



2022 Endorsement Questionnaire - Prince George's County Council
[All Responses Will be Made Public]

Candidate Name: Michael Estève
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Council Seat Sought: 4

1. How does your life experience qualify you for the office you seek?

I'm a lifelong Prince Georgian, the son of a PGCPs teacher and a U.S. Army officer. I'm a product of PGCPs schools, and Loyola University Maryland where I majored in Political Science. I work in the non-profit sector supporting children and adults with intellectual disabilities. I was elected to the Bowie City Council, running against the local political establishment, and spent two terms fighting the destruction of our natural environment, exposing the collusion between developers and city councilmembers, implementing complete streets policies, establishing a first-ever municipal solar program to make the city net zero-carbon emitting, and greatly improving public information and resident engagement.

In my spare time, I coach special olympics athletics, work with the Huntington City Community Development Corporation keeping small businesses in Old Bowie alive and growing, promote community gardens and natural pollinators with the Bowie Green Team, count calories, and garden with my partner.

2. What have the primary sources of your campaign's fundraising been, both in this campaign and past campaigns?

All of my campaigns have been and continue to be 100 percent resident funded.

3. In 2018, the Prince George's County Council approved a small-donor public financing program for Council and Executive races to come into effect for the 2026 election. As yet, the Fair Election Fund Commission has not been set up and no funding has been allocated to the program. Do you support the small donor public financing program? If elected to the Council,

will you work to ensure the program is funded each year leading up to the full funding needed for the 2026 election?

Yes. Montgomery has a good model that Prince George's County should be replicating and fully funding. Developers have had way too much influence on county politics for too long.

4. In 1992, through a citizen-driven referendum, a two-term limit was placed on council members which the council repeatedly attempted to repeal over the years and repeatedly failed. As a result of the addition of two at-large seats on the council in 2016, the two-term limit has been diluted with council members allowed to jump from at-large to district seats and back without limit. Do you think district membership on the council is significantly different from at-large membership? Would you support or oppose the reinstatement of strict two-term limits?

I want to be completely transparent: I am DEEPLY skeptical that term limits accomplish much. Most lawmakers start getting competent at their jobs in their second term. New lawmakers need to learn a complex role with a ton of competing stakeholders, extremely onerous bureaucracy, and learn how to work with state and federal lawmakers to bring home—and then successfully implement—dollars for local services.

The number one thing we need to do to hold county lawmakers accountable is get information about what the county is doing to the public. The death of local news has been a travesty for government accountability. Supporting alternative information sources will go a much longer way in holding the county accountable.

The other part is the county behaving with resident engagement in mind. In Bowie, we significantly grew the city's communications office, started regular town halls, improved technology access to council meetings and work sessions, and ensured events were being held when regular people were available to attend. I plan on moving county meetings to evenings after work when people can tune in and participate, and continue my current practice of regular door-to-door outreach whether it's an election year or not. I plan on fighting to limit developer and special interest influence in county politics and fully funding public campaign financing to create a more even playing field.

I'm fine with maintaining term limits, and preventing district council members from moving at large, but I honestly don't think these are the solutions that will make a difference and they could hurt the effectiveness of publicly elected lawmakers in favor of empowering less accountable senior bureaucrats. Reducing the influence of developers and special interests will go much further in achieving better outcomes.

4. What is your position on the Maryland MAGLEV train proposal?

I organized the first public awareness meetings about Maglev in Prince George's County. Many of those meeting attendees went on to become regional leaders against the train. The 2.3 billion dollar per mile price tag was outrageous when the train was first proposed. The current nearly 4.1 billion dollar per mile price tag is even more ridiculous. For that level of investment, we could substantially improve MARC, build on the Purple Line, improve WMATA bus routes, and

transform the walkability and bikeability of our otherwise car-dependent county. Maglev is a waste that will serve a tiny minority of wealthy travelers and require years of subsidies from everyone else for a train that hasn't even become workable in its country of origin.

5. There is a great shortage of affordable housing in Prince George's County. What role can the County government have in creating policies that will provide affordable housing for residents at all income levels? How will you engage on this issue?

The county promotes all the wrong kind of development. We don't need more clear-cut forests for McMansions and pavement-heavy, sprawling subdivisions. We need to promote smart growth, leveraging Metro stations, future Purple Line stops, MARC stations, and existing transit hubs for higher density, mixed-use development with internal walkability and external trail, bike, bus, and rail access. We established a workforce housing requirement in Bowie and need to consistently apply workforce housing minimums countywide. We also need to protect green and open space and make better use of public spaces for community access, public gardens, natural wildlife, and essential pollinators. We need to greatly improve bike and walkability, redesign roads, promote mainstreet growth, encourage ridesharing, and make Metrobus routes much safer and easier to access and use.

6. As part of the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 (HB670-2021), the Maryland General Assembly requires each county to set up a Police Accountability Board (PAB). Prince George's County Council must pass legislation to fulfill this State mandate.

a. Do you support incorporating the functions of the existing Citizen Complaint Oversight Panel in the PAB?

Yes. We need the PAB process to be straightforward and avoid excessive red tape and duplication that will only serve to hamper investigations.

b. How would you ensure that the composition of the PAB reflects the community?

The county can set rules determining the composition of the PAB to ensure fair representation. I am completely open to suggestions on this process. Often, public bodies can have each member appoint one individual following a simple application process.

c. Do you support a PAB with subpoena powers and paid investigators to effectively review complaints of police misconduct filed by members of the public?

The AG's office is best positioned to conduct investigations and should work in tandem with the PAB.

d. Do you support adequate funding to staff the PAB to investigate the number of complaints filed, including budgeting for independent legal counsel?

I support the PAB retaining its own legal council, and they should be able to recommend investigations to be conducted by the AG's office.

7. The County Council approved a councilmanic district map that was very different from the map created by the independent Redistricting Commission appointed by the council. The map was found illegal by two separate levels of our judicial system. Please share your thoughts on the Council's map, public opposition to the map, and the judicial finding.

We need to amend the county charter to require all maps be drawn by independent commissions without the possibility of political influence.

8. The County has a massive backlog in school maintenance, renovation, replacement, and expansion, which former Board Chair and education stalwart, Dr. Alvin Thornton, has attributed in large part to 20 years of historical racial discrimination towards Prince George's students.

- a. The County's solution to part of this problem has been to engage in a Public-Private Partnership for the construction and maintenance of six middle schools - the first county in the entire country to engage in a P3 for school construction. Do you think that using private capital with significantly higher interest rates that places the burden on Prince George's taxpayers is a viable model to address historical racial discrimination or should the State make Prince George's schools whole through State funding.

No. State lawmakers need to make the difficult move to raise the state sales tax and close corporate loopholes to fund accelerated school renovation, construction, and implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

- b. What is the solution to fixing the huge remaining backlog in school maintenance, renovation, replacement, and expansion?

Sorry, I'm gonna repeat: State lawmakers need to make the difficult move to raise the state sales tax and close corporate loopholes to fund accelerated school renovation, construction, and implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

- c. What actions do you think the County should take to ensure that school capacity matches current and future demand?

We need to move to a model where we rely more on state funding for schools rather than local, property-tax funded education which leaves massive disparities in education funding that disproportionately leaves black, brown, and poor students behind.

9. Should the Prince George's School Board be restored to a fully elected body? Why or why not?

Yes, it should be fully elected, but let's be real that the composition of the school board probably isn't gonna change a whole lot. We've had school board drama in Prince George's for years whether it's been elected, appointed, or hybrid. We need to make school boards less political and more professional, and that's an extremely heavy lift whether it's elected or appointed. I don't have a good answer to that one, but do support a fully elected board even if just to get us through the current impasse.

10. Through legislation and through zoning and land use decisions, the Council plays a decisive role in county planning, and that planning drives transportation demand, demand for services and facilities, environmental and public health impacts, greenhouse gas emissions, and many other impacts. The Zoning Ordinance Rewrite eliminates the requirement that developers file Conceptual Site Plans (CSPs) for certain kinds of projects. CSPs provide critical opportunities for public review and comment on land use proposals early in the development process. Will you commit to working to restore the requirement for CSPs as soon as possible?

Yes, but let's be clear about how CSP reviews so often harm people of color and working class residents. The development review process so, so often devolves into wealthier residents demanding projects include less affordable housing, less environmentally sustainable density, and more low-density sprawl. The development review process should be transparent but not just be an opportunity for a small group of wealthy residents to quash affordable, transit-oriented housing, which is so often what ends up happening.

11. The County Council often uses Zoning Text Amendment bills to rewrite the Zoning Ordinance on the fly and to help developers advance certain projects without going through the normal public review process. ZTAs weaken the Zoning Ordinance and undermine the public's right to know and to have a meaningful say on development proposals. Will you commit to working to end or severely curtail the use of ZTAs and to ensuring that:

- a. Any ZTA bill filed includes a list and map of all of the potentially affected properties, as well as analysis of the potential impacts on communities, the environment, agricultural lands, and demand on public services and facilities?

I want to greatly reduce the use of ZTA's generally. When used, I fully support including a list and map affected properties, community and environmental impacts, and demand on public services and facilities. I want to add the caveat that I don't want this process to be abused by a small group of wealthy residents to prevent good, transit-oriented development that merely inconveniences them which is unfortunately so often the case.

- b. For each potentially affected property, the Council notifies all adjoining property owners, local community associations and watershed organizations, and local municipalities, by first-class mail and no less than 60 days prior to any public hearing on the ZTA?

I want to greatly reduce the use of ZTA's generally. I support informing local stakeholders in advance for the sake of transparency and good government, but I don't want these to devolve into the usual NIMBYism that created our housing affordability crisis in the first place.

12. In May of 2021, the County Council unanimously passed CR-027-2021 in support of a single payer Medicare for All system at the federal level, becoming the first county in Maryland to support the federal legislative initiative. The resolution cited the increase in racial health disparities due to the pandemic that only a single-payer system could address. The resolution also pointed out that Medicare for All "would reduce County spending on healthcare and enable local governments across our state to invest additional dollars into education, environmental

protection, housing assistance, and other critical services.” Will you join the County Council in calling on our Congressional delegation to support and enact federal legislation for a single-payer system?

I absolutely support a single payer health system and will join in calling on Congress to support such a system. We have to be honest that it won't totally cure systemic inequities, but it will go a long way in creating peace of mind for all people that they won't have to lose a job or face impossible choices when they get sick.