want to locate.

As a Councilmember, I would work to ensure nonprofits are treated as essential partners in our economic ecosystem by:

- Including nonprofit leaders in economic and workforce development planning conversations
- Providing multi-year, predictable funding where possible to reduce administrative uncertainty
- Streamlining contracting and reimbursement processes so smaller organizations can participate
- Leveraging County facilities and land to support mission-driven partnerships
- Recognizing the nonprofit sector in economic data, strategic plans, and public messaging

In uncertain times, resilience comes from strong institutions. Nonprofits are among our strongest.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

If we want better results on housing stability, workforce participation, youth opportunity, public health, and community safety, we have to move from a transactional model to a partnership model.

As a Councilmember, I would pursue several structural shifts:

Earlier engagement. Nonprofits should be at the table when policies and RFPs are being designed. Those doing the work every day can help us avoid unintended consequences and design smarter programs from the start.

Outcome-based collaboration. Rather than focusing narrowly on service outputs, we should align around shared outcomes. That means using data collaboratively and being willing to adjust policy when frontline experience tells us something isn't working.

Predictable and equitable funding structures. Multi-year funding where appropriate, faster reimbursement cycles, and right-sized administrative requirements would allow nonprofits - especially smaller and culturally specific organizations - to focus on impact instead of paperwork.

Cross-sector strategy. Nonprofits should be integrated into economic development, workforce, and resilience planning. They are anchors in our communities and often see emerging challenges before government does.

Finally, culture matters. County leadership must consistently communicate that nonprofits are co-creators of public value.

We will face continued economic uncertainty in the years ahead. The counties that navigate it best will be those that leverage every asset they have. Our nonprofit community is one of our strongest assets. Treating them as strategic partners goes beyond good governance - it's smart economic policy.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

In the years following the 2008 Great Recession, revenues declined significantly and we faced several very difficult budgets. We were determined not to reduce service and support to residents most in need. Instead of cutting programs, we focused on improving how we delivered them.

For the first time, we implemented a formal RFP process that clearly articulated community needs and invited nonprofit partners to propose solutions. That shift did two important things: it increased transparency and accountability, and it encouraged collaboration among nonprofits rather than siloed efforts.

The result was that we were able to maintain - and in some cases enhance - critical services while improving efficiency and alignment with community priorities.

That experience informs how I would approach nonprofit investments going forward. When resources are constrained, the answer is not simply across-the-board cuts. It's clarity about outcomes, openness to innovation, and creating structures that encourage collaboration and measurable impact - all while preserving the mission-driven independence that makes the nonprofit sector so effective.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

I would never frame it as “too many nonprofits.” Montgomery County is large, diverse, and complex. Different communities trust different organizations, and smaller, culturally specific nonprofits often reach residents that larger institutions cannot.

That said, fragmentation and duplication can reduce impact - especially when funding is tight. The role of County policymakers is not to decide which nonprofits should exist, but to create conditions that encourage coordination, clarity of purpose, and measurable outcomes.

I would focus on the following:

Strategic alignment around shared outcomes. In priority areas like housing stability, food access, and workforce development, the County should articulate clear goals and invite nonprofits to align around those outcomes - while preserving their mission autonomy.

Incentivizing collaboration. Through grant structures that reward partnerships, shared services models, and backbone organizations that coordinate networks, we can reduce unnecessary duplication without forcing consolidation.

Transparency and data. When we define metrics clearly and share results openly, the ecosystem naturally adjusts. Funders, policymakers, and community members can see where gaps exist and where overlap may be occurring.

Nonprofits are independent, community-rooted institutions - and that autonomy is a good thing. The County’s job is not to manage the sector, but to convene, clarify priorities, and invest in collaboration so that the whole system is stronger than the sum of its parts.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

If we want better outcomes, we need better shared information in order to bolster our ability to see trends early, measure impact accurately, or respond in real time.

I would support a coordinated, privacy-protected data strategy built around three principles:

Shared dashboards and common metrics. For priority areas like housing stability, food security, behavioral health, and workforce participation, the County should work with nonprofit partners to define a small set of shared outcome measures and build accessible dashboards that allow for real-time monitoring of trends.

Modern and interoperable systems. We should invest in upgrading legacy IT systems so they can securely exchange data with nonprofit partners where appropriate, using standardized reporting tools that reduce duplicative paperwork and administrative burden.

Capacity building. Many smaller nonprofits lack dedicated data staff. I would support technical assistance, shared data platforms, and targeted grants so community-based organizations can participate meaningfully in outcome measurement without diverting resources from service delivery.

Any data strategy must prioritize privacy, consent, and equity. But done correctly, shared data allows us to move from reactive crisis management to proactive problem-solving.

Strategic data sharing allows us to align investments with actual community needs and continuously improve results together.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Federal policy shifts tend to hit the same communities first and hardest: immigrant families, low-income residents, seniors, people with disabilities, and others already facing barriers to housing, healthcare, or stable employment. The County's role is to serve as a backstop - protecting rights, stabilizing essential services, and preventing people from falling through the cracks.

I would focus on three priorities:

First, protecting access to services through strong language access, clear communication, and expanded legal and benefits navigation.

Second, stabilizing housing and preventing displacement through eviction prevention, emergency assistance, and preservation of affordable units.

Third, strengthening workforce resilience with rapid re-employment support and sector-based training.

Nonprofits are central to this response. They are trusted messengers, first responders to emerging needs, and often more agile than government.

In uncertain times, resilience depends on preparation and partnership. Government cannot do this alone. We need our nonprofit community.

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Name *

Marilyn Balcombe

Email *

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What Council seat are you running for? *

District 2

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have run several nonprofit organizations. I was the CEO of the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce for 17 years and the first Executive Director of BlackRock Center for the Arts. I have also been on countless non-profit boards.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

I consider nonprofits businesses first. You employ workers, purchase goods and services, rent office space etc. All contributing to our local economy. Very often the work you do takes the place of government services. The County could not provide all the services we offer without our nonprofit partners.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits need to be at the table to provide input in key decisions. This is often done through our boards, committees and commissions. We need to do a much better job making sure these BCCs are effective and serving their intended roles. Our nonprofits are also very much part of our budget deliberations and I always welcome their input.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

This is my 4th budget season and continually make difficult funding and policy decisions. As mentioned above, I understand the critical role nonprofits make in our community.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

This is a complex issue. I do think we have some redundancies in our nonprofit providers, but we also have gaps in service. It is important to understand whether a redundancy is truly providing the same services to the same people or as you are suggesting, providing similar services to different communities in the ways that most benefit that community. It is a difficult dilemma. This is why it is so important for nonprofits to be able to share the impact they have on the people they serve and for Councilmembers to have a full understanding of the nonprofits that are providing services in their communities.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

I would need more information on what the nonprofits need and what is already in place. While the Council is certainly a partner in the relationship, it is typically the Executive branch that has the most direct link to the needs of the community.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

The Council has been putting measures in place to help protect our residents. Very often we cannot stop the terrible treatment being perpetrated by the federal government, but we can control how the County responds. We have made it clear that while we do not impede federal agents, we also do not support them.

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Name *

Drew Morrison

Email *

drew@morrisonforcouncil.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

District 1

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have worked with nonprofit organizations across the service and advocacy spectrum and in Montgomery County specifically. I have a great understanding of what nonprofit organizations provide for Montgomery County residents, how County Government partners with them, some of the challenges in dealing with County Government nonprofit organizations face, and how we can improve our laws and processes to give nonprofits the support, resources, and operational capacity they need to do the best possible work.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

It is all hands on deck to protect our communities from Trump and to create a growing economy, something we had already been struggling with before Trump returned to office. Nonprofit organizations are going to have an increased role because it is your organizations that best understand what is happening on-the-ground and how to connect with the people who need support. I see nonprofit organizations supporting us, broadly, on two fronts: By strengthening our social safety net for the increased number of residents in significant need and by supporting more residents to get on the path to self-sufficiency, we can restore growth and stability to our economy. To ensure nonprofits are recognized in this work, I would make sure that nonprofits are intimately involved in our planning and execution of our coordinated response to the current moment.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

I completely agree that nonprofit organizations in our County are essential partners. We must treat them as such by finally instituting a "nonprofit-friendly" procurement, grant-making, and contracting approach. As a Councilmember, I will not accept the type of spur-of-the-moment contract changes and uncertainty caused by those changes that I have heard about from the current County Executive administration. It is also finally time that we seriously and in a systematic way pursue multi-year contracts and grant agreements to provide assurance and stability for nonprofit organizations so you can spend more of your time delivering services and less of it needing to apply for funding.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

My experience and role in budgeting is unique in this race. I have had to make decisions regularly in both normal times and in crisis and help to lead a team responsible for the Maryland Department of Transportation's \$22 billion budget. There, we had to cut \$3 billion in projects one year due to a worsening budget situation. That tough fiscal reality required us to make hard choices and forced us to identify how we could be efficient in the work we did, how we could make cuts in a way that would allow for successful restoration later, and how we could continue to make strategic investments even amidst deep reductions. As the County faces challenging choices, I will bring this strategic lens to how we make progress even when resources are constrained.

At MDOT, we have also pursued a series of reforms to strengthen how the Department makes investment decisions so that it is more transparent, stakeholder-informed, and data-driven. These reforms have been developed in concert with local jurisdictions. That process has shown me that we can and must make grant decisions clearer, more transparent, and informed by real data about return on investment. I will make sure the County's commitment to nonprofits aligns with those values. I have heard instead that the current County Executive administration has taken a highly politicized, inconsistent approach to grantmaking. I will contribute to a better process.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

What matters most is if the organization can deliver for its stakeholders, including the County as its partner. I believe that is the way we should approach all decisions about our nonprofit partners just as we should with our "in-house" executive agencies and departments. I understand the concern about too many organizations and the potential for stronger results if organizations with similar missions joined together. I also believe that more organizations means we are hearing more perspectives from a more diverse set of providers that is absolutely necessary for reaching everyone in our communities. This is especially important because our County has often not been able to reach the people we must, including in communities of color.

Therefore, I would encourage the County to structure grant and contract opportunities in a way that supports partnerships among organizations so that organizations can strengthen the ways that they work together, reduce overlapping focuses, and build on each other's institutional and community networks.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

I would support an information portal program specifically tailored for disseminating the type of information from and to County agencies that nonprofit providers need. I would work to have this portal exist within the context of in-place County data infrastructure, both in terms of our existing CRMs and databases and the dataMontgomery interface, so that our focus can be on maintaining accurate, current data, and not spend excessive time on the building of a bespoke IT solution.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Yes, as described above, I believe that establishing a stronger and more targeted social safety net for those most at-risk due to the Trump Administration's actions is a fundamental role for nonprofits. This must cover, at least, food security, workforce development, housing and rental assistance, and childcare support. This must find ways to help families that have been torn apart by unlawful ICE and Border Patrol actions. And we must find ways to make these commitments even as our own resources are affected by the federal actions.

For nonprofits, being nimble and flexible is important to help the County in these goals. We have seen how the focus of the Trump Administration shifts quickly, both in what communities they target geographically and what programs they go after. I will work hard to establish the relationships with you and your member organizations necessary to add or adjust resources, modify grant scopes, and identify emergency strategies as needed and in real-time, so that we can all respond to the next wave of actions. To meet the challenges head-on as quickly and efficiently as possible, our local government must act urgently and with the capability required to match Trump's rapid-pace destruction of the federal safety net and local federal workforce.

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Name *

Kate Stewart

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What Council seat are you running for? *

District 4

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

As Chair of the Government Operations Committee I have worked closely with our nonprofit community and the Office of Grants Management to navigate issues with the administration of grant programs. I led the effort to create the Working Group on Community Grants which will deliver recommendations to the County Council in the coming weeks. In collaboration with nonprofit partners, I put together a \$7.75 million supplemental in the Fall of 2025 providing support to nonprofits impacted by the federal administration's actions. In my professional background, I worked as a nonprofit executive so I have firsthand experience administering a nonprofit.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits are the backbone of our community and need to be involved in the discussions of economic development, workforce stability and the overall resilience of our County. I see nonprofits not only providing a safety net for many community members, but also as places of innovation and support for entrepreneurs. Currently, we have a unique opportunity with a new Executive Director of Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation to include nonprofits in discussions as they build a strategic plan for successful economic development for the County.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

My record as Chair of the Government Operations Committee and the work I have done since being elected to the County Council has been to include nonprofit organizations and their leaders as strategic partners and to listen to nonprofits to understand how county policies and actions affect their work. While this is how I have worked at the Council, it is imperative the next County Executive, who oversees and directs our County Departments, makes inclusion a priority. Simply put, the County needs to do a better job of listening and adjusting the County's approach while working with nonprofits.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

My experience as the Council President during the budget is an example of making difficult funding decisions. I am proud of the work we did last year to create a transparent process that made sure we not only focused on funding our public schools, but also prioritized our social services and kept a healthy level of reserves, knowing we would need to tap into those reserves to support our community during the attacks by the federal administration.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

The work I did on the \$7.75 Million supplemental is an example of how this work should be done. Included in that supplemental is funding for a grant program for capacity building and technical assistance for nonprofits to pursue consolidation of services and preparation due to adverse Federal actions. It also required a strategic plan developed by nonprofits that will hopefully include detailed recommendations on how nonprofits and the County Government can meet uncharted challenges. I believe it is essential the County provide resources and technical assistance to support our nonprofits as they create greater coordination and strategic alignment.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

To answer this question, I would like to have more discussions with our nonprofit partners and our department of technology. Having worked on a number of data sharing projects in the past among nonprofits and government agencies it is important to begin with a clear understanding of goals and expectations. Right now in the County, the Department of Health and Human Services has been developing the Community Connect portal and I would like to explore the potential of that portal may be expanded to help connect with our nonprofit partners.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

My record speaks to the work I have done and the Council has done, with the nonprofit community, to support county residents in these unprecedented times. Collaboration is essential so that we are able to help residents and weather these attacks. Here is a list of some of what I have done:

December 2025, as VP of the Council along with CP Friedson I organized and held in collaboration with County nonprofits and government departments a countywide resource fair – United in Service and Support.

Winter and Spring of 2026 as Council President worked with colleagues, nonprofits and government agencies to create a series of 12 online sessions providing resources to community members from home to apply to unemployment to health care, food, housing and job resources, to mental health support and supporting entrepreneurs. The informational series is up on the county website.

Fall of 2026 I led efforts with my Council colleagues to pass a \$7.75M supplemental to support our nonprofits partners and increase resources for County food and housing work during the government shutdown.

Finally, I have also supported legislative efforts to support our community including the Trust Act, the Values Act, UnMask ICE Act and ICE Out legislation. Working with community members, I am also leading the Vehicle Recovery Act, to help reduce the burden on families to recover vehicles that have been left behind and towed after individuals are cruelly taken from vehicles by ICE and other Federal Agencies.

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Google Forms

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Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

Radwan Chowdhury

Email *

info@radwancampaign.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

County Council At-Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have over a decade of experience running a nonprofit organization, providing hands-on leadership in program development, community engagement, and organizational management. In addition, I have served on numerous nonprofit boards, including the East County Citizens Advisory Board and the Maryland Comptroller's Faith Leaders Advisory Board. These experiences have given me a deep understanding of nonprofit operations, governance, and the critical role these organizations play in addressing community needs. I am committed to leveraging this experience to strengthen partnerships between nonprofits and local government, ensuring that services are effective, accountable, and responsive to the residents who rely on them.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits are critical partners in Montgomery County's economic and social ecosystem. They provide services that support workforce stability, address gaps in housing, childcare, and education, and help residents access resources that enable full participation in the local economy. During times of fiscal uncertainty, nonprofits often respond quickly to emerging community needs, maintaining continuity where government funding may lag.

To ensure they are recognized as essential, I would prioritize transparent collaboration between county government and nonprofit organizations, integrate nonprofits into economic and workforce planning discussions, and support consistent, outcome-based funding mechanisms. This approach strengthens the county's resilience, promotes equitable opportunity, and ensures nonprofits are valued as key contributors to Montgomery County's long-term economic health.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

I view nonprofits as essential strategic partners, not simply service contractors. To maximize their impact, I would foster regular dialogue between county departments and nonprofit leaders to identify shared priorities, coordinate programs, and align efforts with community needs. I would advocate for multi-year funding and streamlined grant processes to provide stability, enabling nonprofits to plan effectively and innovate. By integrating nonprofits into county planning, performance tracking, and policy discussions, we can leverage their expertise to address economic, social, and public health challenges while strengthening Montgomery County's resilience and ensuring services reach those who need them most.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

In my decade of nonprofit leadership, I frequently faced decisions where limited resources had to be allocated across competing programs. For example, I once had to choose between expanding youth mentorship programs or investing in adult workforce training, balancing immediate community needs with long-term outcomes. I approached this by analyzing impact metrics, consulting stakeholders, and aligning decisions with strategic goals.

This experience informs my approach to county nonprofit funding: I would prioritize investments based on demonstrated community impact, alignment with county priorities, and measurable outcomes, ensuring that scarce resources deliver maximum benefit while maintaining transparency, equity, and accountability.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

Nonprofits are diverse in mission, size, and scope, and this diversity is a strength of Montgomery County's civic ecosystem. At the same time, better coordination can increase impact, reduce duplication, and ensure that resources are directed where they are most needed.

County policymakers should foster collaborative planning and strategic alignment without compromising nonprofit autonomy. This includes facilitating regular convenings of nonprofit leaders, sharing data on community needs, and encouraging partnerships where programs overlap. Outcome-based funding and transparent reporting can incentivize collaboration while preserving each organization's mission-driven approach. By valuing both independence and coordinated impact, the county can maximize community benefit and strengthen trust between government and nonprofits.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Effective decision-making requires accurate, timely, and actionable data. I would prioritize building partnerships between county departments and nonprofit organizations that enable secure and transparent sharing of information on community needs and program outcomes. This includes standardized reporting formats, integrated dashboards, and shared metrics to track service delivery and measure impact.

Investments in data infrastructure would focus on modernizing digital systems, improving interoperability, and providing training for both county staff and nonprofit partners. By leveraging technology for real-time insights, the county can allocate resources more efficiently, identify emerging challenges, and strengthen evidence-based policy decisions, while ensuring privacy, security, and respect for nonprofit operational autonomy.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Montgomery County must proactively protect and support residents who are most vulnerable, including low-income families, immigrants, seniors, and individuals relying on federal programs that may face uncertainty. Policies should focus on access to essential services, economic stability, housing security, and inclusive public safety measures.

Nonprofits play a critical role in this work. I would strengthen partnerships with community-based organizations to expand outreach, connect residents to services, and coordinate emergency response programs. This includes supporting food security initiatives, workforce development programs, and culturally competent services for immigrant and language-diverse communities. By integrating nonprofits into county planning and response strategies, we can ensure that vulnerable residents are protected and supported even amidst federal policy changes.

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Name *

Harold Maldonado

Email *

info@haroldmaldonado.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

District 7

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have direct professional experience working with nonprofit and international development organizations. Early in my career, I served as a Finance Officer at Medical Care Development International, a nonprofit focused on global health and development programs. In that role, I managed financial operations and budgeting for more than 20 international programs with budgets exceeding \$15 million. I developed financial forecasts, cost analyses, and funding proposals supporting projects funded by institutions such as USAID and the World Bank. This experience gave me a strong understanding of how nonprofits operate, manage resources, and deliver services that support vulnerable communities.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits play a critical role in economic resilience by stabilizing communities, supporting workforce participation, and delivering services that government and the private sector alone cannot provide. My experience managing international development budgets and analyzing economic systems has shown that strong nonprofit partnerships improve economic stability during periods of fiscal uncertainty. In Montgomery County, nonprofits support workforce training, childcare, housing assistance, and community health—services that enable residents to remain employed and productive.

To strengthen this ecosystem, the county should treat nonprofits as strategic partners by improving coordination with county agencies, ensuring transparent funding processes, and incorporating nonprofit expertise into economic planning and policy discussions. Recognizing their operational and economic impact will help ensure they remain integral to the county's long-term resilience and growth. Finally, we should make avoiding "duplication of efforts" when identifying needs and services from NGOs.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

My experience managing large programs and working with international development organizations has shown that strong partnerships are essential for effective policy outcomes. I would engage nonprofits as strategic partners by improving coordination between county agencies and nonprofit organizations, ensuring they are included early in policy discussions and program design. I would also support transparent funding processes and data-driven evaluations to ensure resources are directed to programs that deliver measurable results. By leveraging the expertise and community networks of nonprofits, the county can more effectively address priorities such as workforce development, housing stability, and support for vulnerable residents.

Moreover, NGOs can fill critical gaps in county services because they often operate closer to communities, respond faster to emerging needs, and leverage private funding and volunteer networks that government alone cannot mobilize. By partnering with NGOs, counties can extend the reach of programs in areas such as housing assistance, workforce support, food security, and health services, ensuring vulnerable populations receive support where public resources or coverage may be limited.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

While managing federal programs, I oversaw projects with budgets exceeding \$500 million and teams of more than 100 personnel. During one program cycle, we faced resource constraints that required prioritizing funding between competing initiatives. I used performance data, mission impact assessments, and stakeholder input to determine which programs delivered the greatest operational value. Resources were redirected toward the highest-performing efforts while lower-impact activities were scaled back.

This experience taught me that funding decisions must be transparent, data-driven, and focused on measurable outcomes. When prioritizing investments in the nonprofit sector, I would apply the same approach—supporting organizations that demonstrate clear impact, strong community reach, and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

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Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

My experience analyzing large datasets in financial markets and government programs has shown that effective policy decisions depend on timely and reliable data. I would support creating a shared county–nonprofit data framework that allows organizations to securely share real-time information on service demand, program outcomes, and emerging community needs. This would help the county identify gaps, allocate resources more effectively, and respond faster during economic or social stress.

To support this effort, I would prioritize investments in modern data infrastructure, including interoperable platforms, standardized reporting tools, and secure data-sharing systems that protect privacy while improving transparency. Equally important is investing in training and technical support so nonprofit partners can fully participate in this ecosystem. A strong data infrastructure will allow the county and nonprofits to move from reactive responses to proactive, evidence-based decision-making.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Given uncertainty around federal policy and funding, Montgomery County must strengthen local resilience for residents most at risk. I would support policies that protect essential services such as housing assistance, workforce training, food security, and access to health and family services. It is also important to maintain stable county funding streams and improve coordination among agencies so support programs remain accessible and responsive during policy shifts.

One way to protect vulnerable communities is to improve the economy in the county and as an economist, I plan to revamp economic policies in the county to increase economic activity, support small businesses and make the county "investable" meaning streamline the current regulations to bring companies and investments to the county.

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Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

Steve Solomon

Email *

VoteSteveSolomon@gmail.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

County Council - At Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have volunteered with several nonprofits over the years including:

Montgomery County Sports Hall of Fame
Partnership for Animal Welfare
Friends of the Library
Friends of Brookside Gardens
Sierra Club Maryland
Moms Demand Action Maryland
Small Things Matter

I also served on the Montgomery County Grants Advisory Board which helped distribute grants to several nonprofits.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits play an essential role in Montgomery County. With thousands of organizations, and tens of thousands of employees, they are on their own an economic driver for Montgomery County. Then it comes to the numerous services they provide. We have hundreds of public private partnerships between government and nonprofits across all sectors. Nonprofits also contribute to economic development through job training and wraparound support.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits should serve as strategic partners with county departments. They should be involved in shaping and implementing plans and programs. Nonprofits often work directly with Montgomery County residents and have more close connections than many county departments.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

I serve on the Board of Directors for the Montgomery County Sports Hall of Fame. We are a 100% volunteer organization that puts on an annual ceremony honoring sports legends of Montgomery County. We rely on donations and advertising in our program to fund our event. We also rely on a county grant. This experience shows me that many nonprofits can function and provide services with just a small amount of money.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

Coordination and collaboration between nonprofits is always a good idea. They could share ideas, resources, and provide multiple services at the same time or location. Collaboration also helps identify service gaps.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Data should be what drives all organizations (government and nonprofit) in their decision making. The more strategic and comprehensive that data sharing is, the better the nonprofits can understand the needs of the community they are serving. As we advance technologically, more real time data can be shared rather than reports gathered over a long period of time. We could create more community data hubs, and invest in data infrastructure.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Montgomery County has always had a great history of public private partnerships between the government and nonprofits, which have given support and protection to thousands of our community members, in particular those who are most at risk. Nonprofits not only play a role, they take the lead in many of these situations, be it economically, legally, or with social services. I hope to continue to be able to support that if I'm elected to the County Council.

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Name *

Van Free

Email *

vote@vanfreefordistrict7.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

Montgomery County Council District 7

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

During my 16 years as a Montgomery County career firefighter, I regularly witnessed and at times assisted nonprofit organizations serving residents in crisis. From food assistance groups to organizations supporting families after emergencies. Those partnerships showed me how critical nonprofits are to the county's safety net. As a small business owner and community member, I have also supported local charitable efforts and understand the role nonprofits play in strengthening communities. My experience on the front lines of public safety gave me a deep appreciation for the dedication of nonprofit staff and volunteers who step in when residents need help most.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits are an important part of Montgomery County's economic and community infrastructure. They employ thousands of people, provide essential services, and help stabilize communities during difficult times. When residents have access to food, housing support, and workforce programs, it strengthens the entire local economy. I believe the county should recognize nonprofits as key contributors to economic resilience by maintaining strong partnerships, ensuring reliable contract payments, and including nonprofit leaders in economic development discussions so their perspective is part of long term planning.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits should be treated as partners with valuable on the ground knowledge, not just contractors. Many nonprofit leaders have direct relationships with residents and understand community needs before government does. I would support more regular engagement between county departments and nonprofit leaders, including advisory conversations and joint planning when addressing issues like housing, public safety, and social services. When government and nonprofits communicate early and work together, we can design programs that are more effective and better reflect the needs of our communities.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

As a firefighter, I often had to make quick decisions about how to allocate limited resources during emergencies. In those moments you focus on protecting life and helping the most vulnerable first. That experience shaped how I approach prioritization. As a Councilmember, I would apply the same principle by focusing county resources on programs that address essential needs and deliver measurable results. When it comes to nonprofit partnerships, I believe investments should prioritize organizations that are making a clear difference for residents.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

Montgomery County has a strong nonprofit community, but we should always look for ways to improve coordination and maximize impact. The goal is not to limit organizations, but to encourage collaboration where it makes sense. The county can help by promoting partnerships, sharing data on community needs, and supporting efforts that reduce duplication. At the same time, nonprofits must remain independent and community driven. Strong coordination combined with accountability will lead to better outcomes for residents.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Better data sharing can help both the county and nonprofit partners respond more effectively to community needs. I would support systems that allow nonprofits to share information about service demand, outcomes, and emerging challenges while protecting privacy. Investing in modern data tools and regular reporting partnerships would help policymakers understand what is working and where resources are needed most. When government and nonprofits have clear and timely data, we can make smarter decisions and respond more quickly to community needs.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Local government must be prepared to support residents who may be affected by changes in federal policy, especially those facing housing instability, food insecurity, or barriers to healthcare and employment. Nonprofits will play an essential role because they often have the strongest connections to vulnerable communities. I believe the county should continue supporting programs that provide basic needs assistance, legal support, and workforce services, while working closely with nonprofit partners to identify gaps and respond quickly when residents need help.

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Name *

Sherwin Wells

Email *

Doctor.Wells@hotmail.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

County Council At Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have worked with and for nonprofit organizations on a personal level and professional level and their mission and programs fill a need in society.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

We are in trying times with budget concerns and leadership needs to do a cost benefit analysis to ensure the county remains competitive. To ensure they are recognized and remain competitive, I would visit the operation and ensure the work being done and the individuals involved are recognized for the work they do.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Engaging nonprofits is needed to understand the work they do and ensuring their mission aligns with priorities of the county. Visiting the organization and interacting with the volunteers, employees and management is important to ensure they are addressing county priorities.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

I have business experience and startup funding is difficult. You have to make the tough decisions on what is needed and what can wait. Nonprofits fill a void between services government provide and services that benefits the public and fill a void. Understanding the void and understanding the programs and support the staff provides to fill that void in service delivery would drive investment prioritization in the nonprofit sector.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

Set clear evaluation methods, review of proposals, and timelines for all nonprofits and funding levels and criteria.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Comprehensive and real time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes is possible if all parties use the same system. There would be some network security concerns and that would need to be addressed. I would definitely consider a system for awards and contracts but that would need IT Department approval to ensure the work is carried out and data on service is shared in real time.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

This question is vague as it does not clearly identify who is at risk and the federal policy changes. I cannot say the role that nonprofits would have in response to a vague question.

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Name *

Julie Yang

Email *

julie@julieyang.org

What Council seat are you running for? *

Council District 1

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have worked closely with nonprofit organizations as a board member, founder, volunteer, and public leader. I served on the board of The Arc Montgomery County, supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities, and with the Chinese Culture and Community Service Center, serving seniors and underserved families. I founded the Chinese American Parent Association to bridge cultural understanding and nurture youth leadership and service. Through my public service, I have built partnerships that bring nonprofits directly into schools—expanding mentoring, mental health support, and therapy dog programs. My leadership focuses on connecting nonprofits, government, and communities so their work has greater reach and impact.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits are a major part of our economic engine. According to Nonprofit Montgomery's 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector report, nonprofits generate over \$16.3 billion in annual revenue and employ about 58,100 people in the county.

But their impact goes beyond numbers. Nonprofits create workforce pathways for all, especially for immigrants and residents facing cultural, linguistic, and systemic barriers to employment. For example, nonprofits on whose boards I've served - the Arc of Montgomery County and the Chinese Culture and Community Service Center (CCACC) - employ many new immigrants to deliver services in multiple languages. I met "Hong", a new immigrant who found work as a driver for CCACC's adult day program while taking English classes there. He now helps Chinese-speaking seniors get to medical appointments and reduces isolation in the community. I met "Gina" who speaks French at the Arc of Montgomery County; she is providing home care while going to school.

This is the real story of nonprofits: they are job creators, service innovators, and stabilizers during economic uncertainty. As a councilmember, I would ensure nonprofits are treated as essential partners in economic and workforce planning—through fair contracting, multi-year funding stability, and stronger collaboration between government, business, and the nonprofit sector.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Too often nonprofits are treated simply as contractors rather than strategic partners. That needs to change. The organizations serving our residents every day understand what is happening on the ground, and their voices should be at the table when policies and programs are designed—not just during advocacy season.

As a councilmember, I would establish regular touchpoints with nonprofit leaders so we hear directly about emerging needs, workforce challenges, and service gaps. Planning for county priorities —whether in health, food, housing, youth services, or other sectors —must include the nonprofits delivering those services.

I strongly believe in the principle: “Nothing about people without people.” We should not make decisions that affect communities without those who serve and represent them. In my roles with nonprofits, I have seen the very real consequences for individuals and populations when this inclusion does not happen.

Real partnership requires relationships. As a councilmember, nonprofit leaders will have direct access to me —not just through formal hearings. I encourage leaders to connect with me; we will have ongoing conversations to brainstorm solutions and ensure county policies reflect real community needs.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

In my role on the Board of Education, I regularly face difficult prioritization decisions where needs exceed available resources. One example was balancing investments between reducing class size and expanding support for students with disabilities. Both are essential. We relied on data, but just as importantly, we engaged families, educators, and community partners to help guide a phased approach—prioritizing special education supports first while planning to address class size the following year.

That experience shaped how I view the nonprofit sector. The work of nonprofits and schools is not an “either/or.” It is “and.” Nonprofits provide mentoring, mental health care, food assistance, and family supports that create the conditions for students and educators to succeed.

I also understand that much nonprofit impact is long-term and preventative. Data should inform priorities—helping us understand needs, services, and outcomes—but data alone does not tell the whole story. For example, food insecurity relief may not immediately appear in economic indicators, yet it directly improves well-being, stability, and productivity for families.

Most importantly, these decisions should never be made in isolation. Budget priorities should be shaped through real collaboration with the nonprofit sector—those delivering services and those most impacted. As a policymaker, I believe in the principle: no decisions about communities without the partners serving them at the table.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

Montgomery County has already benefited from strong examples of sector coordination through coordinating entities such as the Primary Care Coalition, the Montgomery County Food Council, and MCAEL (Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy), to name just a few. These models help align organizations around shared goals, improve coordination, and identify service gaps—while individual nonprofits retain the flexibility to deliver services in ways that best serve their communities.

I have worked with non-profits who serve similar populations, such as Empowering the Ages and Jewish Council of Aging. Both do tremendous work empowering our older adults, and are valued nonprofits in our community. Rather than asking whether there are “too many” nonprofits, policymakers should focus on strengthening coordination and transparency across the sector. As a councilmember, I would support and fund efforts such as having Nonprofit Montgomery complete a non-profit registry, which helps map the full nonprofit landscape. Understanding who provides which services allows us to identify strengths, reduce duplication, and address gaps.

The role of county government is not to direct nonprofits, but to convene, connect, and create the conditions for collaboration—setting the table for dialogue so organizations can align efforts while maintaining their autonomy and community-driven missions.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Data sharing between the County and nonprofit partners must start with a resident-centered perspective. Many families I meet are facing challenges in multiple areas at once—health, housing, food security, education, and employment. Yet our systems are often siloed. Families must repeatedly fill out forms and navigate separate systems, which is both inefficient and demoralizing. We should jointly design a data infrastructure that reduces that burden and allows service providers to see a more holistic picture of a family's needs, improving coordination and access to support.

Second, the County and nonprofit sector should strategize together around shared data. A useful model is CRISP, the regional health information exchange, which allows providers to view coordinated health data and respond more effectively to patient needs. Montgomery County could build a similar framework for social services—integrating health, housing, food security, and financial stability data in a privacy-protected system.

With shared dashboards and coordinated data, nonprofits and government can see the same landscape of needs and outcomes, align short- and long-term supports for families, and allocate resources more strategically. Investments in shared platforms, interoperability standards, and nonprofit data capacity will be essential to making this work.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Federal policy shifts often affect our most vulnerable residents first—immigrant families, seniors, low-income households, and people with disabilities. Nonprofits are often the first to see these impacts because they are the trusted organizations residents turn to for help.

County government should treat nonprofits as frontline partners in protecting our communities. That means strengthening legal support and navigation services for immigrants, sustaining behavioral health and food security programs during federal funding disruptions, and supporting senior services that prevent isolation and health crises.

Nonprofits also function as an early warning system. By maintaining regular communication with organizations serving residents on the ground, the County can identify emerging needs quickly and respond before problems escalate.

Equally important, we must ensure the nonprofit sector itself is stable—through predictable funding, fair contracting, and emergency response capacity when federal policies create uncertainty.

When nonprofits are strong, Montgomery County is strong. They are not just service providers—they are the trusted infrastructure that keeps our communities stable during times of change.

This form was created inside of Nonprofit Montgomery.

Google Forms

Council Candidate Questionnaire

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Our **Council Candidate Questionnaire** questions are based on the findings and recommendations captured in the *2025 State of Nonprofits in Montgomery County* report and *Federal Impact Supplement* (shared below). Please answer the following questions, drawing on your personal and/or professional experience with nonprofits, as well as your vision for the future of Montgomery County. **Deadline to respond is March 20. Nonprofit Montgomery will share your answers, unedited, on our website, around April 1.** We will share that link and information with our members and stakeholders.

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In 2025, Nonprofit Montgomery issued a [comprehensive report](#) on the state of the nonprofit sector in Montgomery County. Grounded in data gathered from multiple external sources and a community needs assessment survey shared with nonprofits, the report contextualized the issues related to nonprofits and shared 11 recommendations for how the community can support the nonprofit sector. In September 2025, NM issued a [supplement to the report](#) to capture the impacts on nonprofits of federal actions in the first six months of the Trump Administration. This also included important data as well as three recommendations for policymakers.

Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

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What Council seat are you running for? *

Montgomery County Council At-Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I founded The Upper Room PTSD Support Group after surviving the Discovery Hostage Crisis in 2010—an experience that showed me firsthand how nonprofits fill gaps government cannot. As a Gaithersburg Councilmember, I approve funding for nonprofits who deliver crucial community services. I'm also a member of GCAAR, a volunteer for Meals on Wheels of Gaithersburg, and in my earlier marketing career I worked with national nonprofits including Meals on Wheels America as my client. I served on the St. Martin of Tours School Advisory Board, led our 478-home Saybrooke HOA, coached youth baseball, and actively participate with local Chambers.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Montgomery County's 7,200+ nonprofits aren't just service providers—they're economic engines employing thousands of residents, attracting philanthropic investment, and anchoring communities. They deliver the critical direct services our residents depend on: mental health counseling, workforce training, food assistance, legal aid. In an era of federal funding uncertainty and workforce disruption from federal layoffs, nonprofits are often the first responders for displaced workers, food-insecure families, and communities navigating sudden economic shocks.

To ensure nonprofits are recognized as essential entities, I would start by including nonprofit sector representation in MCEDC's economic development planning—not as an afterthought but at the table when strategy is set. Nonprofits are a major employment sector in this county, and economic development conversations that ignore them are incomplete. I'd also support workforce development initiatives that leverage nonprofits' deep community trust to connect residents—particularly those impacted by federal workforce reductions—to retraining and employment pipelines. No government agency can match that reach.

My fiscal approach centers on growing the tax base rather than raising taxes. Healthy nonprofits attract talent, stabilize neighborhoods, and reduce downstream costs in emergency services, public health, and social services. When we underinvest in the nonprofit sector, we don't save money—we shift costs to emergency rooms, law enforcement, and families who fall through the cracks.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

I would engage nonprofits as strategic partners by building coordination into existing structures rather than creating new bureaucracy. First, I'd establish a Nonprofit Advisory Council – a formal body of 15-20 sector leaders meeting quarterly with the County Executive's office to provide input on procurement policies, indirect cost rates, and contracting timelines before decisions are made, with Nonprofit Montgomery playing a significant coordinating role. Second, I'd ask key departments like DHHS, Aging & Disability, Recreation, and Housing to designate existing staff as Nonprofit Partnership Liaisons – a collateral duty, not new positions – who would meet quarterly across departments to share best practices and surface common barriers. This achieves the goals of the State of Nonprofits report's recommended "County Office of Nonprofit Partnerships" without adding a new layer of government. When we identify coordination problems, the instinct is to create a new office, but new offices add bureaucratic weight and can actually make coordination harder. Building coordination into existing structures is more efficient and more sustainable.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

In my first year on the Gaithersburg City Council, we faced a vote on whether to extend the temporary rent freeze during the COVID health emergency. I'm philosophically opposed to the government dictating prices to private entities—it's a principle I hold strongly and one that informs my opposition to rent stabilization at the county level today. But during that debate, I changed my mind twice. The reality was that we were asking sick people to stay home, which meant hourly workers forgoing income through no fault of their own. I voted to extend the protection—the deciding vote in a 3-2 decision—because in that moment, it would do the most good for the most vulnerable people in our community.

That experience taught me something important about policymaking: principles matter, but so does context. Good leaders hold their values and still listen to the facts in front of them. I walked into that vote certain I'd vote no, and I had the honesty to change course when the human impact became clear.

That's how I'd approach nonprofit investments. I'd start with clear principles: fund capacity, not just programs—nonprofits that can't cover overhead can't deliver services sustainably. Use data to evaluate impact, not just inputs. And protect baseline nonprofit funding during downturns rather than treating those contracts as the first line item to cut when budgets tighten—because nonprofits serve as the county's safety net, and cutting them during economic stress is precisely when demand for their services increases. But I'd also stay open to adjusting course when the evidence demands it. Rigidity isn't fiscal discipline—it's just stubbornness.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

The question of "too many nonprofits" can be a trap if it leads to government picking winners and losers in the sector. That's not the county's role, and I'd be cautious about any approach that consolidates services in ways that reduce community choice or cultural responsiveness.

That said, the concern about fragmentation is legitimate. When multiple organizations serve overlapping populations with limited coordination, it can mean duplicated administrative costs, confusing referral pathways for residents, and difficulty measuring collective impact. The county can drive better coordination without overstepping—and the procurement process is the right lever.

The county should issue RFPs with clear requirements and measurable outcomes. If a scope of work requires coordination across providers, that should be spelled out in the solicitation—and respondents should position the resources and partnerships necessary to achieve the stated goals, just as any prime contractor and subcontractor would in any other proposal. This creates natural alignment in advance, driven by the organizations themselves rather than imposed from above. Where services cannot be bundled efficiently, the county should issue separate RFPs rather than forcing artificial combinations. The county should also invest in Nonprofit Montgomery's capacity-building role—helping organizations strengthen operations, share best practices, and find efficiencies on their own terms.

Beyond RFPs for specific services, the county needs to take a harder look at how it funds nonprofits through grants—particularly organizations filling gaps where the county doesn't provide adequate direct services. Poolesville Seniors is a perfect example: they serve the western county's aging population in an area where the county offers virtually no senior services, yet their grant barely covers half a staffer's salary. When a nonprofit is the only provider in a geographic area the county itself isn't serving, that's not a nice-to-have—that's essential infrastructure, and the funding should reflect it. Grant funding should be tied to an honest assessment of where the county has service deserts and which nonprofits are filling those gaps.

What I would not support is using county funding as leverage to force mergers or artificially narrow the number of providers. Montgomery County's diversity is a strength, and our nonprofit ecosystem should reflect the communities it serves. A Latinx-led organization, a faith-based food pantry, and a clinical behavioral health provider may all serve overlapping populations—but they reach different people in different ways. The goal is coordination, not consolidation.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

I'll be honest: I don't know exactly how data is shared between the county and its nonprofit partners today, and I suspect the answer varies widely by department. That inconsistency is itself the problem. Before investing in a new standalone data platform, I'd want to understand what infrastructure already exists and where the real gaps are.

The structures I've proposed—a Nonprofit Advisory Council meeting quarterly with the County Executive's office, and departmental Nonprofit Partnership Liaisons coordinating across DHHS, Aging & Disability, Recreation, Housing, and other key agencies—are the right vehicles for this work. Those liaisons would be responsible for establishing clear, measurable goals for every county-funded nonprofit engagement and requiring outcome metrics that allow us to evaluate whether the spending is producing results. If we're funding a workforce training program, we should know placement rates. If we're funding a food assistance program, we should know how many families are being reached and whether need is growing or shrinking. The Advisory Council would help ensure those metrics are developed collaboratively with the nonprofit sector—not imposed top-down. If the county and its partners are measuring different things, the data produces noise, not insight.

For smaller nonprofits that may lack reporting infrastructure, the county should provide technical assistance rather than penalizing them for limited capacity. This isn't about building a new technology bureaucracy—it's about embedding accountability into the relationships we already have.

The return is straightforward: better targeting of resources, stronger grant applications for state and federal funding, and the ability to demonstrate to taxpayers that their dollars are producing measurable results. You can't manage what you don't measure—but you also shouldn't build bureaucracy for its own sake.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Federal policy changes—from workforce reductions at agencies headquartered in our county, to cuts in safety-net programs, to immigration enforcement actions—are creating real fear and material hardship for Montgomery County residents. The county must respond decisively while being honest about fiscal constraints.

My priority is preserving the safety net programs our most vulnerable residents depend on, even as federal funding becomes unreliable. That means the county must identify which federally funded services are most at risk and work with nonprofit providers now to plan for gaps before they become crises. When food assistance is cut, it's a nonprofit running the pantry. When families need legal help navigating immigration issues, it's nonprofits like CASA and the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition providing counsel. The county should ensure local law enforcement remains focused on public safety so that families feel safe reporting crimes and accessing services without fear.

On the economic side, federal workforce reductions are hitting Montgomery County harder than almost anywhere in the country. I'd prioritize job training and career transition programs, and I see a real opportunity to partner with the building trades, Montgomery College, and MCPS to create apprenticeship pathways into high-demand fields like construction, electrical, HVAC, and plumbing. Nonprofits are the natural bridge here—they have the community trust, language capacity, and cultural competency to connect displaced workers and underserved residents to these opportunities in ways government agencies simply cannot.

The county's role is to resource these organizations adequately, remove bureaucratic barriers, and ensure that funding reflects the actual cost of delivering services—including the overhead that makes delivery possible.

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Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

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What Council seat are you running for? *

Montgomery County Council At-Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have a lot of experience working with and volunteering for nonprofits big and small. As Head of School at a nonprofit independent school, I led an organization that depended on community partnerships, donor relationships, and mission-driven governance – all core to the nonprofit model. I managed a board of trustees, stewarded philanthropic resources, and delivered services to families during the COVID-19 pandemic when federal and local support was uncertain. I have also been a President and/or board member of several nonprofits to include, the Capital Water Polo Club, the Montgomery County Dive league, and the Cascade Officials Organization (CASO).

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits are a core part of Montgomery County's economy. They employ thousands of county residents, deliver services that allow working families to stay in the workforce, and fill gaps that government and the private sector cannot. As federal funding becomes less reliable, nonprofits are absorbing enormous pressure while simultaneously being asked to do more. I will ensure nonprofits are formally recognized as economic anchors by including them in the county's economic development strategy, not just in social services planning. I believe we need to make government more efficient, and that means giving our nonprofit partners a seat at the table in workforce conversations, inclusion in county economic resilience frameworks, and dedicated county support to help nonprofits navigate funding disruptions – including rapid-response bridge funding mechanisms when federal dollars are frozen or clawed back.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits should be treated as partners, not as contractors. Nonprofits have deep community trust, on-the-ground intelligence, and lived-experience expertise that county departments simply cannot replicate. As a Councilmember, I will push to formalize nonprofit engagement earlier in the policy development cycle – not after decisions are made, but during needs assessments and priority-setting. I will establish regular structured convenings between county department heads and nonprofit sector leaders, create liaisons within county departments whose explicit role is partnership – not just contract management – and champion multi-year funding agreements rather than year-to-year contracts that destabilize nonprofit operations and planning. I believe this is how we make government work better, by working with the people who are already delivering results on the ground.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

As Head of School during the pandemic, we were facing shrinking revenue, rising costs, families in financial distress, and a staff that needed both support and certainty. I had to make tough decisions about where to direct limited resources while protecting the mission and the people most at risk. I chose to protect direct student services and staff compensation first, and reduced administrative overhead and deferred capital projects. That experience taught me to be clear about priorities, transparent about tradeoffs, and focus resources where they can have the greatest impact. I'll bring those same lessons to the County Council. I'll prioritize county investment in organizations delivering direct services to vulnerable populations, and I'll work to reduce the administrative burden that consumes nonprofit capacity.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

Duplication is sometimes real – but what can look like redundancy is often necessary to serve different communities with different cultural, linguistic, or geographic needs. County policymakers should not use consolidation as a cost-cutting measure. Instead, I will invest in shared infrastructure – back-office services, data systems, legal and HR support – that allows smaller nonprofits to focus their resources on mission delivery. I will support Nonprofit Montgomery's capacity-building role and encourage voluntary collaboration and alignment. Community-driven organizations should remain community-driven. The county's role is to create conditions for coordination.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Effective policymaking requires real-time, shared data – and right now, too much of what the county knows about community needs is siloed, lagged, or incomplete. I support shared data systems that allow nonprofits to contribute anonymized, aggregate community needs data and access county data that helps them target services effectively. This must be built with strong data privacy protections and equity considerations – smaller nonprofits should not be excluded because they lack technical capacity. I will push for standardized outcome reporting frameworks developed in partnership with the nonprofit sector, so that reporting requirements serve the mission rather than just satisfying bureaucratic compliance and creating an unnecessary burden.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Federal policy changes are already putting pressure on housing, food access, healthcare, and immigration services in Montgomery County. My response would be threefold: first, use county funds to backfill critical service gaps where feasible and prioritie programs serving the most vulnerable; second, work with the County Executive to track funding disruptions in real time and be ready with rapid county response; and third, lean heavily on nonprofits as the delivery arm of that response – because they have the trust, the relationships, and the community presence that government agencies lack. I will also explore legal and policy tools to protect immigrant residents from federal overreach. Vulnerable communities cannot wait for the next budget cycle. The response must be urgent, coordinated, and sustained.

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Name *

Scott Evan Goldberg

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What Council seat are you running for? *

At-Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

Personally, I currently serve on the boards of the Montgomery Parks Foundation, YMCA of Silver Spring, Bethesda Chamber of Commerce and Montgomery County Workforce Development Board and previously on the Western Citizens Advisory Board and as Chair of the Montgomery County Democratic Party, all nonprofits with a wide spectrum of missions. Professionally, I worked in partnership with Makom, formerly the Jewish Foundation for Group Homes, as a service provider to coordinate maintenance of their properties, which was both a rewarding and an eye-opening experience into the vital role that nonprofits play in our community.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

In Montgomery County, nonprofits are high impact economic drivers. Nonprofits are the best kind of employment because it is hyperlocal and can't really be outsourced. Employing approximately 10% of the county's workforce and beyond providing jobs, you have massive purchasing power—estimated at \$4 billion—which circulates back into local small businesses and services. We need to reform the grant process to instill the predicability for nonprofits to plan operations and investments in advance. By having processes that set nonprofits up for success, that's how we show you the respect you deserve.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

County leaders talk a lot. Nonprofits many times provide more effective service at a lower cost with substantial unpredictability of funding. Our county government doesn't have a culture of new thinking and that's what I would push the next County Executive and Department Directors to instill in their teams. Words matter too. I'd support using more equitable language like partners, teammates, and peers.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

As a small business owner, my policy was that I always got paid last, if there were funds leftover. At the beginning of the pandemic, revenue took a drastic downturn. I prioritized the compensation of the people on the frontlines directly delivering on the mission of our company. That meant not getting a salary for the better part of a year. After that, our staff had a renewed vigor that providing top tier service to our clients and customers would always be the ethos of our team and that they would always be supported, no matter what.

When times get tough, and they will one day, as a County Councilmember I will always prioritize the people and organizations directly serving the mission of county government.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

Two thoughts: 1) most of us are reasonable, well-intentioned, thoughtful adults. We can have the conversations necessary to decide what is best for the mission and how to have maximum impact. I trust the nonprofit community to know and understand when there are duplicative operations and where synergies may multiply effectiveness. 2) On the County Council, as a steward of the taxpayers, I will examine our expenditures to make sure the residents of Montgomery County are getting the most for their money. That will include asking tough questions and examining if we're being as efficient as possible.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

The Montgomery County government is average at measuring things. Our culture, and this is a perfectly human response, is to highlight the positive and hide the negative. To better performance, knowing our deficiencies is more important than touting what we're doing well. Data measuring and sharing would be a perfect project for the Chief Innovation Officer.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Supercharging our local economy. Right now, we don't have any real economic development priorities as the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, a nonprofit, is in the beginning stages of developing a strategic plan. In a strong, vibrant jobs market, the loss of federal jobs and federal funds could be absorbed much more easily. An added benefit is that the county would have more tax revenue to backfill funding reductions to support the nonprofit community. I view nonprofits as strong, impactful employers so they would play a vital role in the county's employment mix.

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Council Candidate Questionnaire

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Our **Council Candidate Questionnaire** questions are based on the findings and recommendations captured in the *2025 State of Nonprofits in Montgomery County* report and *Federal Impact Supplement* (shared below). Please answer the following questions, drawing on your personal and/or professional experience with nonprofits, as well as your vision for the future of Montgomery County. **Deadline to respond is March 20. Nonprofit Montgomery will share your answers, unedited, on our website, around April 1.** We will share that link and information with our members and stakeholders.

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In 2025, Nonprofit Montgomery issued a [comprehensive report](#) on the state of the nonprofit sector in Montgomery County. Grounded in data gathered from multiple external sources and a community needs assessment survey shared with nonprofits, the report contextualized the issues related to nonprofits and shared 11 recommendations for how the community can support the nonprofit sector. In September 2025, NM issued a [supplement to the report](#) to capture the impacts on nonprofits of federal actions in the first six months of the Trump Administration. This also included important data as well as three recommendations for policymakers.

Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

Rocky Whitesell

Email *

pawhitesell@smcm.edu

What Council seat are you running for? *

District 4

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

My experience with nonprofits has primarily been as a volunteer with local charities, rather than in a professional capacity. Across Montgomery County, I've seen nonprofits fill real gaps in services, while others strengthen the cultural life of our community. Both are needed, and I want to strengthen the County's partnerships with each.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

A downturn is exactly the wrong time to disinvest in nonprofits. They are employers and purchasers in the local economy, so cutting them back deepens the slowdown. At the same time, demand for their services rises, making them some of the only institutions that can both support households and keep money circulating locally. Their flexibility also allows them to respond quickly as needs shift.

As a councilmember, I would like to collaborate with the non-profit community as a whole to review our system of County funding with two main goals: that non-profits have to spend as little time as possible working to receive funds so that they can devote maximum effort to their work, and that the distribution of funds involves significant coordination with the non-profit community.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

The key shift in my view is giving nonprofits a structured role in the budget process early enough to matter. I am not proposing that the County cede its authority, but that nonprofits, as a community, are directly involved in identifying needs, gaps, and priorities before decisions are made.

Concretely, I would move nonprofit input earlier in the budget cycle and make it a defined, scheduled step across sectors before departments set priorities. At that point each year, the County would ask nonprofits within each sector what demand is rising, where gaps exist, and what is or is not working. Where this already happens, it should be moved earlier and made more consistent; where it does not, it should be established. This should be coordinated across departments, perhaps through a small central office or function, so nonprofits are not navigating a fragmented system. The goal is not to create a new layer of bureaucracy, but to ensure what we are already hearing about needs and gaps is timely, coordinated, and able to shape decisions.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

Most recently I worked in policy at NIH and led a rapid, six-month cost analysis of a \$42 million program budget, breaking down spending across services and identifying what was and was not financially sustainable. I produced a set of options for leadership, outlining the tradeoffs during a period of significant fiscal pressure.

The reality was that fully balancing the budget in the near term was not feasible given the scale of the disruption. That made it even more important to be clear about what different choices would mean. I made a point of getting as close to the ground as possible, speaking with staff at every level to understand how money was actually spent and how the work was done. From there, my approach was to be direct about the tradeoffs: where reductions were unavoidable, they should be as targeted as possible, looking at actual dependencies and how systems functioned, not just working from opaque line items.

That experience informs how I would approach investments in the nonprofit sector. In constrained environments, the goal is to be transparent about tradeoffs, preserve capacity where it is most effective, and avoid across-the-board cuts that weaken the system. I would work to understand budgets not as abstract numbers, but as services and functions that do not scale cleanly, so we can minimize harm in tough times and rebuild effectively when conditions improve.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

I would be hesitant to push anything top down. One of the greatest strengths of nonprofits is their ability to organize flexibly and independently, and what can look like duplication from the outside often reflects different gaps being filled, different communities being served, or different approaches that matter on the ground.

As a central actor, the County can still make coordination easier and more useful. That means improving visibility into where services are concentrated or lacking, creating opportunities for nonprofits to share what they are seeing, and aligning funding processes so they encourage collaboration where it makes sense. The goal should be to support coordination without constraining the independence that makes the sector effective. Ultimately, the people best positioned to answer whether there are too many overlapping nonprofits are those running them; the County's role should be to help inform that question, not decide it.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

The County already has examples of this working in specific areas, where nonprofits and government jointly define what data matters and share information to guide decisions. The challenge is that this approach is not consistent across sectors.

I would look to build on those models by working with nonprofits and departments to define the most useful data to share, and then creating a County function that can standardize, anonymize, and produce usable outputs across sectors. A small central office or function focused on nonprofit partnerships could be a natural home for this work.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

The County should respond to harmful federal policy changes by focusing first on the people most exposed to them, especially immigrant families. In the case of immigration enforcement, I believe there is a documented pattern of unlawful conduct by federal agents. The County has a duty to actively monitor these situations, document potential violations, and ensure they are referred for appropriate legal review and response. We cannot simply wash our hands and declare non-cooperation.

Community organizations have already been at the forefront of this work. It is appropriate for the County to coordinate with these organizations to better understand what is happening on the ground and to ensure that concerns about potential abuses are heard and acted on quickly.

More broadly, federal policy changes are causing serious disruptions to social services funding at the local level. My aim as a councilmember will be to soften the impact of those changes as much as possible.

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Google Forms

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Name *

Vicki Vergagni

Email *

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What Council seat are you running for? *

At-Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

Director of Specialized Education Projects, American Society of Association Executives; Coordinator, Safety and Industrial Health, Edison Electric Institute;
 Consultant, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation;
 Owner/CEO, Association Personnel, Inc. (placement service for non-profits);
 President, Board of Directors and On-Site Community Manager, Glen Way Gardens Condominium
 35+ years experience with all types of nonprofits: trade and professional associations, charitable resource, business that provided service to nonprofits, housing association.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits traditionally "fill in the gaps". Economic development, workforce stability and resilience are functions of a healthy, skilled work force. Therefore, it is critical that non-profits be funded to address "safety net" issues (e.g., food, housing, transportation, medical/dental care, education, electronic communications). At a minimum, I would initiate a "Nonprofit of the Week" that highlights the organization's mission so it can secure visibility, volunteers, and contributions.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

I would require each County agency to identify for the Council those nonprofits with which they collaborate and to establish a liaison committee to share how best to compliment each other's mission. For example, condominiums work with Police/Fire and Rescue, Health and Human Services, Animal Control to provide access to private homes; provide information to Permitting Services, Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Commission on Common Ownership Communities; partner with Department of the Environment on recycling, conservation; distribute information to residents for METRO related to its services, etc.

Prioritization and Decision-Making

*

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

Like managing any business or nonprofit with limited resources, "triage" is the name of the game in condominium management. Enclosing buildings at \$850K, or enclosing the entire property for \$750K to provide security -- or cameras property-wide for \$400K? Replacing windows for \$1.2M, or installing individual electric meters for \$2.1M? In each case I analyzed the return-on-investment for a working-class community by factoring in advantages/disadvantages, immediate cost and long-term pay-off.

Sector Capacity and Impact

*

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

Ask each chapter of a national, and of a local, nonprofit to provide a mission statement that describes their clientele with population numbers; discuss how their services integrate with various County agencies; and the resources required (e.g., time and money) to provide those services. A spreadsheet could be created that allows comparison. If there is overlap, hard decisions re funding will need to be made. Regardless, every nonprofit should be eligible for "Nonprofit of the Week" that will support the resolution of those entities' key issues (e.g., decreased funding and revenue, decreased staffing and increasing volume of client demand).

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

The County has an operating "311," but we may need to use a different 24/7 number (e.g., "555"). Each caller would be assigned a client number. All nonprofits who get a call for help should advise the caller to call "555" if they have not so that they get comprehensive assistance. For example, if an individual contacts a nonprofit because ICE took a friend/relative, they may need emotional support, food, rental assistance, legal advice, transportation, etc. If they call any nonprofit for assistance, the individual answering that call should refer them to "555". Requests for assistance should automatically be sent to all nonprofits who can support the friends/relatives. If there is more than one food provider, either choose the closest provider, or providers can receive requests on a rotating schedule. Nonprofits who provide service should report to the County the client # of the individual(s) to whom they provided services and identify those services.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

There is always a role for nonprofits because they are composed of people of goodwill who wholeheartedly commit themselves to the mission at hand, oftentimes using their own resources to help out. After identifying groups most at risk, assure first that bridges have been or are being built with those groups. Then identify their needs and all organizations providing those needed services. Connect the group of at-risk individuals with those nonprofits that can help address their needs, and have representatives of those groups collaborate on identifying the most effective and efficient ways to use the available resources.

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Name *

Dawn Luedtke

Email *

dawn@dawnluedtke.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

District 7

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

In my current role as the incumbent councilmember for D7, I work extensively with our nonprofit organizations serving County residents through my work on the HHS committee. In my personal capacity, I have served on the boards of directors for multiple nonprofit arts organizations over the last twenty years, and have served as a volunteer with non-arts related non-profits.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

It depends on what type of nonprofit organization it is as to how it directly impacts each of the areas listed. And, to be fair, there's a great deal of interconnectedness between those three areas. Supporting our workforce development and making sure people can stay here and remain employed in the county also relates to ability to put food on the table and maintain housing. Instability in our workforce that can be corrected via our social safety net stabilizes not just the individual and their family, but the ability to have workers to perform the jobs they hold, and to overall community stability. Nonprofit partners to County government are the boots on the ground who are first to see shifts and trends in needs or in being able to articulate adjustments of service delivery models. That is essential to our internal government agencies, like HHS, to inform the decision-making on behalf of county government.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Please see response above - I do believe that this needs to be a bi-directional communication of priorities, needs, and budgets back and forth between the County departments who contract with the nonprofits and the nonprofits providing the work on the ground. I have also during my first term in office focused on determining where there have been problematic contractual issues or functional issues (like processing of reimbursements for services rendered) because that matters greatly to the daily operations of those nonprofits performing that work on behalf of the County, and the County should be attentive to making sure that the nonprofits can spend more time doing the actual work they were set up to do rather than having to cut through red tape to administer the contracts. I remain firmly committed to that work moving forward.

Prioritization and Decision-Making

*

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

Given the budget climate we are in, all funding prioritization decisions are challenging. My process involves making sure my decision-making mitigates risks to the greatest extent possible across all sectors of need and all services while making sure we do not use up funds which we may need to hold in reserve for emerging scenarios. The goal is to stabilize as much as we can with the resources we have and balance that across the differing priorities while understanding that there simply isn't a way to replace all loss of federal funds that have impacted the State of Maryland and local governments.

Sector Capacity and Impact

*

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

I do respect the individual autonomy of nonprofits operating within Montgomery County. I also believe that there may be efficiencies of scale that nonprofits who serve like sectors could utilize moving forward to increase impact and again, to reduce overhead for operations. Each nonprofit conducts its own development work to raise funds for the performance of the work they set themselves up to do. For those with contracts with the County, I do believe an RFP process is the best way to select providers to meet the County's needs. And, that there needs to be communication back and forth between the nonprofits and the County on what is happening within the community and how to be agile and adaptive as needs change. There also needs to be clear communication that when nonprofits come up with new ideas or enhancements they may not always be supplemented by County funds.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

I think it is important for the county departments to have the ability to understand the data themselves in an efficient, comprehensive manner so that they can assess what is or isn't working, and also appropriately monitor contracts for services. I believe this question would best be answered by finding out what specific data reporting would be useful to the nonprofits in the performance of their work, what systems already exist within county government to aggregate and disseminate that information, and how best to provide useful, actionable information out to the nonprofits while also not compromising individual identifying information and ensuring all compliance with applicable State and federal data privacy laws.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

I would propose creating addenda to existing contracts and/or adding language in new contracts that allows for flexibility in delivery model based on the changing federal landscape and community fears and vulnerabilities. It is both important to be specific about what the County has contracted for and what the expectations are of the use of taxpayer dollars to deliver services and supports for our residents, and also to make sure that we have provisions that give flexibility triggered by certain events to adapt as to how that work is done so that we do not experience gaps in services to the greatest extent possible.

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Name *

Rick F. Mui

Email *

vote.Ricky.F.Mui@outlook.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

District 3

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

Proud supporter and member of various 501 (c) (3)'s throughout the Maryland region. I have served in various roles for my local Rotary club, regional AAPI organizations, and as a consistent volunteer for food banks and shelters. For the past 2 years, I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as the Chair for Rockville's Human Services Advisory Commission, where the commission members explore whether the needs of Rockville residents are met through social services providers. I participate in the annual Point in Time Count to gauge whether we've made a measurable difference.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Successful non-profit organizations maintain multiple funding streams, which mitigates the reliance on federal or local government grants. I have seen many non-profits pursue private donations or connect to the local and regional public via art shows or exhibitions to increase awareness and capture public donations. As an example, Sunflower Bakery in Rockville utilizes grant funding to assist developmentally challenged individuals to learn marketable skills, leading to real employment opportunities. Loyal followers can also purchase baked goods at the location. CCACC recently opened a new medical clinic to serve up to 6000 engagements per year. The return on regional grant investment is a healthier population, especially those that would not have received medical screening or care without insurance.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Non-profit organization that provide medical, mental and health services, homeless outreach and food recovery and distribution are vital partners within Montgomery County. The County government does not have the capacity (time, financial, or manpower) to manage daily individual needs of a 1.1 million population. Our community relies on local non-profits to perform the last-mile services; placing the services or food directly into the hands. As a stakeholder in this network or continuum of care, these service-oriented non-profits can offer unique first hand perspective into the issues. The County government should synthesize these lessons learned across sectors to identify root causes and develop long term solutions to helping our residents resolve the underlying issues. The County government needs to understand the situation and should standardize metrics collection; the non-profits need to understand the intent and facilitate capturing the data for the metrics; to include possible causation and remedies.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

I have participated in multiple panels for the City of Rockville's community grant funding review. The panel members review the grant requests and produce a recommendation for funding levels for the Mayor and Council. Most of the review is done in a vacuum. Paired along with the review panel, I was also privy to attend on-site visits with different non-profit organizations. These visits allow a much better perspective of the actual service provided and the process. This is the best combination of community partnerships; where decision makers can directly see the impact of public grant funding, and to comprehend the scope of the issues a specific non-profit is working to address.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

The sheer volume of Non-profit organizations may suggest: 1.) there are major unmet needs (for a population of 1.1 million), 2.) there may be more service delivery supply capacity than demand, 3.) attention may be scattered. The large volume of 6000+ independent entities inherently makes funding adequately very challenging; especially via private donors. A helpful model may be that a few non-profits coordinate the majority of funding and distribute to front line echelons that directly deliver the service. This model exists in the commercial sector and military units, where "front line franchises" can be autonomous in their service delivery and reach back to a central organization for support.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

This is the most critical element of the entire system. What are the dimensions of the need that the County government and the for-profit sectors are not satisfying? We need data to capture information in order to understand the issues: (How many people use a particular set of services? When? Where? How often? Why? How are the services utilized? Is the utilization time based (temporary, seasonal, periodic or year-round)? What other options have the people used?). The answers would assist County government to understand the size of the budget required to address these issues. Are the symptoms acute or chronic? What are the possible outcomes?

When Non-profits share their data on services provided, we can start to develop a process map of what factors or variables to be cognizant for. We can also develop warnings or milestone triggers. A real-time tracker can be displayed via a dashboard to help with resource monitoring, capacity, and service statuses. I would propose a public private partnership; as private companies utilize goodwill funding to support their communities.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

For many cultures around the world and throughout history, we have seen members of the community rise up to care for the more vulnerable populations. Some members of the community require additional care brought on by a human developmental challenge, by a medical issue or simply a condition of age. Successful civilizations dedicate resources to assist in making these lives comfortable, and in cases where an improved state can be reached, strive for that independence and self-reliance. In the case of a 102 year old undergoing physical therapy, we can only manage maintaining a positive health status. For those undergoing treatment for an addiction, we can provide the cleanest environment from which these patients can fight for recovery. In many cases, Non-profits are filling an essential gap in the industry between government operations (NIH, local Dept of Health) and private for-profit organizations (businesses and hospitals); particularly when licensed clinicians volunteer to provide palliative care. In another sense, non-profit organizations are providing the most cost-effective services for their available capacity, in an environment that lacks other options.

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Name *

Sonia A. Garcia, Ph.D.

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What Council seat are you running for? *

Montgomery County Council- District 6

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have worked closely with nonprofits through my academic, professional and community organizing experience. In my federal role, I supported programs focused on research access, outreach, and workforce development, collaborating with nonprofit partners to expand participation and impact. More recently, I have been deeply involved with EPIC of MoCo - Empowering People In Communities, where I support bilingual outreach, translation, community education, and civic engagement efforts. Through this work, I have assisted in informing and educating residents on housing and transit policies, so that residents are able to advocate for themselves. This experience has shown me the critical role nonprofits play in bridging gaps between government and community.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits are essential to Montgomery County's economic stability and resilience, especially during times of federal uncertainty. They are not only service providers, they are workforce developers, community anchors, and trusted messengers in communities that government often struggles to reach.

Through my work with EPIC of MoCo, I've seen how nonprofits stabilize communities by providing information, organizing residents, and connecting people to resources. This directly supports economic participation and reduces long-term costs associated with displacement and instability.

To ensure nonprofits are recognized as essential, I would:

- Integrate nonprofits into economic development planning, not treat them as separate
- Ensure consistent, timely funding and reduce administrative burdens
- Include nonprofit leaders in policy design and implementation conversations

A strong nonprofit sector strengthens the entire county economy and resident's resilience.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits should be treated as strategic partners, not just contractors. They bring lived experience, community trust, and real-time insight that government alone cannot replicate.

Through my work with EPIC of MoCo, I've seen how nonprofits act as a bridge between residents and decision-makers—translating complex policies, gathering feedback, and ensuring communities are engaged. That role should be formalized.

As a Councilmember, I would:

- Include nonprofits early in policy development, not after decisions are drafted
- Create structured feedback loops so nonprofit input directly informs policy outcomes
- Support multi-year partnerships rather than short-term contracts
- Ensure departments engage nonprofits in planning, not just service delivery

Partnership means co-creating solutions with the communities nonprofits represent.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

In my program management roles and as a liaison with multiple stakeholders, I have had to make decisions about where to allocate limited resources across multiple initiatives with competing needs. This required balancing data, stakeholder input, and long-term impact.

For example, when supporting program initiatives and outreach efforts, I prioritized investments that demonstrated measurable outcomes, strong community engagement, and alignment with broader goals. I also considered who would be most impacted by those decisions.

This experience informs how I would approach nonprofit investments: prioritizing organizations that are deeply embedded in the community, demonstrate impact, and address critical gaps, while also ensuring transparency and accountability in how funding decisions are made.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

The question is not whether there are “too many” nonprofits, but whether there is enough coordination and support to maximize their impact.

Many nonprofits are filling gaps that government has not addressed, especially in immigrant and working-class communities. Through my work with EPIC of MoCo I’ve seen how grassroots organizations provide culturally competent outreach that larger systems often miss.

County policymakers should:

- Support collaboration and shared infrastructure across nonprofits
- Fund capacity-building, not just program delivery
- Create spaces for coordination without forcing consolidation
- Respect that community-driven organizations may operate differently but are highly effective

The goal should be alignment and support, not limiting the number of organizations doing critical work.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Strong data sharing between the county and nonprofits is essential for understanding real-time community needs and measuring impact.

Nonprofits are often the first to see emerging issues, but they are not always connected to county data systems or decision-making processes. That gap limits effectiveness.

I would support:

- Investment in shared data platforms that allow secure, real-time information exchange
- Standardized but flexible reporting systems that reduce administrative burden
- Regular data-sharing partnerships between departments and nonprofit organizations
- Funding for nonprofits to build their own data and evaluation capacity

Data should be a tool for collaboration and it must include both quantitative data and community-informed insights.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Nonprofits play a critical role in protecting vulnerable communities, especially in times of federal policy uncertainty. They are often the first line of support for immigrants, low-income families, and communities at risk of displacement.

Through my work with a local non-profit, I've supported efforts to inform and mobilize residents around policies that directly impact their housing stability and economic security. This includes engagement around proposals such as the University Boulevard Corridor Plan, where residents raised serious concerns about the lack of anti-displacement protections for homes that were rezoned, as well as limited and inequitable community outreach. Our very own planning stated that the directly impacted single-family homeowners were not outreached- meaning they were not engaged in the process.

These experiences highlight why stronger safeguards are necessary.

I would support policies that:

- Require clear and enforceable anti-displacement protections in any rezoning or redevelopment plan
- Ensure early, multilingual, and community-centered outreach that reaches directly impacted residents
- Strengthen funding for direct services, legal support, and tenant protections
- Protect housing stability and preserve naturally occurring affordable housing
- Partner with nonprofits to deliver rapid-response support during policy changes

Nonprofits must be central partners in protecting communities, not an afterthought, and that is one of the reasons I chose to run for Montgomery County Council in District 6.

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Council Candidate Questionnaire

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In 2025, Nonprofit Montgomery issued a [comprehensive report](#) on the state of the nonprofit sector in Montgomery County. Grounded in data gathered from multiple external sources and a community needs assessment survey shared with nonprofits, the report contextualized the issues related to nonprofits and shared 11 recommendations for how the community can support the nonprofit sector. In September 2025, NM issued a [supplement to the report](#) to capture the impacts on nonprofits of federal actions in the first six months of the Trump Administration. This also included important data as well as three recommendations for policymakers.

Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

Josie Caballero

Email *

josie@josieformaryland.com

What Council seat are you running for? *

Montgomery Council Council At-Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I have been working in equality nonprofit work for the last 5 years as a director at Advocates for Trans Equality. My work includes national scientific research, national advocacy, coalition work, voter education, and registration. I also serve as President of the Transgender American Veterans Association, which serves trans veterans nationwide. I have a thorough understanding of how nonprofits operate and the importance of their work to the communities they serve.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County’s current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county’s economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Over 58,000 people in Montgomery County are employed by nonprofits, according to the 2025 State of Nonprofits in Montgomery County Report. Nonprofits are a critical part of Montgomery County’s economic infrastructure. We rely on them as stable institutions that help families stay housed and supported, especially during periods of economic uncertainty. Nonprofit organizations also attract outside funding to help bring money into the county, provide essential services, and help keep communities stable during these times of economic uncertainty.

Nonprofits must be treated as essential partners in Montgomery County. This means including them in economic development strategy, improving the reliability of county funding and reimbursements, reducing unnecessary administrative barriers, and ensuring nonprofit leaders have a real voice in budget and policy decisions.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits should be treated as strategic partners, not treated only as contractors. Nonprofit partners should be consulted early in the process at the front end of policy development and program design. Nonprofits are on the frontline closest to the people most impacted by county policy, and we must lean on that expertise. I will ensure that the county has clear channels for feedback, and ensure nonprofit leaders have a real seat at the table when the county sets priorities. The county relationship cannot be purely transactional. We must value nonprofits for the service they deliver, their policy insight, community trust, and direct community knowledge. That is how we build a smarter government and the best results for residents.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

In my nonprofit work, I had to make major program decisions based on my budget. This meant that I had to cut programmatic work and prioritize other programmatic work. When making such a decision, I focus on measurable impact and program efficacy that best meet the greatest needs of the community that we serve.

That is how I would approach nonprofit investments in county government. I would make funding decisions based on measurable impact, program efficacy, and which investments best meet the greatest needs of the community. I would also work to protect essential services and ensure county resources are directed where they can do the most good.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

The county should be careful not to approach this question by assuming there are simply too many nonprofits. As I have stated before, nonprofits are a key sector of our economy, and we must promote their growth at all levels. The county should be supporting the creation of spaces for nonprofit organizations to coordinate effectively and sustain their work. I would support creating a regular, informal space that invites a representative from every Montgomery County nonprofit. This would support a consistent, accountable place where issues can be raised and addressed. Our goal would be greater impact and stronger alignment.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Data is a priority for me because, in my nonprofit work, I have led a nationwide survey that surveyed over 92,000 people. I understand firsthand the value that data collected by nonprofits is priceless to good public policy. I also understand how important the data collected by the county is to nonprofits, as that data informs the programs, budgets, and services that they provide.

I will support investing in shared data infrastructure, standardized reporting tools, and secure systems that allow nonprofit partners and county departments to exchange information more efficiently. I would also push for regular coordination between the county and nonprofit partners to identify and ensure that we are collecting the data that is needed to help us deliver better results for residents.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

One of my major policy stances is standing up to federal ICE enforcement. Our immigrant population is most at risk and most vulnerable. Montgomery County must be prepared to protect immigrants from these illegal actions pushed on us by cruel federal policy. This means unmasking and holding them accountable for complying with Montgomery County laws. If ICE breaks those laws, then they should be held criminally liable. I believe that nonprofits have played and will continue to play a critical role in educating our residents on their rights and how to deal with the enforcement.

I will also support county investments in eviction prevention, emergency housing support, legal services, food access, displacement protection, and safety for all our communities from all forms of hate and bigotry. Nonprofits have a major role as they are often the first organizations people trust and turn to when government policy becomes more hostile or unstable. We must have a strong line of communication with nonprofits because the county can only become better by listening to the needs of the organizations that serve our communities on the ground day in and day out.

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Council Candidate Questionnaire

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Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

Marc Elrich

Email *

info@marcelrich.org

What Council seat are you running for? *

At-Large

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

As a councilmember and now as the executive, I have been proud to work closely with nonprofit partners to deliver critical services to our residents.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Working with nonprofit partners to provide crucial safety nets and advocate for a greater quality of life for our residents has never been more critical. Nonprofits have always stepped up when there are gaps in the capability of the government, and our residents have never needed more support. I see nonprofits as a key branch of our social services infrastructure and will continue to prioritize supporting them.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits should always be at the table when discussing and coordinating county services. I support increasing coordination with nonprofits in county departments and with elected officials.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

With the current budget, I had to make very difficult decisions to close massive funding gaps while preserving social services. Despite political pressure, I prioritized maintaining our current levels of support for the nonprofit community because budgets are moral documents and residents need more, not less, at this moment. I will always choose the moral route that helps the average person over austerity.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

I believe in results and always support greater coordination between various nonprofits that work with the County to maximize resources and services to ensure there aren't redundancies. Gathering together nonprofits with similar missions into committees with government officials is one solution to ensure county funds are being properly used while maintaining the autonomy and integrity of nonprofit organizations.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Montgomery County has an open data policy, so verified data which is not legally restricted should be available to our partners.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Nonprofits have deep community relationships and community trust, which helps to ensure that support is not just available but accessible to the whole county in ways local governments can't. To carry out policies that address the increasing needs of our county due in large part to cuts in the federal budget, nonprofits are indispensable. I support policies that provide affordable housing, protect immigrants from a lawless administration, fully fund public schools, increase protections for workers, and directly address poverty and homelessness.

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Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

Izola Shaw

Email *

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What Council seat are you running for? *

District 3

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

I've worked with nonprofits on food security, community gardens, environmental protection, and deepening engagement with underrepresented communities. During COVID, I helped deliver food to those in need across Montgomery County. I've also served on nonprofit boards, overseeing policy and funding for major organizations. These experiences have shown me how essential nonprofits are, and I'm committed to ensuring local government is a true partner so they can keep supporting our community.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits are vital to Montgomery County's economy and resilience. They create jobs, provide training, and deliver services that keep people working and families stable, especially during times of uncertainty. They fill critical gaps, supporting those who might otherwise be left behind when funding is tight. I believe nonprofits should be recognized as essential partners in economic development, not just social services.

As a Councilmember, I would champion their role by advocating for stable funding, including them in economic planning, and making sure they have a seat at the table when decisions are made. Their expertise and knowledge are crucial to a stronger, more resilient Montgomery County.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits should be treated as strategic partners, not just contractors. They have deep roots in the community and valuable insight into what actually works on the ground. As a Councilmember, I would involve nonprofits early in the policy process, invite their input on county priorities, and create regular opportunities for open dialogue, not just during contract renewals. I would also push for more collaborative planning sessions so nonprofits can help shape solutions, not just deliver them. By building real partnerships, we can tap into their expertise and make county initiatives more effective and responsive to community needs.

Prioritization and Decision-Making

*

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

While serving on a nonprofit board, I faced a difficult resource decision where we could not fund every program or initiative we cared about. We had to weigh competing needs and make choices that prioritized the greatest impact for the community. This experience reinforced the importance of listening carefully, being transparent about tradeoffs, and focusing on outcomes that matter most to those we serve.

As a Councilmember, I would bring this same mindset to decisions about supporting the nonprofit sector, making sure investments are guided by community needs and open dialogue with those most affected.

Sector Capacity and Impact

*

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

The best approach lies in encouraging coordination, not imposing consolidation. County policymakers can help by creating spaces for nonprofits to collaborate, share resources, and align efforts where it makes sense, while still respecting each organization's unique mission and community roots.

Rather than deciding which nonprofits should merge or change direction, the County should support networks and coalitions, offer technical assistance, and invest in shared infrastructure that makes collaboration easier. The goal should be to maximize impact through partnership, while respecting the autonomy and creativity that make our nonprofit sector strong.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

I would support building easy-to-use, secure data systems that allow nonprofits and the county to share information in real time, while protecting privacy. This could include investing in shared data platforms, regular training, and technical support so all partners can use the tools effectively.

I would also advocate for dedicated funding to help nonprofits with technology upgrades and data staff, since many smaller organizations lack these resources. Creating clear standards for data collection and reporting would make it easier to measure outcomes, spot gaps, and adapt quickly to changing community needs. With better data, we can make smarter decisions and deliver better results for residents.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

I would push for local policies that protect the rights and well-being of those most at risk, such as immigrants, low-income families, and people affected by changes in healthcare, housing, or civil rights protections. This could mean expanding legal aid, emergency assistance, and access to services regardless of immigration status, as well as strengthening local safety nets to fill gaps left by federal changes.

Nonprofits play a critical role in this response. They are often the first to see emerging needs and can deliver support quickly and with cultural sensitivity. I would work closely with nonprofits to ensure policies are responsive, resources reach those who need them most, and our community remains a place where everyone feels safe and supported.

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Disclosure: NM is funded by the County to provide capacity-building support to strengthen the county's nonprofit sector.

Name *

Debbie Spielberg

Email *

info@debbiespielberg.org

What Council seat are you running for? *

District 1

What is your personal or professional experience with nonprofit organizations? (100 words or less) *

In my 15+ years working at the County Council and now for County Executive Marc Elrich, I have worked with numerous nonprofit organizations, covering a breadth of issues important to Montgomery County. I have helped improve policy, contracts and stabilize funding. Over the years, I have worked with Identity, Interfaith Works, CASA, Habitat for Humanity, Kid Museum, Renters Alliance and more. I have been endorsed by Casa In Action, Jews United for Justice and Sierra Club. I view nonprofits as critical partners in both policy development and implementation, and I value their on-the-ground expertise in addressing complex community challenges.

Nonprofits and Economic Development *

Given Montgomery County's current economic pressures, including uncertainty around federal and state funding, how do you see nonprofits contributing to the county's economic development, workforce stability, and overall resilience? How would you ensure they are recognized as essential entities within this ecosystem?

Nonprofits play a vital role in stabilizing communities and supporting economic resilience. They provide workforce training, connect residents to jobs, and deliver services that allow people to remain housed, healthy, and engaged in the economy.

We need to recognize nonprofits as essential, which means ensuring stable and predictable funding. I will work to streamline county contracting processes and lessen administrative burdens without compromising necessary reporting of information (sometimes longtime practices are no longer efficient and effective.). Additionally, I will work with county and non-profit partners to explore and expand shared services, including records and data management, to lower administrative costs. A strong nonprofit sector helps prevent deeper economic crises by addressing challenges early, and I will work to ensure they are treated as integral partners in the county's economic strategy.

Nonprofits as Partners *

County leaders often speak to their appreciation of the County's nonprofit partners, but in practice, county departments relate to many nonprofits primarily as contractors and service providers. How would you engage nonprofits as strategic partners in addressing county priorities?

Nonprofits should be engaged as strategic partners from the beginning of policy development, not just as contractors after decisions are made. I would prioritize regular, structured engagement with nonprofit leaders, including advisory groups and direct consultation during budget and policy processes.

I also believe the County should continue work on funding models that allow nonprofits flexibility to innovate and respond to community needs, rather than narrowly defined contracts. My experience working across government has shown that better outcomes happen when nonprofits are treated as partners with expertise, not just vendors delivering services.

Prioritization and Decision-Making *

Please share an example of a time when you had to make difficult funding or policy prioritization decision. How would that experience inform the way you prioritize investments in the nonprofit sector?

Throughout my time in county government, I have been involved in difficult budget and policy decisions, particularly around housing, education, and social services. One recent example is balancing the immediate needs of residents with preparing our children for the future. After MCPS cut funding for the Kid Museum, I advocated for continuing the funding through the county budget because it is so important to engage young people and get them excited about learning, especially in the sciences. Without any county funding, it is difficult for them to reach out to students in MCPS who have less opportunities to experience science and discovery in an interactive manner. Another decision was made to redirect funds from "hoteling" (putting families into hotels for short-term housing in lieu of shelters, which are so difficult for families) and add some additional resources into a program known as SHaRP to allow them to move into housing. In both cases, these decisions involved evaluation of data, community input, and long-term impact. I understand that we must protect the vulnerable immediately without neglecting programs that help in the long term. I would apply that approach to nonprofit funding generally, ensuring resources are directed where they have the greatest impact while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Sector Capacity and Impact *

In recent community conversations connected to the [State of Nonprofits Report](#), attendees questioned whether there are too many nonprofits and whether greater coordination or strategic alignment could increase impact. How do you think County policymakers should approach this issue while respecting nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions?

We need to focus on whether we are coordinating effectively to maximize impact. The County can play a role in facilitating collaboration by supporting shared data systems, encouraging partnerships, and aligning funding priorities with community needs. The County can work with nonprofit Montgomery and other organizations to have difficult conversations about local funding expectations and possible collaboration or consolidation. At the same time, it is critical to respect nonprofit autonomy and community-driven solutions. Many nonprofits are deeply rooted in the communities they serve and bring unique expertise. In all of this we should focus on improving coordination, reducing duplication where it exists, and ensuring organizations have the capacity to succeed. I will work with my colleagues and the next County Executive to help with this work.

Data and Infrastructure *

How would you support strategic, comprehensive, and real-time data sharing between the county and nonprofit partners to better understand community needs and outcomes? What investments would you make in data infrastructure to support this work?

Better data sharing between the County and nonprofit partners is essential for understanding community needs and improving outcomes. I would support investments in shared data platforms that allow for real-time information sharing while protecting privacy. This includes some of the newer county data systems to allow for more efficient service delivery.

We should also provide resources and technical assistance to nonprofits so they can effectively collect and use data. Strong data infrastructure helps us identify gaps, measure impact, and make more informed decisions. This is an area where strategic investment can significantly improve service delivery across the county. This is also a place where my experience can be particularly helpful: I will work with the next County Executive as well as my colleagues to support this work.

Protecting Vulnerable Communities *

What policies would you propose to protect and support members of our community who are most at risk due to current or anticipated federal policy changes? Is there a role in that response for nonprofits?

Montgomery County must take an active role in protecting residents who are most vulnerable to federal policy changes, including immigrants, low-income families, and those at risk of housing instability. I support strengthening local protections, access to legal services, and ensuring that county resources are not used in ways that harm vulnerable populations.

Nonprofits are essential partners in this work. They are often the first point of contact for residents in need and play a critical role in providing services, advocacy, and community trust. The pandemic exposed the great needs in our community that have not gone away, and our nonprofit partners have been essential in the work. I will work to ensure they have the resources and support necessary to respond effectively to these challenges.

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