


Bethesda, MD 20816

June 17, 2024

Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee
12320 Parklawn Dr., Suite 210
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Chair Ahmad, Vice Chair Lockett, and MCDCC members,

Thank you for your leadership in helping to organize and elect Democrats to offices up and down the ballot. As an organizer, former state legislative staffer, and daughter of District 16, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve my community in a new role. Servant leadership has been a major throughline of my personal and professional life, from my leadership organizing an [early voting carpool](#) on my college campus, to my AmeriCorps service where I managed a volunteer literacy tutoring program, and to my experience staffing for two progressive women members of the Maryland General Assembly, Del. Davis (D28- Charles) and Chair Pendergrass (D13-Howard). Through all those experiences, I have developed a deep commitment to elevating the needs of students and families, centering their voices, and working in partnership to create innovative policy solutions. If selected to fill the vacancy, I hope to continue that effort to advocate for an excellent education for every student from pre-K through college, safe and walkable communities protecting vulnerable road users and preventing gun violence, and increased access to affordable housing, childcare, and paid family leave.

District 16 —and the Montgomery County Delegation as a whole— would be best served by someone who is intimately familiar with the legislative process as well as other state-level policy levers like oversight and constituent services. I am proud of my track record of advancing and passing legislation in Annapolis on complex structural issues including [police accountability](#), [food security on college campuses](#), and [public transit access](#). In addition to my legislative record, I also have led local organizing and oversight efforts to [stem the school-to-prison pipeline](#), preventing the opening of an illegal alternative school for elementary-aged students in Charles County, working hand-in-hand with local parents and the Charles County NAACP. I'm also proud of the new children's literacy initiative I spearheaded in the early days of the pandemic when schools and libraries were closed, which distributed over 10,000 books through the summer meals program and brought together diverse local partners including Charles County Government, Charles County Public Library System, Charles County Public Schools, and state and local nonprofits. Finally, I have experience successfully managing a large influx of constituent support requests, helping community members obtain unemployment benefits, access special education services, navigate state licensing, and more. At the heart of my approach to policymaking is the recognition that I don't have all the answers, and to always seek out voices that are not at the table.

Montgomery County is becoming an unaffordable place to live, raise a family, and retire, and I am deeply committed to fighting for progressive, structural policy change to make our county a welcoming and supportive community for all. Until witnessing the depth of women lawmakers and leaders in Annapolis a few years ago, I never thought that I had a role in public office. I am inspired by their example and by Governor Moore's call at his inauguration to bring the next generation into public service. It would be an honor and a privilege to serve as the next Delegate for District 16, putting my advocacy and legislative experience to work on behalf of the community I call home. Thank you for considering me, and I'm happy to answer any questions at


Sincerely,

Melissa E. Bender

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