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August 6, 2024

President Hicks,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit responses to Sussex Preservation Coalition's candidate questionnaire concerning the "Agenda for Livable Communities" and your mission. My background and professional experiences provide a comprehensive and science-based health focused approach to environmental and land preservation policies. Central to my vision is the integration of private sector knowledge, resources, and technology to effectively address environmental challenges. Demonstrating my long-standing commitment to environmental stewardship, while serving in Delaware's State Senate (2009-2012), I authored and successfully passed Delaware's National Scenic Byway Legislation, underscoring my dedication to preserving open spaces and natural landscapes for future generations.

This (An Act to Amend Title 17 of the Delaware Code Relating to The Brandywine Valley National Scenic Byway: 146th General Assembly, Senate Bill No. 241)

([https://assets.nationbuilder.com/drmikekatz/pages/66/attachments/original/1711228044/Katz - Brandywine Valley National Scenic Byway SB241 146th.pdf?1711228044](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/drmikekatz/pages/66/attachments/original/1711228044/Katz_-_Brandywine_Valley_National_Scenic_Byway_SB241_146th.pdf?1711228044))

The Scenic Byway legislation may serve as a model for a Sussex County Conservation Plan that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the Sussex County Community. I am available to assist the Sussex Preservation Coalition in bringing together local, state, and federal resources to meet the "Livable Communities" objectives

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with the community.

My best wishes,

Mike

(Dr. Mike Katz Independent Nominee for U.S. Senate)

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Question 1. What can elected officials do to preserve open spaces including forests? Are new ordinances or legislation needed? What should be the priority?

As Delaware's U.S. Senator, preserving open spaces, including forests, is paramount for creating and maintaining livable communities. This effort not only benefits the environment but also enhances the quality of life for all residents. Here is how we can achieve this:

1. Conserve Open Spaces and Forested Land

Legislation and Ordinances: Enact and strengthen legislation to protect existing open spaces and forests. This includes creating conservation easements, expanding protected areas, and providing tax incentives for landowners to maintain their land as open spaces.



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Funding and Grants: Secure federal funding and grants to support state and local conservation initiatives. This includes funding for land acquisition, reforestation projects, and conservation management programs.

Community Engagement: Foster partnerships with local communities, environmental organizations, and private landowners to promote conservation efforts. Community involvement is crucial for the success and sustainability of these initiatives.

2. Protect Wetlands, Bays, Ponds, Streams, and Rivers:

Stronger Regulations: Advocate for robust regulations to protect waterways from pollution and overdevelopment. This includes enforcement of the Clean Water Act and support for the “State of the Bays” report by the Center for the Inland Bays.

Restoration Projects: Invest in restoration projects that rehabilitate degraded wetlands and waterways. These projects help improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, and provide flood mitigation.

3. Infrastructure Adequate for Residential Growth:

Comprehensive Planning: Promote comprehensive planning that aligns infrastructure development with population growth. This includes ensuring that transportation, healthcare, emergency services, education, and affordable housing are adequately provided.

Sustainable Development: Encourage sustainable development practices that balance growth with the preservation of open spaces and natural resources. This can be achieved through smart growth policies, zoning regulations, and incentives for green building practices.

4. Balance Economic Prosperity with Environmental Sustainability and Resilience:

Support policies that balance personal property rights with community rights, growth with conservation, and short-term gains with long-term preservation. This includes promoting affordable housing while protecting open spaces and ensuring economic activities are sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Actions Necessary to Achieve, Implement, and Maintain the Agenda for Livable Communities:

Partnerships: Develop strong partnerships between county, state and federal officials and federal agencies. Collaborative efforts are essential for addressing issues that transcend local boundaries and require coordinated actions.

Public Engagement: Ensure that policies governing livable communities are developed with maximum citizen participation. This means making public meetings accessible and ensuring that all voices, not just the well-connected, are heard and considered.

Infrastructure Planning: Shift from reactive to proactive infrastructure planning. “Plan - Prepare - Build” should be the guiding principle to ensure that growth does not outpace the capacity of infrastructure to support it.



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Conservation Plan: Advocate for the creation, implementation, and enforcement of a Sussex County Conservation Plan. This plan should be based on the benefits provided by the natural environment and supported by strong enforcement mechanisms to ensure its effectiveness.

By prioritizing these actions and policies, we can preserve open spaces, including forests, and ensure that our communities remain livable, sustainable, and resilient for future generations. As Delaware's U.S. Senator, I am committed to working with all stakeholders to achieve these goals and uphold the principles outlined in the "Agenda for Livable Communities".

Question 2: Clean water is fundamental to community health. What specific policies or practices are critical to ensuring that all waterways are clean and healthy?

Clean water is fundamental to community health, and as Delaware's U.S. Senator, I am committed to implementing specific policies and practices to ensure all waterways are clean and healthy. The following strategies are critical:

1. Strengthen Regulatory Frameworks:

Enforcement of the Clean Water Act: to prevent pollution from industrial, agricultural, and residential sources. This includes maintaining water quality standards and ensuring compliance through regular monitoring and enforcement actions.

Updated Water Quality Standards: Support the establishment of scientifically sound water quality standards that reflect the latest research on pollutants and their impact on health and ecosystems.

2. Protect Wetlands:

Wetland Conservation: Promote policies that protect and restore wetlands, which are essential for filtering pollutants, providing wildlife habitats, and mitigating floods. This includes incentivizing wetland restoration projects.

Support Sustainable Agricultural Practices:

Nutrient Management Programs: Advocate for programs that assist farmers in implementing nutrient management plans to reduce runoff of fertilizers and pesticides into waterways. This includes providing technical assistance and financial incentives for adopting best management practices.

4. Invest in Infrastructure and Technology:

Stormwater Management: Support investments in modern stormwater management systems that capture and treat runoff before it reaches waterways.

Upgrading Wastewater Treatment: Federal funding to upgrade and maintain wastewater treatment facilities to ensure they effectively remove contaminants from sewage and industrial discharges before they are released into waterways.



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5. Promote Community Engagement and Education:

Public Awareness Campaigns: Support public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the importance of clean water and how they can help protect local waterways. This includes information on proper disposal of household chemicals, reducing plastic use, and preventing littering.

Citizen Science Initiatives: Encourage citizen science programs that involve local residents in monitoring water quality and reporting pollution incidents. This fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for protecting local water resources.

6. Foster Intergovernmental and Public-Private Partnerships:

Collaborative Efforts: Work with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as private sector partners, to coordinate efforts and share resources for water quality initiatives. Effective collaboration is essential for addressing complex and interconnected water quality issues.

Research and Innovation: Support research into new technologies and practices for improving water quality. This includes funding for universities and research institutions to develop innovative solutions for pollution control and water treatment.

By implementing these policies and practices, we can ensure that all waterways in Delaware and beyond are clean and healthy, thereby safeguarding the health and well-being of our communities. As your United States Senator, I will be dedicated to leading these efforts and working collaboratively with all stakeholders to achieve our shared goal of clean water for all.

Question 3: What do you consider the most critical infrastructure problems facing Sussex County, and how do you propose to address those problems?

As Delaware's U.S. Senator, I recognize that Sussex County faces several critical infrastructure challenges that must be addressed to ensure the well-being and prosperity of its residents. The most pressing issues include inadequate transportation systems, insufficient healthcare facilities, strained emergency services, overburdened educational institutions, and a lack of affordable housing. Here are my proposals to address these problems:

1. Transportation Infrastructure:

Problem: Sussex County experiences significant traffic congestion, limited public transportation options, and insufficient bike lanes.

Solution: Advocate for federal and state investments in comprehensive transportation infrastructure projects. This includes expanding and modernizing road networks, developing safe and extensive bike lanes, and enhancing public transportation services. Promoting transit-oriented development and encouraging the use of sustainable transportation options will also alleviate congestion and improve mobility.



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2. Healthcare Facilities:

Problem: The county's healthcare facilities and staffing are inadequate to meet the needs of its growing population, resulting in long wait times and limited access to medical services.

Solution: Work with community and healthcare leaders to secure federal funding to expand and upgrade healthcare facilities in Sussex County. Support initiatives to increase the number of healthcare practitioners and support staff through loan forgiveness programs and incentives for practicing in underserved areas. Additionally, promote the integration of telemedicine to improve access to healthcare services for all residents.

3. Emergency Services:

Problem: Emergency services, including fire, police, and medical response, are overburdened due to insufficient infrastructure, staffing and resources.

Solution: Advocate for increased funding for emergency services to ensure that they are adequately staffed, equipped, and strategically located to respond promptly to emergencies. Implement advanced communication and coordination systems to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency responses. Additionally, develop comprehensive evacuation plans to ensure the safety of residents during regional emergencies.

5. Affordable Housing:

Problem: There is a significant shortage of affordable housing in Sussex County, making it difficult for young families, local workers, and low-income retirees to find suitable accommodations.

Solution: Support federal and state policies that incentivize the development of affordable housing units through tax credits, grants, and low-interest loans for developers. Advocate for zoning reforms that encourage mixed-use and higher-density developments, which can increase the availability of affordable housing. Collaborate with local governments and non-profit organizations to provide resources and support for affordable housing projects.

Balancing Growth with Infrastructure Development:

Unbridled growth has led to stresses on existing infrastructure, frequent flooding, and environmental degradation. Promote a "Plan - Prepare - Build" approach to infrastructure development, ensuring that infrastructure is in place or concurrent with growth. Support the creation, implementation, and enforcement of a Sussex County Conservation Plan that balances economic development with environmental sustainability and resilience. Advocate for smart growth policies that prioritize sustainable development, protect open spaces, and preserve natural resources.

By addressing these critical infrastructure challenges through targeted federal and state investments, comprehensive planning, and collaborative efforts, we can ensure that Sussex County remains a vibrant, livable community for all its residents. As your U.S. Senator, I am committed to working with local, state,



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and federal partners to secure the necessary resources and implement effective solutions to these pressing issues.

Question 4: Do you think Sussex County has a good balance between personal rights and community rights? If so, please explain your thinking. If not, how would you work to create a better balance?

As Delaware's U.S. Senator, I believe achieving a balance between personal rights and community rights is essential for fostering livable communities. Sussex County currently faces challenges in maintaining this balance due to unbridled growth, leading to the loss of open spaces, environmental degradation, and strain on public services. While personal property rights are important, they must be balanced with the rights and well-being of the broader community. Here is how I propose to support a better balance:

1. Implement Comprehensive Land Use Planning:

Problem: Uncontrolled development has led to significant environmental and infrastructure issues, compromising community rights for the benefit of individual property owners.

Solution: Advocate for comprehensive land use planning that considers the long-term impacts of development. This includes creating zoning regulations that balance growth with the preservation of open spaces, forests, and wetlands. By implementing smart growth policies, we can ensure that development is sustainable and beneficial for the entire community.

2. Strengthen Environmental Protections:

Problem: The loss of natural habitats and increased pollution due to unchecked development threaten the health and quality of life of Sussex County residents.

Solution: Support environmental regulations to protect wetlands, waterways, and green spaces. This includes enforcing the Clean Water Act, and supporting wetland conservation projects. Protecting these natural resources is essential for flood mitigation, clean water, and biodiversity, benefiting both individual property owners and the community at large.

3. Enhance Public Participation:

Problem: Decisions regarding development and land use often lack sufficient input from the community, leading to policies that favor a few over the many.

Solution: Advocate for policies that expand avenues for public engagement in the decision-making process. This includes ensuring that public meetings are accessible and widely publicized and that opportunities for public comment are genuine and inclusive. By involving the community in these decisions, we can create policies that reflect the collective interests and rights of all residents.

4. Promote Affordable Housing Policies:

Challenge: The shortage of affordable housing in Sussex County disproportionately affects young families, local workers, and low-income retirees, creating a disparity between personal property rights and community needs.



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Solution: Support policies that incentivize the development of affordable housing through tax credits, grants, and low-interest loans for developers. Advocate for zoning reforms that encourage mixed-use and higher-density developments, which can increase the availability of affordable housing. These measures will help ensure that all residents have access to safe, affordable housing while respecting personal property rights.

6. Build Robust Infrastructure:

Problem: Inadequate infrastructure to support residential growth places a burden on the community, affecting transportation, healthcare, emergency services, and education.

Solution: Advocate for a "Plan - Prepare - Build" approach to infrastructure development. Ensure that infrastructure projects are well-planned and that resources are in place before development occurs. By aligning infrastructure development with population growth, we can provide necessary services and improve the quality of life for all residents.

By addressing these challenges and implementing these solutions, we can achieve a more equitable balance between personal rights and community rights in Sussex County. As your U.S. Senator, I am committed to working collaboratively with local, state, and federal partners to create policies that benefit all residents while preserving the environment and ensuring sustainable growth.

Question 5: Can and should the working relationship between federal, state and local officials be improved? If so, why and how?

As Delaware's U.S. Senator, I firmly believe that improving the working relationship between federal, state and local officials is crucial for fostering livable communities that are safe, healthy, and environmentally responsible. Enhanced collaboration will ensure that policies are effectively implemented, resources are efficiently utilized, and the public is actively engaged. Here are the reasons why and how this relationship can be strengthened:

1. Coordinated Policy Implementation:

Rationale: Effective policy implementation necessitates coordination between federal, state and local governments to ensure alignment and efficient use of resources. Disjointed efforts can lead to redundancy or conflicting actions that hinder progress.

Action: Establish regular communication channels and joint planning sessions between federal, state and local officials to align policies and initiatives. Creating intergovernmental task forces focused on key issues such as land use, transportation, and environmental protection will facilitate better coordination and shared goals.



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2. Efficient Use of Resources:

Rationale: Limited resources necessitate efficient allocation and utilization. Collaborative efforts can pool resources, reduce duplication, and leverage strengths to achieve greater impact.

Action: Develop and implement shared funding mechanisms and grant programs that encourage joint projects and resource sharing. State and local governments can co-fund infrastructure projects, environmental conservation efforts, and community development programs to maximize their impact.

3. Enhanced Public Engagement:

Rationale: Policies governing livable communities must be based on broad citizen participation. Ensuring public input is considered at both state and local levels leads to more inclusive and effective policies.

Action: Expand avenues for public engagement by holding joint public hearings and workshops where citizens can provide input on key issues. Utilize digital platforms to facilitate broader participation and ensure community voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

4. Comprehensive Planning and Development:

Rationale: Uncontrolled growth and development can lead to environmental degradation, traffic congestion, and strained public services. Coordinated planning can balance growth with conservation and infrastructure development.

Action: Promote a "Plan - Prepare - Build" approach where federal, state and local governments collaboratively develop comprehensive land use plans. These plans should prioritize sustainable development, protect open spaces, and ensure infrastructure is in place to support growth. Establishing joint planning commissions can ensure development projects are reviewed and approved with a unified vision.

5. Stronger Environmental Protection:

Rationale: Protecting natural resources such as wetlands, forests, and waterways requires coordinated efforts across different levels of government. Fragmented approaches can undermine environmental conservation goals.

Action: Support the creation of federal-state-local environmental partnerships focused on conservation and sustainability. Implement joint enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with environmental regulations. Sharing data and best practices can enhance the effectiveness of conservation efforts.

6. Improved Emergency Response:

Rationale: Effective emergency response and disaster management require seamless coordination between state and local agencies. Disconnected efforts can lead to delays and inefficiencies during critical situations.

Action: Develop and regularly update joint emergency response plans that outline clear roles and responsibilities for state and local agencies. Conduct joint training exercises and simulations to ensure preparedness and improve coordination during actual emergencies.



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7. Balanced Economic Development:

Rationale: Economic growth should be balanced with environmental sustainability and community well-being. Coordinated efforts can ensure that economic policies benefit both individuals and the community.

Action: Foster public-private partnerships that involve both state and local governments in promoting sustainable economic development. Encourage businesses to adopt environmentally friendly practices and support local economic initiatives that align with broader sustainability goals.

By enhancing the working relationship between state and local officials through these strategies, we can create more cohesive, effective, and responsive governance that better serves the people of Sussex County and beyond. As your U.S. Senator, I am committed to fostering this collaboration to achieve our shared vision of livable, sustainable, and prosperous communities.

Questions 6: Is there anything else you wish to add?

In addition to the strategies outlined for improving the working relationship between state and local officials, Dr. Mike Katz's diverse healthcare, business, and public policy leadership uniquely qualify him to enhance governance and public service in Washington, D.C. to best serve all Delawareans.

Dr. Katz, a pediatric critical care anesthesiologist, business owner, and former Delaware Democratic State Senator, and seasoned executive has demonstrated exceptional leadership in medicine, business, and public policy. He is authored and successfully ushered enactment of Delaware's National Scenic Byways legislation. This accomplishment underscores his commitment to environmental conservation and his ability to collaborate effectively across all political lines.

Dr. Katz's extensive experience spans multiple sectors, including healthcare, business, education, and finance, both on state and national levels. His work with state medical associations and his national elected role with the American Medical Association, where he advocated for America's health, safety, and well-being, reflect his deep understanding of healthcare policy and his capacity to address complex challenges.

In addition to his healthcare and legislative expertise, Dr. Katz's strong business executive experience and involvement in finance and education provide him with a well-rounded perspective on policy issues. His ability to manage intricate projects, navigate diverse stakeholder interests, and drive strategic initiatives is complemented by his extensive knowledge across various sectors, making him exceptionally well-equipped to deliver results for Delaware's needs.



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Dr. Katz's independent stance, free from allegiance to political parties or special interests, allows him to focus solely on the best interests of all Delawareans. His refusal to accept all donations and contributions from special interests and corporate entities reinforces his commitment to serving the public with integrity and impartiality.

His approach to governance is characterized by grassroots engagement and accessibility for all. Dr. Katz views his role not only as a legislative leader but as a resource for all citizens, state and local elected officials, and community organizations. His open-door policy and emphasis on local, on-the-ground service reflect his dedication to transparency, responsiveness, and collaborative problem-solving.

With his personal duty to serve, extensive policy experience, business executive background, and leadership across healthcare, education, and finance, Dr. Katz is exceptionally well-positioned to address Delaware's needs and promote effective governance, environmental sustainability, and community engagement.

Delaware's National Scenic Byway legislation:

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