

Our Revolution Maryland (OR-MD), Baltimore City
Candidates Questionnaire

1. Please state the position you are running for. How does your experience, along with your life experiences, qualify you for the position?

I am running for the House of Delegates so that I can continue to address both policy issues and neighborhood concerns that affect the people of Maryland and of the 41st District. I have learned how to use the legislative process to codify Roe v. Wade and repeal the death penalty, among my accomplishments over nine terms in Annapolis. I first learned how to work with people of different backgrounds as a student at City College.

2. What will be the principles or values that guide your public service?

The principles that will guide me are those enunciated by Hubert Humphrey in his last public address: "The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped."

CIVIL RIGHTS

3. Do you support the Trust Act? (Legislation that prevents a State/local Government Agent from using public resources for civil immigration enforcement; prevents law enforcement officials from stopping, arresting or detaining an individual simply to find out immigration or citizenship status; prevents the State from creating a registry for the purpose of immigration enforcement, and prevents state law enforcement officers from being deputized as immigration officers)

a. Yes

b. No

Explanation: *Yes, singling out persons solely based upon their immigration status is an unconstitutional waste of resources.*

4. Do you support Gov. Hogan's executive order to bar state business with companies that boycott Israel, that is, his order opposing BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions)?

I supported House Bill 949, which would have modified existing state laws that prohibit the Maryland pension system from investing in companies that do business with Iran or Sudan and also prohibit companies that are doing business with Iran from securing procurement contracts with Maryland. Companies that are engaged in boycotting Israel should face the same prohibitions. To address First Amendment concerns regarding HB 949 (2017), I drafted an amendment limiting the bill to business entities, thereby removing individuals from the scope of the bill.

This legislation and the Governor's executive order are a reflection of Maryland's long and successful economic, academic and cultural relationship with Israel, from the partnerships of our Jewish communities with Israel, to ties between our higher education institutions, to the investments and job creation that have occurred both here and in Israel. Israel is a nation with a strong record of

multiculturalism and promotion of rights for both women and the LGBTQ communities – by far, the strongest record in the Middle East.

5. Are you in favor of Baltimore's sanctuary city status?

Yes, Baltimore's history as a home to newly arrived immigrants is a vital tradition we should uphold.

6. How would you advance racial justice and social equality in Baltimore City?

My work to make Baltimore's neighborhoods healthier by weeding out the scourge of lead paint will continue until no more kids are testing positive for lead.

Another part of that process is making landlords accountable and regulating out of existence predatory practices. As an example, last session I introduced HB117 (2017), which targeted rent-to-own schemes. Rent-to-own agreements are used in predominantly poor communities of color where financial literacy and means are limited.

Gun violence is another injustice felt predominately by impoverished communities in Baltimore. This is a life and death crisis; Guns are a disease that killed hundreds in 2017 just in our City. I introduced HB 1521 (2017) to set up a fund to give out grants to gun violence reduction programs through a newly created Maryland Commission to Study Firearm Violence. This year, I am co-sponsor of HB 113 (2018), which would increase State funding for a proven gun violence reduction program, the Safe Streets program.

EDUCATION

7. Baltimore city has a persistent problem of budget shortfalls (i.e., lack of needed funding) for its public schools. How do you propose to address this?

The Kirwan Commission report will be the means to address the problems of funding and accountability. More resources are needed for students with the greatest need. With that comes accountability – appropriate means of measuring performance.

8. Do you support legislation providing free tuition at community colleges, vocational and trade schools and will you commit to using new tax revenue from those sectors better able to afford it?

a. Yes

b. No

Explanation: Yes, I have long championed public education in Maryland and would support legislation providing free tuition at community colleges, vocational and trade schools. I would support a progressive form of funding for this commitment.

9. There is a deeply concerning persistent achievement gap in Maryland public schools that affects a large number of students in economically disadvantaged communities and minority communities. What will you do to help close that gap?

The state funding formula needs to take into account the additional needs of children living in poverty. This most certainly includes the additional needs for after-school academic and/or social services vital to the success of young people in impoverished communities around Maryland.

10. How would you improve Baltimore public schools?

As I mentioned in my response to question 7, I think the Kirwan Commission's recommendations are the logical place to look for ideas to improve the Baltimore public school system.. Education is the most important investment we make as a State in our future. We must meet our obligation to educate our children to participate in the work force and civil society..

HEALTH CARE

11. Do you support a Maryland single-payer universal health care system, in absence of a national plan, to establish a single standard of quality, therapeutic care to all residents in the state? What do you see as the greatest obstacles to enacting single-payer health-care legislation in Maryland? If you favor such a plan, what can you do to overcome those obstacles?

a. Yes

b. No

Explanation: No. Increasing access to health insurance coverage and boosting enrollment, especially for low-income and vulnerable residents is a essential, but I do not support a Maryland single-payer universal health care system. Instead, I support efforts to protect our state's current health insurance marketplace, which is composed of public and private payers and has seen dramatic increases in enrollment since the passage of the Affordable Care Act. The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange recently reported that 81,553 individuals purchased insurance on the Exchange in 2014; in 2018, that number nearly doubled, to 153,571. Enrollment in Maryland's Medicaid program has increased by nearly 300,000 individuals. I support efforts to protect and build on these existing programs, rather than creating a new single-payer system in our state.

My colleagues and I on the Health & Government Operations Committee, which has jurisdiction over health insurance, are following the recent actions on the federal level very closely. I am concerned that regulatory actions taken by the Trump Administration and legislation approved by the Republican-led Congress could discourage individuals from purchasing health insurance and thus destabilize the market.

In light of these concerns, we passed legislation in the 2017 session creating the Maryland Health Insurance Protection Commission, which is meeting regularly and developing policy options to stabilize our health insurance marketplace. Current options under consideration include creating a Health Care Access Fund, which would support health insurance enrollment; imposing modest fees on carriers to promote greater competition in the marketplace; a re-insurance program to cover the costs of high-cost enrollees with chronic conditions; and vigilant enforcement of the individual mandate. I support considering these and other incremental options before the creation of a Maryland single-payer universal health care system.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

12. What is your position on the bail reform imposed by the Maryland Court of Appeals? Do you support eliminating money bail, or other reform to prevent having anyone spend time in jail solely because of inability to pay bail?

a. Yes

b. Yes

Explanation: Yes, I support eliminating money bail. It is a persistent source of inequity in the court system and past due to be replaced.

13. What actions should be taken to address police violence and the constitutional rights violations of the Baltimore Police Department in the recent Department of Justice report?

Under Attorney General Sessions, the Department of Justice has signaled that it is not interested in enforcing consent decrees on police departments. However, I still believe that the enforcement mechanisms in the consent decree process are an important first step in addressing police violence and constitutional violations. A cultural shift must occur in the Baltimore Police Department, and accountability will make that happen.

14. How will you de-escalate the recent surge in violence in Baltimore?

I would rely on non-violent programs that work. Safe Streets would de-escalate the recent surge in violence in Baltimore. This year I am working with my colleagues to pass HB 113 (2018) to provide additional State funding for the Safe Streets program so that it can be expanded beyond its current footprint. I am also drafting legislation that would provide a funding source for increased after-school and summer programs for our youth.

ENVIRONMENT

15. How would you help move Maryland to a 50% clean energy economy by 2030?

I support strengthening the Renewable Portfolio Standard. I would be particularly interested in investing in clean-energy job training because this would create 21st Century jobs for Marylanders, many of whom have lost good paying jobs in the new economy.

16. How would you help move Baltimore to a 100% clean energy economy by 2035?

As I said in my response to question 15, I support strengthening of the Renewable Portfolio Standard with complementary strengthening of Maryland's investment in clean-energy job training, moving Baltimore towards a 100% clean energy economy.

17. The city of Baltimore and surrounding communities face great environmental challenges, from aging sewer systems and subsequent runoff into the Chesapeake Bay, to superfund sites like the 68th Street Dump and lead paint in homes. What are some of your ideas for addressing the unique environmental challenges in our city and state?

I support placing a price on carbon pollution generally and using any funds generated to promote clean energy alternatives and assist communities affected by climate change. In particular, the principles of environmental justice should guide policy makers in developing such legislation because the impact of climate change and pollution has fallen disproportionately on communities of color.

My commitment to eradicating lead poisoning is described above.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

18. Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour?

a. Yes

b. No

Explanation: Yes, I was a co-sponsor of HB1416 (2017) and will co-sponsor Del. Hettleman's bill this session. I support a \$15/hour minimum wage for Maryland, and I would cast my vote to override a veto of any legislation enacting a \$15/hour minimum wage.

19. What is your position on unionization?

I have an extensive history of supporting and sponsoring legislation protecting workers' rights' to organize unions and engage in collective bargaining. I would support efforts to afford the benefits of collective bargaining to as many workers as possible. Most recently, during the 2017 session I co-sponsored legislation that would establish collective bargaining rights for community college employees.

I have spoken with AFSCME about legislation to protect worker rights should the Supreme Court overturn precedent when it decides in Janus v. American Federation.

20. Municipal water and sewage rates have more than tripled for Baltimore residents since 2000 and continue to rise in the face of huge costs for infrastructure updates and repairs. Do you support legislation to cap water and sewage rates for low-income households in the Baltimore area, based on their ability to pay?

Yes, I would support any efforts to increase affordability of utilities for low-income households in Baltimore.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

21. Will you support legislation for Small Donor Matched Public Financing of elections?

a. Yes

b. No

Explanation: Yes, I have long supported efforts to rid the influence of money in politics and would support legislation for Small Donor Matched Public Financing of elections.

22. Will you make a pledge to run without corporate and developer money in your campaign?

No. I principally rely on donations from individuals to run my campaign, alongside my own personal loans to the campaign. I have long pledged, and my record bears this out, that I vote my conscience regardless of who has donated to my campaign. I have found that making it clear where you stand means that those who seek to influence political decision making with money do not waste their money on me.

23. Will you support the legislation by Wolf-PAC/GMOM (Get Money Out of Maryland) to call for an Article V convention to get money out of politics?

No, we should not open the door to wholesale changes in the U.S. Constitution. We must address this problem legislatively.

HOUSING

24. Do you support the 20/20 Vision for Baltimore City (See: http://www.unitedworkers.org/20_20)?

I support the 20/20 Vision for Baltimore City. In particular, it is important to prioritize the training of local residents and formerly incarcerated persons to break the cycles of poverty that perpetuate inequality.

25. (Rent Court Reform) The Baltimore Sun recently affirmed that “The rent court system routinely works against tenants, while in many cases failing to hold landlords accountable.” A reform bill agreed to by many landlords and tenants passed last year in the Maryland House, but was blocked by the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. What specific actions will you take to ensure Rent Court reforms are enacted?

I was the lead sponsor of HB 1487 (2017), which was based upon a consensus process of bringing together tenant advocates and landlords to support reform of the rent court process. I will introduce similar bills this session based on a collaborative path to meaningful rent court reform.

26. What other solutions do you have to alleviate Baltimore's housing crisis? Baltimore City faces a rising population of homeless individuals, and a paradoxically large number of vacant houses (16% of the city's homes according to the US Census Bureau). According to the Baltimore Sun, approximately 25% of Maryland renters spend 50% of their household income on rent. What can be done to make housing more affordable and fill vacant properties?

Baltimore's large number of vacant houses depress home prices and invite criminal activity. The State and the City should underwrite the demolition of these properties and their replacement with a solution supported by the affected communities.

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC SECURITY

27. While there are undoubtedly a wide range of policies you might wish to propose that you have not discussed above, what would be one or two additional policies or programs in particular that you will put forward that you would especially want to highlight – policies which you believe will create economic

opportunity, employment, address income inequality in Maryland, assist low and middle income people in Maryland, bring social services to needy communities or create greater economic security for seniors?

The best way to address economic inequality is to provide a quality education for our children and job retraining for adults. Implementing the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission will have an historic impact on the state's future.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

28. Do you feel that the city of Baltimore needs to improve in accountability and/or transparency? If so, what are some of your ideas for improving both?

Yes, I would support legislation to bring more transparency to government. This year I introduced HB 276 (2018) that defines a public official to include a person employed in the executive service or management service of the Executive Branch of State government. In order to prevent another Flint, MI, we have to ensure that public officials are held accountable for misconduct in office. By giving the Maryland State Prosecutor clear legislative guidelines on who is a public official subject to misconduct in office charges, it becomes easier to bring misconduct in office charges.

TRANSPORTATION

29. Do you support the development of the Red Line? If not, what alternatives would you support to improve public transportation in the Baltimore area?

I supported the Red Line project, and I would support similar projects in the future to increase rapid transportation options in and out of Baltimore City.