

Dr. Prabu Selvam for Montgomery County Council At-Large

Gaithersburg Germantown Upcounty Chamber

County Council At-Large Candidate Questionnaire

Please respond with a short answer to the following questions:

TRANSPORTATION :

- **Transportation is critical to our economic growth. How are you going to work with the County Executive and the Governor to address the congestion on the Upper I270 corridor?**

I would support creating a bus rapid transit lane on I-270 to connect upcounty areas directly to the metro system. I would consider lane widening in those affected areas if there is clear evidence that this would help, but often congestion is originating from points south and widening in the north alone may not solve the issue.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TAXES:

- **Our County budget is outpacing growth of our population and growth of our business economy. What concrete steps will you take to invite investment to Montgomery county – for both small and large businesses – to grow the economy, allowing us to maintain the level of services in our county budget? Where does the Upcounty fit into your plans?**

I was raised in the Upcounty and know the significant economic potential that remains untapped in these areas of the county. My proposals are to significantly increase our investment in small business grant and low/no interest loan programs, paired with COC mentorship programs to get more small businesses off the ground and to help them succeed. I want to create a one-stop permitting office that helps coordinate across county and state government to help entrepreneurs efficiently navigate permitting. We must also strengthen workforce training programs focused on high-tech, biotech, healthcare and childcare to provide the workforce businesses need to thrive and to address severe unmet needs that exist in our current economy. The Upcounty and businesses there should receive proactive support and outreach to ensure they benefit from the County's programs and resources. I have met with farmers and landowners in

the Upcounty, and I have an interest in more creative and lucrative uses of the Ag reserve, while still respecting our environmental goals. We should find ways to allow farmers to generate more types of businesses outside of traditional farming, including agrotourism and solar farms.

- **In one sentence, what is the biggest mistake the current Executive and Council has made regarding the county's economic growth?**

Overdependence and complacency when it comes to federally funded jobs and neglecting private sector growth for decades while investing very little in business growth. The MD Economic Dev. Assoc. has found that \$1 invested in small business programs can return \$9 of tax revenue, but we have left so much on the table and now our residents are without job opportunities, especially after historic federal and contractor job losses. Permitting processes are too cumbersome, and workforce pipelines that have high job placement rates have not been scaled up sufficiently.

- **The Germantown Master Plan previously called for over 60,000 jobs in Germantown, which did not come to fruition because Upcounty infrastructure needs have been ignored for decades. How would you reverse this result to grow Upcounty job centers?**

We must direct more resources to Upcounty infrastructure development, including housing production, adding road lanes where needed and strengthening rapid transit options. The Upcounty has become a residential hub with so many having to travel many miles for work, by increasing business growth inside the Upcounty, this will also alleviate traffic congestion from thousands who commute as far as Northern VA for work.

PUBLIC SAFETY:

- **Businesses are increasingly concerned about juvenile crime trends in the Upcounty. What changes, if any, would you pursue in addressing crime, particularly among juveniles?**

There must be greater crime prevention by engaging especially young men with mentorship and community engagement outside of school. Recruiting young people into jobs as businesses grow in the Upcounty will be a major factor here, serving as a deterrent from getting involved in crime. We also need more recruitment of police officers from the Upcounty and the neighborhoods they serve. With proactive outreach and by using

educational scholarships that forward-fund tuition, we can recruit a more diverse police force.

HOUSING:

- **Employers cite workforce housing as a barrier to attracting talent. How would you expand diverse and attainable housing options—especially near Upcounty job centers?**

I propose expanding the MPDU program to trigger below market rate housing options when 10 home units are built, not 20, so that there is a greater supply for working families. We must also fast-track permitting so that developers have an incentive to build in Upcounty areas.

EDUCATION:

- **Attracting and retaining the next-generation workforce is a top Chamber priority. The Chamber supports investment in Montgomery College, The Universities at Shady Grove, and MCPS. What is your vision for partnering with these institutions to strengthen the county's talent pipeline? What strategies will you pursue to keep young professionals in Montgomery County, especially in Upcounty communities?**

As a K-12 graduate of MCPS who worked in retail stores as a high-schooler in Germantown before studying Mechanical Engineering in college and eventually becoming a medical doctor, the education of our young people and mid-career changers is central to my goals for our county, especially the Upcounty.

I plan to strengthen our existing workforce programs, especially those focused on high-demand trades, and biotech which is a regional strength for us, especially in the Upcounty. Healthcare and childcare are also major opportunity areas for us with a rapidly aging population and significant gaps in childcare access with astronomical costs to families as a result.

We need proactive recruitment in the Upcounty to plug residents into these programs which they may not even be aware of, and especially when it comes to healthcare and childcare, I would like to pair entrepreneurship training with these tracks and match individuals working in this sector to small business grants to build home-health and childcare businesses. These are areas where especially women and minorities are highly represented, many of them living in the Upcounty. Let's empower them to go from minimum wage jobs to business owners. Greater coordination between MC, MCPS and

USG programs will allow us to best use our resources for the greatest gains for our residents and businesses.

- **Under Maryland's 'Maintenance of Effort' (MOE) law, the county is legally prohibited from ever spending less per student than it did the previous year. This creates a 'ratchet effect' where every emergency increase or one-time bonus becomes the permanent, mandatory floor for the future—even if performance metrics drop. Would you be willing to hold the budget at the absolute legal minimum—effectively a 'no-growth' budget—until the Board of Education agrees to a third-party forensic audit of their central office management? And if so, how will you defend that decision to the teachers' union (MCEA) when they label it an 'attack on educators' during your next budget cycle? If not, what strategy will you employ to ensure the return on the taxpayer's investment to MCPS.**

The quality of the education we provide to our students is a central responsibility of our County government. I am also committed to caring for our teachers, ensuring that their critical work is respected and that their jobs are secure. Every year and especially this budget cycle, my impression (and that of many teachers I have spoken to), is that our teachers and students are held *hostage* by MCPS and county leadership and sometimes the unions themselves to obtain certain budget outcomes. This is unfair and takes our attention away from providing a cost-effective and high-quality education for our students and secure good-paying jobs for our teachers.

If elected to the County Council I would be deeply hands-on, meeting with the school board, MCPS and the executive branch throughout the year to transparently discuss trends in tax revenue, projected priorities and performance of the school system. It should not become an adversarial, last-minute crisis where taxes are increased year after year because of poor planning, management and coordination.

I agree that every budget increase must be tied to clear outcomes of our students and teachers, especially as Black and Latino students face a 50% gap in math and science performance, and many families are leaving public schools because of their perception of poor educational quality. We must creatively and transparently improve the performance of MCPS and take this on as a joint responsibility across local government.

During difficult economic times as we face now, we must also advocate for available State waivers on the MOE law and continue working with State colleagues to modify these rules so that we are not cornered, and so we have more flexibility at the county level.

Please respond YES or NO to the following questions:

Education:

- Do you support the reinstatement of uniformed School Resource Officers to local high schools?

I support placing highly trained unarmed security staff in every school including elementary schools who have training on disarming, de-escalating and subduing attackers. There is clear evidence from a Journal of the American Medical Association study that SROs increase arrests of juveniles without decreasing the risk of students dying during shooting incidents. The net effect is often a negative one.

- Do you support funding MCPS above the Maintenance of Effort?

I'm focused on management and outcomes. If evidence-based programs need funding, then I'm willing to increase funding in a transparent and targeted way.

- Do you support holding MCPS to higher account for their portion of our County budget, particularly those funds above MOE?

Yes

- Would you support opening a conversation with the State Board of Education about oversight of the MCPS budget and accountability?

Yes

Public Safety

- Do you support the expansion of the Drone as a First Responder program further into the Upcounty?

Yes, with close oversight

- Facial Recognition: Will you support the Montgomery County Police Department's use of facial recognition technology for investigating violent crimes?

Yes, with close oversight

- **Police Retention:** Will you commit to a one-time "retention bonus" for all sworn officers with 5+ years of experience to address the current staffing vacancy crisis?

I support incentives for existing officers by my primary focus would be on recruitment of new officers. Having spoken to many officers in the county, they generally feel well cared for by the MCPD. Where evidence shows attrition of mid-career officers, of course I will support targeted incentives.

Housing:

- **There were approximately 2000 housing permits filed in the county for new projects in 2024, and fewer than 50 in 2025. Do you support repeal of the Rent Stabilization legislation, which has resulted in a nearly 100% drop in permits filed for rental housing construction?**

No, with the current rent stabilization law we have, given the CPI over the last 2 years, our current law would allow for rent to increase by 75% over 10 years. Working families' income almost never increases that much in 10 years. I see our current law as anti-gouging and not truly a barrier to profitability. I would instead focus on proactive enforcement to ensure residents get the most benefit out of the law and also making it clear and easy for landlords to recover expenses related to upgrades and renovations so that they get credit for being responsible landlords and so residents benefit from safe and energy-efficient living units.

This is not the "black or white" litmus test that many have painted it to be, it's more complicated than that. If we have strong job growth and people are willing to pay to live in an area, that is also an incentive for developers, rent stabilization or not.

- **Missing Middle Zoning:** Do you support allowing duplexes and triplexes to be built in neighborhoods currently zoned strictly for single-family homes?

Yes, with certain size and design limitations.

- **Developer Incentives:** Would you support "Transit-Oriented Development" that grants automatic enterprise zone status to developers building near Metro or Purple Line stations?

Yes, but not equal in all parts of the county. A developer does not need incentives to build along transit in Bethesda as they would along a bust rapid transit line in Germantown for example.

- Eviction Notice: Do you support the 2026 requirement that landlords must provide a minimum of two weeks' notice before an eviction can proceed, even in cases of non-payment?

Yes

Economic Development & Taxation:

- Tax Limit Bypass: Will you pledge to vote no on any property tax increase that utilizes the "school funding loophole" to bypass the County Charter's requirement for a unanimous Council vote?

Yes

- Special Taxing Districts: Do you support the creation of new "Special Taxing Districts" for residents and businesses to fund infrastructure projects?

No, this penalizes residents because of development near to them that they did not ask for.

Oversight & Quality of Life:

- Leaf Blower Enforcement: Do you support the use of "noise code inspectors" to issue the maximum \$500 fine to homeowners and landscapers still using gas-powered leaf blowers?

No. We should enforce all laws on the books, but in a cost-effective manner that does not abuse county resources.

- The gas-powered leafblower ban last year has cost our small landscaping businesses thousands of dollars each in equipment and lost time. Some of our larger landscapers have had to reinvest tens of thousands of dollars in equipment and infrastructure. Did you vote for (or for those of you not on the council, would you have voted for) the onerous legislation that banned the use of gas-powered leafblowers for our landscaping community?

I would have supported it if we included budgeting to help small businesses transition over.

- Will you vote yes or no on any capital project that adds new lanes of travel for gas-powered vehicles (excluding dedicated bus lanes)?

I am willing to vote yes, but not on “any” capital project that adds new lanes.

- The decision to remove M83, the long-planned and never-funded eastern arterial to I270 and Great Seneca Highway’s eastern counterpart, from the transportation master plan was detrimental to the growth and needs of our Clarksburg community. Did you vote to remove (or for those of you not on the council, would you have voted to remove) M83 from the transportation master plan?

I would have considered supporting it if a bus rapid transit line was included in this plan.

- Do you support the recent charter amendment that reduced the County Executive’s term limit from three terms down to two?

Yes, this creates greater accountability.

One last question –

What do you feel is the most important issue for Upcounty business owners and residents to consider during this election season?

There is a false narrative that you have to be either tax and spend with a focus on social services, or you are pro-businesses, deregulation and anti-spending on things like education. As an ER doctor, former Air Force officer and humanitarian worker, ideology does not get the job done. Even being blindly pro-business is an ideology just the same.

I’m focused on accelerating our economic growth and being deeply hands on with our public schools and other major budget items that deeply affect the lives of people. We can be strongly pro-business and provide a safety net that allows families to thrive and confidently contribute to our local economy and communities. My approach is to have strong, broad-based revenue growth by expanding private sector employment and businesses and thoughtfully and strategically investing those tax dollars to get the best outcomes for our residents, whether that is education, public health, housing or support for seniors.