

Montgomery County 2026 Candidate Questionnaire



Personal Information:

Name

Chao Wu

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2026 Election?

Maryland House of Delegates

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

www.chaowu.org



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 consise.

(pictured above: One Acre Farm)

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

Professionally, I am a data scientist with a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, College Park. Legislatively, I have served in the Maryland General Assembly since 2022, first on the Ways and Means Committee and now on the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee. I also co-chair the Maryland Legislative STEM and Emerging Technology Caucus, where I work on policies related to innovation, education, workforce development, and Maryland's future economy.

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 support re-establishing the Office of the People's Counsel as an independent voice for residents and communities.

Government transparency is essential to accountability, public trust, and effective decision-making, especially on major legislative and land use issues that directly affect neighborhoods and quality of life.

Montgomery County should strengthen public engagement by providing clearer access to information, earlier community input opportunities, and more transparent explanations of how decisions are made and why.

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, there is always room for improvement in how local government branches and state entities work together. The best way to improve collaboration is to listen closely to the people our government serves, identify gaps, inefficiencies, and unnecessary friction between agencies and branches, and focus on practical solutions that improve responsiveness and transparency. Residents often see problems firsthand, and their feedback can help government better coordinate policies, streamline decision-making, and deliver services more effectively for the community.



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?

Protecting our groundwater, sole source aquifers, and the Potomac River must be a long-term priority because clean and reliable water is essential for residents, farms, and businesses. We need stronger monitoring of water quality and water usage, faster response systems when contamination or shortages occur, and better protection of the natural environment and watersheds that recharge our water supply. I support practical conservation measures, infrastructure upgrades to reduce waste and leakage, and careful planning to avoid overuse of our water resources.

As data centers and population growth increase water demand, we must ensure that large users operate efficiently, recycle water when possible, and do not negatively impact residential or agricultural water access. We should also strengthen regional coordination across local and state governments to prepare for future drought conditions, invest in sustainable water infrastructure, and protect the long-term health of the Potomac River for the entire Washington metropolitan region.

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 Agricultural Reserve can play an important role in addressing climate change by protecting open space, preserving farmland, supporting local food production, and helping absorb carbon through forests and healthy soil. While I am still learning more about some of the specific county-level policies and funding structures related to this issue, I do support stronger efforts to address climate change because it affects our environment, economy, public health, and future generations.

I believe we need both short-term and long-term strategies, including regional coordination, practical

conservation efforts, and investments in sustainable infrastructure and clean technologies. As energy demand grows, including from high-energy users such as data centers, we should carefully evaluate how to balance economic development, environmental protection, energy efficiency, and fairness for residents and taxpayers.



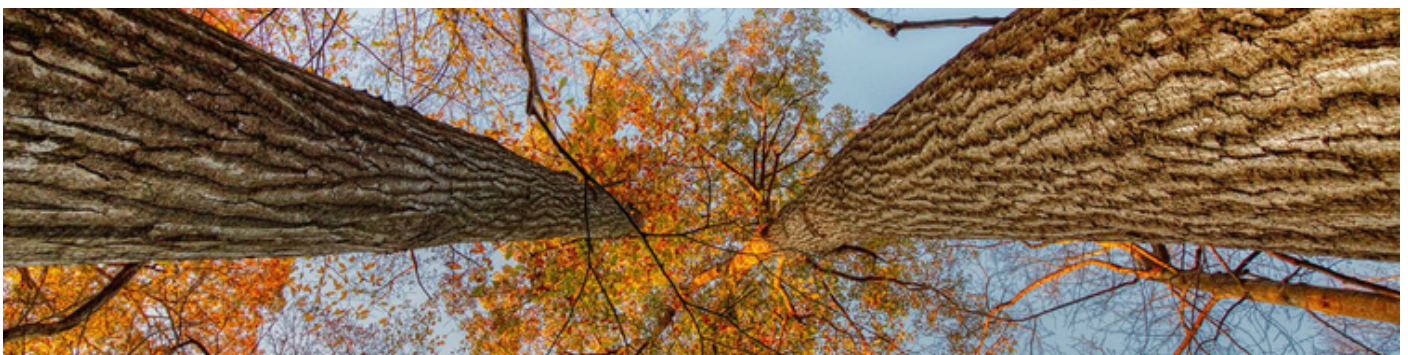
Do you support the long planned closure of the trash incinerator in Dickerson? Please provide some details as to why or why not. (pictured above: Shepherd's hey Farm)

I do not support closing the Dickerson incinerator without a realistic and sustainable replacement plan. Montgomery County still generates a large amount of trash, and simply shipping waste to other regions or states is not a true long-term solution. That approach may shift environmental impacts elsewhere rather than solving the underlying problem, while also creating additional transportation costs and emissions. Immediate closure without replacement capacity could also create operational and financial challenges for the county.

At the same time, the facility must operate with strong environmental safeguards and accountability. I believe we should invest in modern technologies and continuous improvements to reduce emissions, improve efficiency, and better protect public health and the environment. Waste-to-energy facilities can also contribute to Maryland's energy needs, so the focus should be on balancing environmental responsibility, practical waste management, energy reliability, and long-term sustainability.

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?

As an AI data scientist and policy architect, I support responsible development of data centers. They are essential infrastructures for AI, and our digital economy, bringing high paying jobs and tax revenue. However, we must expand energy production, require efficient water usage and conservation, modernize power grid, and ensure large energy users, like data centers, help manage peak demand, bring up their own energy and share the cost, so Marylanders are not burdened with higher utility bills.



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)

Forests play an important role in protecting our environment, improving air and water quality, supporting biodiversity, and helping address climate change. I support strong forest management practices that

protect existing forests, maintain healthy and diverse ecosystems, and control invasive non-native plant species that can damage native habitats.

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

I do not support the expanded use of synthetic turf fields and believe we should prioritize natural grass whenever possible for school and community use.



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)

While I am still learning more about the specific challenges facing agriculture in Montgomery County, I recognize that supporting local farmers and preserving farmland are critically important for our economy, food security, environment, and community resilience. I understand that rising land and leasing costs, an aging farming population, and barriers for new farmers are serious concerns that require long-term attention.

In the General Assembly, I have supported legislation and initiatives that strengthen local agriculture and encourage buying local products. Moving forward, I would support efforts to help new and diverse farmers access farmland, expand opportunities for local food production, and improve coordination between government, agricultural organizations, and the farming community to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of the industry.