



Natali Fani-González

Natali Fani-González is a Montgomery County Council Member (District 6) and Chairs the Economic Development Committee for the Council. She brings deep local government experience and a strong background on economic opportunity for all to the Montgomery County Council. Until August of 2021, Natali was the Vice Chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board, the local agency that regulates real estate development, plans transportation infrastructure, and manages the park system. During her seven years on the Planning Board, Natali was a key player in supporting the growth of the County's life sciences sector through master plans in the Great Seneca Science Corridor, White Flint, and Bethesda. With a particular focus on addressing the needs of small, local, and immigrant-owned businesses, she also helped steer the County Growth and Infrastructure Policy, Veirs Mills Corridor Master Plan, Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen Sector Plan, the MARC Rail Community Sector Plan, and the Bicycle Master Plan, among many others.

Prior to her service on the Planning Board and starting her own business, Natali worked for the regional immigrant group CASA, where she successfully fought for the Maryland DREAM act, banking services for the unbanked, and other local and state policies to uplift low-income communities.

Natali arrived in the United States as a teenager with her mother without being able to speak English. Nevertheless, she committed herself to her education while working weekends cleaning houses with her mother. She won a full scholarship to Goucher College, where she was awarded degrees in political science and international relations. She served on the Goucher College Board of Trustees after she graduated. She knows from experience the struggles good, hard-working people face trying to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Washingtonian Magazine honored Natali as one of the “40 Under 40” Changemakers in the Washington DC Region and then named her as a “Woman to Watch.” She is a 2021 Recipient of a State Citation by Governor Larry Hogan for community efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic helping vulnerable communities. The DC metro area’s largest Spanish language newspaper, *El Tiempo Latino*, recognized Natali as one of the 100 most influential individuals for the DC Hispanic community. Natali lives in Wheaton with her husband, a former United States Marine, and their children.



Kali Schumitz

Kali Schumitz is the Maryland Center on Economic Policy's (MCEP) Vice President for External Relations. Prior to joining MDCEP in 2015, Kali worked as a newspaper reporter and editor for more than 13 years, most recently covering local and state government in Virginia for Post Community Media. She also has an extensive background in nonprofit communications and management, having provided board and volunteer support to several organizations. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Women's Flat Track Derby Association. Kali holds a B.A. in Mass Communication from Towson University.



Danette Nguyen

Danette Nguyen was appointed Managing Director of the Maryland Women's Business Center (MWBC) effective November 2022. In her new role as Managing Director, Danette is looking forward to empowering women entrepreneurs as they start, grow, and expand their business in Maryland's Capital Region.

Prior to joining MWBC, Danette served as the Deputy Director/Programs Manager for Fairfax City's Office of Economic Development. In that role, Danette was responsible for overseeing program management, community engagement, grant administration, an extensive portfolio of placemaking programs, and various small business support initiatives. In 2020 and following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Danette assisted with the development and implementation of small business support programs and led Fairfax City's Seasonal Outdoor Dining Pilot Permit Program in response to the need for active outdoor public spaces following the pandemic.

Danette has served on community development boards throughout her career and has earned prestigious awards and certifications for her work in the economic and community development field. These include the Jack Wood Town-Gown Award from George Mason University and an Emerging Leader Fellow certificate administered by the International Downtown Association.

Danette graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Management Information Systems and Marketing from George Mason University.



Rianna Matthews-Brown

Rianna P. Matthews-Brown is the Chief of Staff for Comptroller of Maryland, Brooke E. Lierman. In this role, Rianna serves as the Comptroller's most senior advisor and strategist, lending her expertise, counsel, and leadership on a range of agency-wide priorities and initiatives. In addition to overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Comptroller's Executive Office, she is the Comptroller's principal representative with agency executive leadership and external partners and stakeholders. Prior to joining the Comptroller's Office, Rianna worked for Johns Hopkins University as the Deputy Chief of Staff, a senior staff position in the Office of President.

A Baltimore native, Rianna earned her bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and her juris doctor from the University of Maryland's Francis King Carey School of Law. She began her career in the Washington, DC office of U.S. Senator Paul S. Sarbanes (D-MD) and worked on Capitol Hill for six years specializing in health, energy/environment, labor, and employment issues. Rianna later worked for the Baltimore City Health Department as the Director of External Affairs and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as the Chief of Staff for Behavioral Health.

Rianna lives in Baltimore with her wife, Kibibi, and their children, Solomon and Selah.