

Section 1: Candidate Information

• Full Name (Required)	Imara Crooms
• District running for (Required)	Councilmanic District 9

Section 2: Questionnaire

How will you ensure that Prince George’s County government leads by example in hiring, retaining, and promoting employees with disabilities, and what accountability measures will you implement?	I’ve spent over a decade working in democracy, governance, and accountable administration around the world, and one lesson from that work is that public office is a trust with the people. I firmly believe that our county government should be the premier regional model for equity and inclusion. If we want Prince George’s County to lead by example in hiring, retaining, and promoting individuals with disabilities, we must dismantle the barriers embedded in our current bureaucratic systems and move toward true structural accountability. Ensuring equal opportunity begins with reforming how our county recruits and evaluates talent. My campaign is explicitly committed to establishing strict, merit-based hiring practices across all county agencies to end the culture of insular favoritism and political insider connections that has historically locked out marginalized applicants, including those within the disability community. We need an open, modernized, and universally accessible recruitment pipeline. This means performing an aggressive accessibility audit of our county application portals to ensure total compatibility with assistive technologies, alongside restructuring interview protocols to eliminate implicit bias against neurodivergent or physically disabled candidates. Retention and promotion, however, require more than just an accessible front door. To truly support workers with disabilities throughout their careers, county government must foster a culture of workplace dignity. I will champion the implementation of a centralized accommodation fund within the county budget. By centralizing these resources, we ensure that individual agency budgets are never used as a baseline excuse for delayed or denied accommodations, adaptive software, or physical workplace modifications. Furthermore, I stand in deep solidarity with our public sector labor unions (including an endorsement from AFSCME) who represent the backbone of our county workforce. I will partner directly with labor leadership to guarantee that promotional pathways are structurally transparent, fair, and actively protected from systemic discrimination. For accountability, we cannot rely on symbolic resolutions or internal reviews; daylight is the ultimate disinfectant. One of my campaign promises is to provide a public dashboard within the first 90 days of my term, to track government performance across our district. I will mandate that these dashboards explicitly track anonymized, aggregated data on disability representation across all pay bands, retention timelines, and accommodation request fulfillment rates. By tying agency operations directly to a transparent, community-facing data system, we ensure that county leadership remains answerable to the residents we serve. True public service must belong to all of the public, and by combining merit-based equity with public transparency, we can build a county workforce that truly reflects the diversity and brilliance of our entire community.
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What comprehensive employment initiatives will you champion to create meaningful career opportunities for county residents with disabilities?

Our current economic model too often treats workforce development as a series of corporate giveaways rather than an investment in human dignity. I believe that to create meaningful career opportunities for Prince George's County residents with disabilities, we must shift from passive compliance to proactive, structural incentives. My economic vision for South County and the broader jurisdiction focuses on attracting businesses that align with community priorities, pay living wages, and uplift every single member of our working class. We can achieve this by embedding disability-inclusive hiring frameworks directly into our county's economic development mechanisms rather than relying on the goodwill of speculative developers.

First, we must leverage the power of county-funded development projects, Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) and Labor Peace Agreements (LPAs). I am a staunch advocate for tying public investment to strong labor standards, worker voice, and community benefit agreements. When the council reviews major land use decisions, commercial projects, or tax incentives, we must insist that the associated community benefit agreements include enforceable frameworks for hiring residents with disabilities. This ensures that as the county grows, our disabled neighbors are not treated as an afterthought or left waiting for "hand outs", but are structurally centered in our expanding economy. By utilizing our regulatory oversight, we can encourage companies doing business with the county to actively coordinate with supported employment programs and provide accessible, family-sustaining jobs.

Second, we need to integrate disability-inclusive pathways into our vocational pipeline. My platform actively supports expanding career and technical apprenticeship mandates to provide robust mentorship and internship opportunities for young folks. I will advocate to explicitly expand these workforce training initiatives to include specialized, adaptive programs for neurodivergent individuals and residents with physical disabilities. By fostering direct partnerships between Prince George's County Public Schools, community colleges, and our local public and private sector labor unions, we can build accessible pipelines into public service, skilled trades, and emerging clean energy sectors, ensuring that transitional youth have the real, unyielding support necessary to build stable careers.

Finally, we must support our local, entrepreneur-friendly small and mid-sized businesses that commit to inclusive hiring practices. Through increased transparency and equity in county procurement, we can implement preference points for local businesses and worker cooperatives that are disability-owned or maintain exemplary records of integrated employment. This specific approach circulates wealth directly within our neighborhoods and leverages existing county streams without overpromising massive, unsustainable new expenditures in a tight fiscal environment. Meaningful employment is a cornerstone of economic security and community self-determination, and by aggressively deploying our legislative tools (procurement, development oversight, and labor partnerships) we can build a genuinely inclusive economy for all Prince Georgians.

What comprehensive, county-wide accessible transportation solutions will you develop beyond existing paratransit services?

In Prince George's County, and specifically across the sprawling geography of District 9, transportation access is not just a logistical hurdle but a central issue of civil rights and disability justice. Our transit investments have consistently treated rural and historically underserved areas as an afterthought, forcing residents with disabilities to rely almost entirely on siloed, over-burdened paratransit systems that require restrictive advanced booking and often fail to provide spontaneous, dignified mobility. To build a comprehensive, county-wide accessible transportation network, we must look beyond paratransit and commit to structurally transforming our fixed-route transit and pedestrian infrastructure so that the entire system utilizes universal design principles. This is a central promise of my campaign, even if it is a commitment that will likely take longer to realize than my term in office.

First, we must aggressively address the structural neglect of our current public transit footprint by investing heavily in transit equity. Meaningful accessibility means ensuring that a resident can safely reach, wait for, and board any standard county bus or regional train. Currently, our standard especially across district 9 is for our neighbors to wait at stops completely devoid of physical shelters, sidewalk connections, or basic lighting. I will champion targeted capital allocations to systematically retrofit our existing bus stops with accessible boarding pads, universal shelters, and bright, high-visibility lighting. Furthermore, we must work aggressively with our state partners to fix the deadly pedestrian hazards along corridors like Crain Highway, which remains one of the most dangerous roads in the state for pedestrians and cyclists. By applying a strict public health and accessibility lens to infrastructure design, we can press for the transformation of these hostile speedways into accessible complete streets featuring audible pedestrian signals, visible crosswalks, and continuous sidewalk networks.

Second, because District 9 is large, diverse, and geographically spread out, traditional fixed-route bus lines cannot always scale efficiently to meet every neighborhood's needs. To bridge this critical first-mile and last-mile gap without overpromising massive, immediate standard bus expansions that our current budget cannot realistically sustain, we should pioneer county-backed, accessible micro-transit programs. By deploying smaller, on-demand, fully accessible local shuttles that operate via simple smartphone applications or telephone dispatch, we can provide flexible, localized transit options that connect rural and suburban disabled residents directly to main transit hubs, medical facilities, and local commerce.

Accountability in transportation requires ensuring public funds directly serve the public rather than being traded away in backroom developer deals. As a publicly financed candidate, my focus is strictly on centering the real, daily material needs of working families and neighbors with disabilities. We cannot approve massive growth across the county while leaving our existing residents isolated by broken transit options. By treating safe, accessible, and reliable transit as a non-negotiable right, we can ensure Prince George's County finally delivers infrastructure that leaves no resident behind.

How will you ensure that all new transit infrastructure exceeds ADA minimum standards and truly provides accessible, reliable public transportation?

So the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was a monumental victory for civil rights, but at this point most recognize that ADA compliance represents a legal floor, rather than an ambitious effort at accessibility. In Prince George's County, and specifically within the geographically spread-out footprint of District 9, merely meeting the bare minimum of federal standards continues to leave residents with disabilities isolated and underserved. Equity suggests the need to designing transit infrastructure that assumes a diverse public from the outset, rather than treating accessibility as an expensive retroactive accommodation. As your councilmember, I will ensure our new transit infrastructure truly serves everyone by aggressively deploying our legislative oversight over county budgets, development approvals, and regional transit planning partnerships.

Our primary lever for enforcing enhanced accessibility standards rests on reforming the county's capital improvement pipeline and development review processes. For decades, the county has approved projects and handed out special dispensations and infrastructure waivers to corporate developers without locking down long-term community benefits. From day one I've committed to ending these backroom deals and shifting to bold, people-first planning. Any new transit-adjacent commercial or residential development in our district must be bound by enforceable community benefit agreements that mandate infrastructure exceeding ADA minimums, to include such obvious requirements as universally accessible boarding platforms, proper shelters, and continuous sidewalk connections. Our county sorely lacks and must establish a strict, people-first infrastructure standard: if infrastructure is not ready or fails to guarantee seamless accessibility, the project should not move forward.

Furthermore, we must restructure how the county plans its local bus routes and pedestrian networks to prioritize actual usability. It should be obvious, but a bus line is only accessible if a resident can safely get to the stop. I will fight for real investment in transit equity, ensuring that new crosswalks, improved access to local routes, and audible signals are standard requirements along hazardous corridors like Crain Highway, which remains one of the most dangerous roads in the state for pedestrians. To guarantee that these systems work seamlessly in practice, my office will look to collaborate with our public sector labor unions and community organizations to ensure that those who use and operate the transit system daily have a direct voice in economic and infrastructure planning. By centering human dignity and community self-determination over corporate corner-cutting, we can build a transit network that provides genuine, reliable freedom of movement for every resident.

What specific actions will you take to increase the supply of affordable, accessible, and integrated housing options throughout Prince George's County?

To increase the supply of affordable, accessible, and integrated housing options across Prince George's County, we must alter how local government interacts with development. Traditionally in this county, our housing policy has been dictated by speculative profit and developer-driven priorities, rather than the stable, dignified material needs of our neighbors. As a candidate running entirely through Maryland's Fair Election Fund, I am proud to refuse any campaign contributions from corporate developers and lobbyists, giving me the complete political independence necessary to prioritize people-first planning over corporate margin cutting.

One of my core priorities as an elected official is to end the era of backroom deals and special dispensations where the county council hands out waivers to developers without extracting binding, long-term public benefits. We need to establish community-first development standards where any major residential approval is tied to a robust Community Benefit Agreement. I will champion policy frameworks that mandate new residential projects not only meet, but exceed minimum accessibility requirements by integrating true universal design principles into a significant percentage of new units. This means moving beyond token compliance to ensure integrated housing, places where individuals with physical or neurodivergent disabilities live seamlessly alongside non-disabled neighbors in developments that are fully transit-accessible, rich in public infrastructure, and rooted in community safety.

Ultimately, affordability cannot be separated from public investment and preservation. I support the principle of housing as a human right, which is why we must protect existing affordable stock from speculative exploitation and prevent displacement. I will advocate for strengthening our county's Right of First Refusal (ROFR) program, transforming it into an acquisition pipeline that allows the county or mission-aligned housing trusts to purchase multifamily properties and transition them into publicly governed, deeply affordable, and universally accessible social housing. This approach directly counters the trend of flipping housing for speculative gain and instead locks in permanent, stable options for working-class families and disabled residents.

Finally, we have to recognize affordability is a vastly bigger issue than rent or mortgages alone. Housing integration requires that we plan utilities, reliable services, sidewalks, and safe, equity-focused transit routes alongside the housing footprint itself. If a home is technically affordable but lacks reliable broadband, accessible bus shelters, or basic service delivery, it remains structurally inaccessible. By demanding infrastructure readiness before growth moves forward, we will build a Prince George's County that is accessible, equitable, and dignified for every resident.

What policy changes will you advocate to improve healthcare access including provider training and accessible medical facilities?

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right, period. Healthcare must not be a privilege reserved for those who can afford to navigate a broken, profit-driven system. In Prince George's County, and particularly in South County, achieving equity here requires a shift toward public accountability, preventative care, and universal design. While the statutory capacity of a County Council to mandate macro-level healthcare overhauls is constrained by state and federal regulatory frameworks, we possess significant local authority over county public health funding, capital improvement allocations, and partnerships with regional hospital networks. I will use these tools to build a local healthcare infrastructure that is physically, geographically, and structurally accessible to every resident, specifically centering the needs of our disability community.

To improve facility accessibility, we must ensure our public health infrastructure is designed for everyone from the outset. I will advocate for and would love to collaborate with you on accessibility audits of county-operated clinics and seek to leverage county capital project approvals and zoning agreements to push private medical providers toward facility designs that exceed baseline ADA requirements. This means encouraging the integration of sensory-friendly waiting spaces, universally accessible diagnostic equipment, and clear, multi-modal communication infrastructure for deaf and hard-of-hearing patients. Furthermore, because physical facility access is meaningless without geographic access, our transit infrastructure planning must directly link our neighborhoods to major medical facilities so that a lack of reliable transportation never stands between a disabled resident and their care.

Further, healthcare access cannot be separated from economic security. Medical debt and high out-of-pocket costs routinely trap working-class families, seniors, and individuals on fixed incomes in cycles of poverty. I am committed to leveraging county partnerships with major regional networks like MedStar and local nonprofits to expand medical debt relief initiatives and ensure our county health clinics are fully funded and culturally competent. By shifting resources toward community-rooted, preventative health infrastructure and demanding strict accessibility baselines from providers doing business in our county, we can build a healthcare system that treats every resident with the dignity they deserve.

How will you expand integrated, trauma-informed mental health services specifically designed for children and adults with disabilities?

Our historic approach to public safety and healthcare regularly relies on reactive, carceral systems rather than proactive, community-based care. For children and adults with disabilities, this systemic failure is acute and constant. We know at this point that safety and health grow from streetlights that work, stable housing, and accessible mental health care when we need it, all the fundamentals of a functioning society rather than punishment or isolation. Prince George's County must lead the region in integrating trauma-informed services into our schools, public health clinics, and crisis response networks.

To support young people, we should focus on care and prevention within our educational system. I have and will continue to advocate for using funds from the Blueprint for Maryland's Future to expand our network of community schools, ensuring they serve as holistic hubs that embed trauma-informed mental health professionals directly into the learning environment. Crucially, we must continue scaling up restorative justice programs across Prince George's County Public Schools to replace punitive discipline with supportive care. For students with developmental, intellectual, or physical disabilities, a trauma-informed environment prevents the systemic harm of over-disciplining and provides the early, integrated interventions they deserve.

For adults and families, we must structurally decouple mental health crises from law enforcement. When a neurodivergent neighbor or an individual with an intellectual disability experiences a crisis, the arrival of armed officers can (as we've seen all too often) escalate trauma and lead to devastating, avoidable and sometimes fatal tragedies. I am fully committed to expanding our county's community responder models, ensuring that behavioral health professionals are the primary units dispatched to mental health calls.

Finally, we should increase the capacity of our local care infrastructure by expanding access to county health clinics and strengthening funding partnerships with community-rooted nonprofits and labor-friendly healthcare networks. We will prioritize funding for providers who implement specialized training in intersectional trauma, ensuring that practitioners understand how disability intersects with race, poverty, and institutional neglect. Accountability starts with independence, and because my campaign is publicly financed through the Fair Election Fund, I answer only to the community. I will fight to ensure our county budget actively divests from harmful corporate-led extraction and instead prioritizes community-driven investments that guarantee dignity, healing, and comprehensive care for every resident.

How will you ensure that first responders receive regular training on interacting with and supporting people with diverse disabilities?

When a medical emergency or a high-stress crisis occurs in our community, the first people to arrive should be equipped to understand and respect the full human dignity of everyone involved. To date, our regional system has treated first responders as a catch-all solution for complex crises without giving them the ongoing, specialized tools required to safely support neighbors with intellectual, physical, or developmental disabilities. I firmly believe that public safety must be rooted in care, connection, and equitable investment rather than institutional inertia. To ensure our emergency services protect every resident, we must transform the substance of first responder training as well as the structural logic of our emergency dispatch system.

I will advocate that all county emergency personnel including 911 dispatchers, Fire, and EMS teams receive regular, continuous professional development in disability literacy, neurodivergence, and universal de-escalation. This cannot be a symbolic, one-time checklist exercise. Training must be developed in direct coordination with local disability advocates, self-advocates, and healthcare service providers to ensure it reflects real-world, lived experiences. Dispatchers must be equipped to recognize when an emergency call involves a disabled individual so they can relay context to those on the ground, and field responders must be equipped to handle sensory processing challenges, non-verbal communication, and physical mobility needs without misinterpreting a neurological condition or a medical crisis as non-compliance.

We also have to be honest about the limitations of training alone; we cannot expect a single class to solve a deep structural problem. The need for systemic change means recognizing that sending armed law enforcement into a crisis involving a neurodivergent resident or an individual experiencing a behavioral episode can escalate trauma and lead to avoidable, devastating harm. My platform actively prioritizes robust funding for community responders and mental health support to manage these exact situations. I will work collaboratively to redirect resource allocations toward expanding our county's mobile crisis teams, ensuring that specialized behavioral health professionals are the primary units dispatched to handle non-violent, disability-related emergencies.

By combining continuous, community-led disability literacy training for our existing emergency personnel with a targeted expansion of specialized community responder units, we can take an unfair burden off our traditional first responders while guaranteeing our disabled neighbors receive the specialized, dignified care they deserve. Public service is a trust, and by bringing structural accountability to our county budget and meeting people exactly where they are, we can build a safe and thriving community that leaves no neighbor isolated.

How will you ensure adequate funding and accessibility of programs that help older adults maintain independence when they acquire disabilities?

Ensuring that older adults can maintain their independence and age in place with dignity when they acquire disabilities is a core moral obligation of any local government. In District 9, this issue is deeply personal to our communities; our district has a significant demographic of seniors and retirees who have spent decades investing in the fabric of our community and often our nation. When public services fail or infrastructure is delayed, we send a message that our seniors are treated as an afterthought. To guarantee adequate funding and absolute accessibility for these vital independence programs, we must transition away from top-down bureaucratic inertia toward community-controlled, transparent governance.

To start with we can secure and expand the funding baselines for senior independence programs through structural accountability and fiscal discipline. Rather than making unbacked promises of immediate, massive budget increases, my platform focuses on maximizing existing resources and introducing democratic oversight. I will advocate for a participatory budgeting pilot locally to ensure that our neighbors have direct, binding power over how local care and infrastructure dollars are distributed. Furthermore, we must actively defend and enhance our existing senior protections, including expanding local tax relief for residents over the age of 65, to prevent our elders from being economically displaced from their homes as their physical needs evolve.

Notably funding alone is meaningless if geography creates an invisible barrier to access. Because District 9 is vast, rural, and suffers constantly under suburban sprawl, centralized services inherently exclude the seniors who need them most. Accessibility means meeting people exactly where they are. I will work to integrate our senior independence programming with a robust digital and physical infrastructure. This includes pushing for county-wide utility and broadband equity to ensure that every older adult has the dependable high-speed data connection required to access telehealth and virtual independence resources seamlessly. Physically, we must pair this with our specialized, accessible micro-transit options to ensure that a lack of transportation never isolates an older adult from their local senior hubs, medical facilities, or community networks. Accountability means showing up and listening. By bringing clean government and universal design to our public services, we can ensure Prince George's County finally works for all of us.

What will be your top three legislative priorities to advance disability rights and full inclusion in our county? (Please list and briefly describe your top three priorities.)	To build a Prince George’s County where disability rights are treated as a core civil rights issue, we must integrate accessibility directly into the structural logic of our government. Running a fully publicly financed campaign through the Fair Election Fund gives me the unique independence from corporate PACs, developers, and lobbyists required to prioritize the daily material needs of our neighbors over speculative profits. My legislative agenda maps disability inclusion directly onto my core platform, utilizing our councilmanic authority over budgeting, zoning, and procurement to deliver structural equity. Establish an Accountable Government via Centralized Equity and Public Dashboards: We must reform internal county operations so that local government leads the regional workforce by example. I will legislate strict, merit-based hiring protocols to dismantle old cultures of insular favoritism, opening clear pathways for disabled applicants. Having a county government regularly scandalized by issues of cronyism and political capture in a location directly adjacent to one of the most merit-driven institutions in our nation is flatly unacceptable. Retaining this talent requires real support, which is why I will champion a centralized accommodation fund within the county budget. This ensures individual agency overhead is never used as an excuse to delay or deny adaptive technologies or physical workplace modifications. To guarantee total accountability, we will mandate public performance dashboards that explicitly track anonymized data on disability representation across all county pay bands and accommodation fulfillment timelines. Mandate Community-Controlled Development via Universal Housing Design: Our housing inventory must expand structurally to support independent living. The era of handing out sweetheart deals and infrastructure waivers to corporate developers must end; if development does not center the long-term benefit of our neighborhoods, it should not move forward. I will introduce legislation requiring binding Community Benefit Agreements on all major residential projects to mandate that a significant percentage of units incorporate universal design principles. Furthermore, we will strengthen the county’s Right of First Refusal program, transforming it into a preservation pipeline that enables public or mission-aligned housing trusts to acquire multifamily properties and stabilize them as permanently affordable, structurally integrated social housing. Secure Infrastructure Investment via Fixed-Route Transit Equity and Complete Streets: Real mobility means moving beyond the limits of siloed paratransit systems and ensuring our fixed-route networks are inherently accessible. I will direct capital allocations to retrofitting local bus stops with accessible boarding pads, universal shelters, and continuous sidewalk connections. We will work with state partners to transform dangerous corridors like Crain Highway into complete streets featuring audible pedestrian signals and high-visibility pathways. To ensure no corner of District 9 is isolated, we will complement this by piloting county-backed, accessible micro-transit solutions, using flexible, on-demand accessible shuttles to bridge first- and last-mile gaps across our geographically spread-out rural and suburban neighborhoods.
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Consent & Submission

Consent checkbox (required)

I consent to my responses being shared publicly in full.

