



2022 County Council Candidate Questionnaire

The Food Council invited all County Council candidates to complete a 9-item questionnaire, which was developed in collaboration with our community partners. Our goal is to provide information on local candidate's food system priorities and commitments. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we do not endorse candidates.

For more information, please contact Heather Bruskin, Executive Director at hbruskin@mocofoodcouncil.org.

Name: **Lorna Phillips Forde**

Campaign Website:

Candidate for: **Montgomery County Council District 2**

I. Please describe your personal and/or professional engagement in any local food systems initiatives, policies, and programs.

A: I currently serve on Manna Food Center's Board of Directors and am the Immediate Past Chair of the Advocacy Task Force which advocates for policy and legislation that improves the quality of and access to food for vulnerable residents. As the Task Force Chair, I worked closely with the CEO and Task Force members to identify and expand community collaborations to increase the impact and influence for those experiencing food insecurity. I also worked collaboratively with community partners and elected officials to accomplish objectives, build and maintain mutually beneficial partnerships, leverage information and achieve results.

I appeared before Maryland General Assembly House and Senate committees to present written and verbal testimony crucial to the mission of Manna Food Center; including advocating for extended SNAP benefits which were crucial for an increase for nonprofit contracts with the Department of Health and Human Services in recognition of the many ways nonprofits support the quality of life beyond safety net services.



I worked with the CEO and Advocacy Task Force members to identify & expand community building collaborations in an effort to increase food insecurity impact and influence.

2. Please describe any plans you have for creating economic opportunities for individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx/Latino, and/or a person of color, particularly in food and agriculture?

A: I will focus on programs that address access, funding, equity & affordability to expand local producers to include women and BIPOC residents. I will look at the effectiveness of programs across the country to:

- a. Match farmers seeking land with owners looking to sell or lease. Montgomery County's nonprofit land preservation groups that acquire farmland could do something similar with their underutilized acres.
- b. Look for federal funding to teach young adults from socially disadvantaged communities the skills needed to pursue careers in farming.
- c. Increase the number of urban farms in Montgomery County that can produce fresh, healthy foods for the community and encourage more BIPOC residents to enter farming.
- d. Explore funding to support a high school to college pathway for agricultural science to start developing the pipeline of farmers early.

3. Please describe your position on addressing income insufficiency, which is a major contributor to food insecurity in our County. Please describe any positions or initiatives in your platform that focus on food security.

A: Unemployment/under-employment is one of the 4 major causes of food insecurity. My platform incorporates two (2) specific areas that address this.

- a. My Economic Viability platform specifically focuses on small business development & empowerment. Having a Montgomery County small-woman & black-owned business, it is important to me that we provide the resources and infrastructure for small businesses to contribute to job growth and the tax base and ultimately become a long-term community partner. We can accomplish this by:
 - i. Reenergizing the County's Small Business Incubator so that it offers *life-cycle* resources for small businesses. Recent new hires may bring some actionable best practices to the table, but the effort needs to be intentional and sustained.
 - ii. I will also advocate for Montgomery County to participate in programs like the new Maryland Makerspace Initiative Program which can help to close some of the educational gaps that have developed over the years and equip people with the skills to qualify for technical jobs or launch their own businesses.
- b. My Quality Education platform addresses my support for full Blueprint funding; particularly those incentives that may phase out over time. In order to attract and maintain quality talent (who can afford to live in Montgomery County), the incentives need to be a permanent element of the plan.



4. What role should the County government have in improving resident access to federal benefit programs, such as SNAP and WIC.

A: The County should play an integral role in ensuring that residents overcome issues like stigma, lack of computer access, lack of awareness and difficulty completing applications which keeps residents from pursuing SNAP & WIC benefits. There should be intentional & regular educational awareness and outreach programs...not just during crisis periods.

5. It is likely that the impacts of climate change, national and global politics, and future disasters will further disrupt food production, supply chains, and food security networks. Please describe any policies and programs that you will propose or support to address local food system resilience?

A: I will support programs or policies that address:

- a. Investment in farmworkers to address affordable housing and indoor air quality
- b. Sustainable agricultural initiatives to reduce the impacts of climate change
- c. Compost infrastructure to build healthy soil
- d. Groundwater sustainability

6. Please describe any initiatives or policies you would propose to increase local food production and access to affordable agricultural land.

A: I propose that we expand access to the Agricultural Reserve for local and BIPOC producers. Match farmers with those who are interested in selling their farmland and establish land grants. Offer incentives should be offered to farmers who produce more table crops vs. farm animal feed. Create programs & incentives that will get locally grown, nutritious food into more county institutions; especially the health care facilities.

7. Please describe any initiatives or policies you will propose to reduce food waste and advance zero-waste strategies.

A: I wholeheartedly support the concept of composting for residents & businesses, but mandatory requirements must be considered through an equity lens. Offer small businesses incentives or tax breaks to embrace the process of green business operations. Create resources that will provide small businesses with an actionable and profitable sustainability plan, education modules for their teams and internal/external strategies to achieve buy-in.

8. Where do you see opportunities for the County government to support food education? How can the County support residents in making healthy and sustainable food choices easier?

A: The County should continue to be a supporter of the Montgomery County food alliances by allocating funding for infrastructure to improve food access through schools, food banks, food hubs, urban farms, farmer's markets and other community-based investments that provide access to healthy & sustainably produced food.



Expand community-based outreach to ensure that those in need are aware of the services available. Work with the County Health Department to provide educational opportunities on sustainable agriculture techniques, possibly provide free vouchers for healthy food to underserved residents. Knowledge and access are key factors in getting many in the community to transition to healthy foods.

9. What do you see as the biggest food system challenges in the County and what do you believe is the role of the County Council in addressing them? How should community stakeholders be engaged in that work?

A: As a result of the lingering effects of post-pandemic job loss, more families have found themselves suffering from food insecurity. This is a trend that will remain; especially with rising food prices, continued supply chain issues and the overall lack of affordability in the county; especially housing. It is incumbent upon the Council to ensure that the network of food banks and food councils as well as other non-profits who offer safety-net services are adequately funded.

Community stakeholders do an admirable job responding to the needs and minimizing redundant efforts through regular communication. They will need to continue to work collaboratively to ensure that no one goes hungry. More stakeholders should assess the intersectional ties that exist with food insecurity to bring other critical stakeholders into the fold.

