

# Montgomery County 2026 Candidate Questionnaire



## Personal Information:

**Name** Amar Mukunda

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2026 Election?** Maryland State Senate District 39

## Where Can Voters Learn More About Your Positions Or Contact Your Campaign?

<https://mukundaformaryland.com/>



**Please Answer the Following Questions- responses will posted in their entirety and will not be edited. There are no word limits but please try to be concise.**

(pictured above: One Acre Farm)

## Please share 3 sentences that help us to know you better:

I am the son of immigrants and was born and raised in Montgomery County, and for four years, I helped lead the largest gun violence and addiction prevention program in Maryland. I have a background in Energy & Infrastructure Engineering; I have started, run, and sold a business; and I am currently a Combat Engineer for the U.S. Army Reserve. My family and I have experienced losing our home, losing loved ones to tragedy, and struggling to contend with the ever increasing cost of living - I am running to ensure future generations in my district do not have to bear these same burdens.

**When we recently surveyed residents throughout the County, they shared that their top priority was a lack of government transparency - How can Montgomery County ensure transparency in their legislative and land use decision making? How would you grade current public engagement? Do you support re-establishing the Office of the People's Counsel?**

I believe the municipal, county, and state governments should hold more town halls and public conversations, and they should use all tools available to them (e.g., social media, mail, and frequent newsletters) to keep residents informed of these critical decisions. Some of our county and state legislators already do a great job with keeping the public informed, but there is still much room for

improvement. This would help encourage public engagement and increase resident input when it comes to legislation that has such a large impact on our environment and standard of living.

I support re-establishing the Office of the People's Counsel to enhance transparency, restore forums for residents to access information and voice concerns, and give everyday people the right to be part of decision-making that directly affects them and their quality of life. While this is largely a county initiative, I would work with the Maryland Office of People's Counsel to ensure the Montgomery County OPC is well-funded, adequately staffed, and prepared to provide exceptional service and support.

**Do you believe that the way that local government branches (executive, legislative and planning), and state entities currently interact can be improved? If so, what steps would you take to bring better collaboration?**

Yes. Too often, information sharing between state and local governments begins and ends with limited, measured communications coming down from the top. We need identifiable, reliable, and bidirectional channels of communication between all local and state branches of government. I would advocate for the appointment of designated liaisons to do this work in nonpartisan and efficient ways that benefit legislative and other government entities at all levels with real-time information sharing.



**Source water protection is a priority for County residents. Rural residents are served by wells drawn from a federally designated Sole Source Aquifer. What specific actions will you take to protect groundwater quality and ensure a sustainable supply of drinking water for residents, farms and businesses? And what do you propose with regard to protecting the Potomac River, a drinking water supply for more than 5 Million people in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Given increasing drought conditions, growing data center water consumption, and projections that the Potomac River may not meet future demand, how will you plan for a water-constrained future? What policies or investments would you prioritize during your term?**

Like other states, Maryland must prioritize water conservation, water use efficiency, groundwater treatment, wastewater recycling, and stormwater capture.

We as a state should commission a cost-benefit analysis to study the advantages and drawbacks of using desalination to increase our water supply. There are more water-constrained parts of the United States, as well as several countries around the world, that already use desalination to augment the supply of drinking water from other sources. However, a primary focus in a desalination impact study for our state should be how we can mitigate other environmental impacts, such as byproduct disposal, marine disruption, and energy consumption, along with operation costs. The General Assembly should mandate that construction of desalination plants include renewable sources of energy generation to significantly reduce fossil-fuel dependent strains on the energy grid.

I will also propose an interstate compact with D.C., Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia to cooperatively improve our stewardship of shared water supplies. We have had far too many instances of pollution to the Potomac River, and it will take collaboration to innovate improvements to water our treatment, to institute rapid responses to contamination disasters, and to impose penalties on the worst culprits of pollution.

**What role can the Ag Reserve play in helping our County address Climate Change? Do you have plans to bolster the county's funds to address climate change, i.e. expanded grant making, review of energy tax structure for high energy consumers such as data centers?**

The Ag Reserve already plays an important role in addressing climate change through innovations like conservation tillage, cover cropping, and precision agriculture. The Ag Reserve also offers opportunities to expand the County's Best Management Practices and the state's Watershed Improvement Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate adaptive climate responses. I support an all-of-the-above approach to improve our climate change mitigation efforts. We need more state funding to support Montgomery County's climate actions, which can be obtained through more grant opportunities, progressive taxation on high-consumption corporations, and requirements for data centers to renewably generate much of their own energy on site.

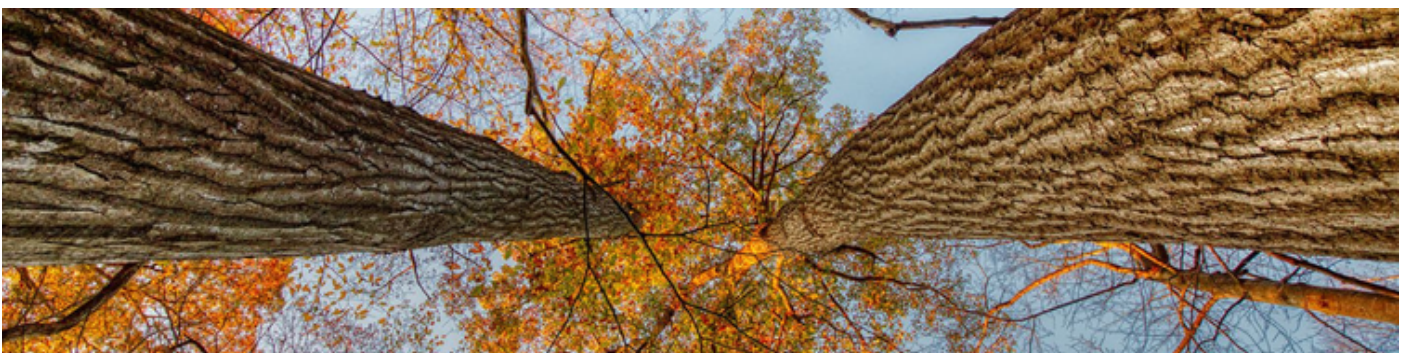


**Do you support the long planned closure of the trash incinerator in Dickerson? Please provide some details as to why or why not. (pictured above: Shepherd's hey Farm)**

I do support the closure of the Dickerson trash incinerator. However, we also need to determine the best, most cost efficient alternatives for solid waste disposal that minimizes contributions to landfill and avoids transporting local waste to other facilities just to produce the same harmful results elsewhere. We know that trash incineration is harmful to the environment, including air, land, and water. It is even more harmful to the health and wellbeing of nearby residents. While incineration must ultimately be discontinued, we must also develop smart options to make that happen safely, sustainably, and financially responsibly.

**Should Montgomery County host hyperscale Data Centers? If so, what zoning standards and regulations should be established? Have we gathered all the necessary information to make an informed decision at this time?**

I support the legislation before the Montgomery County Council to place a moratorium on building data centers, especially until we are able to better assess the impacts to the environment, water use, and strains on the energy grid. With last year's override of the Governor's veto, there is already a statewide effort to study these impacts. However, since we are missing necessary information, we also need a statewide moratorium as we await those results. In the meantime, the state legislature can get ahead of data center challenges by crafting regulatory standards for on-site energy generation and reduced consumption of the general water supply. Data center permitting must not be granted on protected, agricultural, or habitat-significant lands, and the size and scale of these centers must be determined in accordance with the resources it would take to run them.



**Forests are a key tool for climate protection and protecting public health. How would forest protection and control of non-native plant species factor into your administration's goals? (Picture above - Wib Middleton)**

If we are serious about combatting climate change, we must protect our greatest natural resources that already play the biggest roles in reducing human impact. I will work to expand the Forest Conservation Act, particularly reforestation efforts and prohibiting the net loss of forest (following the model of Montgomery County's Forest Conservation Law). We should also revisit exemptions for developers, which should be limited and should accompany stricter requirements for tree replanting. Montgomery County recently passed legislation to manage the population of invasive bamboo. I support similar state legislation for all invasive or non-native plant species that harm our native species.

**Where do you stand on synthetic turf playing fields for school and community use?**

I am opposed to continued use of synthetic turf. The environmental impacts alone are bad enough, but the safety concerns around heat retention and unnecessary injuries are easily preventable by using natural grass. I will support statewide legislation similar to municipal efforts in places like Massachusetts and California that have banned new use of synthetic turf, as well as misleading marketing by profit-motivated industry. Progress has been made in the State of Maryland, especially in prohibiting new synthetic turf use on playgrounds, but we need to do much more.



**Challenges to current and future farmers are increasing. The average age of County producers is 59. The cost of leasing farm acreage (60% of farms are leasing) is skyrocketing while a diverse new crop of farmers struggle to afford farmland. Have you got any plans for how the County can help keep the industry healthy and promote expansion— with an understanding that resilience depends on local food and fiber production? (Pictured above: Afrithrive Farm)**

I believe many of the same protections we have and fight for with housing can also apply to tenant farmers. As State Senator, I will work to give farmers more opportunities to negotiate flexible lease terms that allow adaptation based on crop cycles and the dynamics of the industry. Where feasible, I also support the right of farmers to enter cost-sharing agreements, where they share in the benefits of improved infrastructure for irrigation, soil enhancements, and structural protection, like fencing.