



LATINO DEMOCRATIC CLUB
OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Latino Democratic Club 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

Campaign Profile:

Please attach a brief personal bio with your submission*

Bio:

Lesley Lopez is a two-term Delegate in the Maryland General Assembly, where she has been the President of the Women's Legislative Caucus and Deputy Majority Whip. She was born in Paget, Bermuda, as the daughter of an active-duty single mother in the U.S Navy. After graduating from the University of California, San Diego in 2005, Lopez began a career in journalism by working for the show America's Most Wanted in Bethesda, Maryland. Lopez went on to work as a legislative staffer on Capitol Hill for Rep. Henry Cuellar (TX28) and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Since 2012, she has been an Adjunct Faculty member at George Washington University, where she obtained her MPS in Management. She lives in Clarksburg with her husband and two young boys.

Candidate Name: [Lesley Lopez](#)

Office You Are Seeking: Congress, MD-06

Candidate Contact Email: lesley@lopezformaryland.com

Candidate Contact Number: 909-709-7864

Campaign Website and Social Media Handles (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram):

<https://www.lopezformaryland.com>

Twitter: @LesleyJLopez

Instagram: @DelLesleyJLopez

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LopezforMaryland>

Amount Raised (include as of date): \$180,000

Cash on Hand:

Other Endorsements: I have been endorsed by over 40 elected officials across the state, as well as SEIU Local 500 and the Teamsters.

Questionnaire:

Below is a candidate questionnaire produced by the Latino Democratic Club (LDC) of Montgomery County. The LDC will distribute the questionnaire to candidates for office in the 2024 Democratic primary in Montgomery County for the 2024 early vote. Please submit your responses by April 5th, 2024, to ldcendorsements@gmail.com. **Please limit your response to each question to 200 words or less. Your response will be shared on our website unless you explicitly opt-out;** therefore, we encourage you to submit your responses in English and Spanish to make them accessible to all members of our community.

1. Latinx Engagement

- a. Please provide details of your prior involvement or work with the Latinx/Hispanic community in Maryland.**

In my two terms as a legislator for District 39 in the upcounty, I represent some of the most diverse communities in the country. Between lawmaking and extensive constituent services, I am the only person in this race with a decades-long commitment to serving and protecting our Latinx/Hispanic community. Before being elected I worked on comprehensive immigration while working for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the National Immigration Forum. In my six years as a legislator, I have a proven track record of supporting initiatives such as ending state involvement in private ICE detention centers, creating a Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Driver's License Privacy, extending tax credits to ITIN holders, and continuing to fight to allow undocumented folks access to our health insurance exchange. Last year, I worked with Maryland and national leaders for immigrant rights to allow people without permanent status to apply for healthcare occupational licenses.

2. Housing

- a. According to a study done by Montgomery County planning, those who identify as Hispanic/Latinx are more likely to pay more than 30% of their income on housing than residents of the County overall. This is most pronounced for Hispanic and Latinx renters, among whom 62% are burdened by housing costs. What would be your solution for affordable and quality housing?**

The affordable housing crisis is impacting families across the country. We need to increase our investment in increasing the inventory of affordable housing, and I will fight for additional funding for this in Congress. I was proud to support Governor Moore's housing legislation in Annapolis this session.

We also need to keep in mind housing is a part of a large conversation about poverty in America, and that means addressing wage stagnation, wage inequity, inflation, and lack of affordable childcare.

3. Mental Health and health

- a. **How would you approach the need to both increase access to mental health services among Latino residents and address the shortage of linguistically and culturally competent mental health care professionals? Especially among Latino youth?**

I've been working on this issue as a state lawmaker and last year passed a bill with the help of national groups such as Dream.US to increase the number of culturally competent mental health care providers.

4. Fentanyl

- a. **The fentanyl crisis has been devastating our community. In Montgomery County, we have seen it disproportionately affect our Latinx/Hispanic youth. How do you recommend that we address this issue?**

In Annapolis, I have been leading on this issue as the opioid crisis has been devastating to our community. This session I introduced two bills to increase harm reduction strategies and also target the white collar criminals association with fentanyl distribution. In Congress, I would continue to advocate for harm reduction policies, like fentanyl test strips, as well as making it easier to enforce laws against those who traffic fentanyl.

5. Education

- a. **Hispanic/Latinx students are the fastest-growing ethnic group in MCPS, with 34% of the student population. The graduation gap of Latinx students has been exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic. How would you address the truancy rate in the Latino community and close achievement gaps?**

This is a complex issue, where students, parents and educators need to be supported. I believe that addressing it requires ensuring that our schools have the required funding and resources to meet student needs. I was proud to support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and in Congress, I will continue to support funding for our schools.

6. Crime

- a. **Studies show that crime is one of the most pressing issues for Latinx /Hispanic voters. How will you work to both improve public safety, as crime is rising in our communities, and make the criminal justice system in Montgomery County more equitable?**

Congress should adopt a balanced approach to tackle rising crime rates. This involves increased funding for certain law enforcement initiatives for community safety while simultaneously investing in social programs that tackle underlying issues such as poverty, education, and mental health. Implementing restorative justice practices and decriminalizing non-violent offenses can promote rehabilitation over incarceration. In Annapolis, I supported bills to address the rise in crime in our state, including HB814, which addressed the rise in juvenile crime. This legislation includes provisions to

establish programs that serve to support youth and keep them from becoming the perpetrators or victims of crimes.

7. Business and economic prosperity

- a. Small businesses are the engine of economic growth and are critical to the financial health of the Latinx/Hispanic community. What would you do to strengthen and create Latino-owned small businesses?**

Supporting our small businesses community is important for the wellbeing of our community and economic mobility. In Annapolis, I have supported policies that help small business owners, including for funding for businesses during the pandemic and support for working parents, like childcare grants so parents have the freedom to start businesses. In Congress, I will continue to advocate for these priorities.

8. Immigration

- a. What programs or legislation do you think would best support our immigration residents who do not have access to federal funding in Montgomery County?**

In Maryland, we have already taken steps to support our immigrant residents even when Congress hasn't acted. I've sponsored legislation allowing individuals without social security numbers to apply for healthcare licensing, for example, and I was proud to support Access to Care legislation to include all members of our immigrant community to access the Maryland health insurance exchange.

9. Asylum

- a. Do you support a comprehensive immigration reform that better supports and protects those who have been displaced by war and seek asylum? If elected, what would your priorities be to change our current system?**

I do. Congress has failed to act on immigration reform and asylum seekers are suffering. We have a moral responsibility to help those who have been displaced by war and violence, and I will support reforming the system to make it faster and more humane.