

# Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

## *Baltimore City Endorsement Questionnaire*

Candidate Name: Mary Washington

Office and District Running For: Mayor, Baltimore City

1. What is your vision and plan for public safety and reform of the police and criminal justice system?

I have developed a public safety proposal to the people of Baltimore, and, after 6 working sessions across the city, will submit a final, common vision--the People's Vision for Public Safety and Restoring Peace in Baltimore. For far too long, our city leaders have advanced failed policing strategies, producing the devastating cycle of violence that continues to tear our communities apart and leave so many unsafe on our own streets. It is time to turn the page and give the power back to the people of Baltimore.

Our proposal recognizes that public safety is an ecosystem, and there must be a balanced approach that goes beyond crime and punishment. Baltimore's public safety ecosystem must include: (1) repairing the community's profound distrust of the BPD after decades of corruption and abusive practices, (2) strengthening the police department's ability to protect our communities, (3) establishing and expanding trauma recovery services for our communities suffering from ongoing violence and (4) investing in proven services and strategies that support prevention, intervention, and diversion to keep building healthy communities.

The proposal is based on these core components and is designed to both address years of failed plans and establish new approaches to effectively promote true public safety. It is also designed to put the community front-and-center in the conversation. Politicians and community members have been operating in their own silos, where the immense passion and leadership in our communities have not been leveraged effectively by our government, and where city leadership has treated the issue of public safety in Baltimore — a city home to over 250 distinct neighborhoods — as a monolith.

My proposal can be found at: <https://mayormarywashington.com>

2. What can you do, within the powers of the office you are running for, to improve education for all Baltimoreans and provide educational equity?

As Mayor, I have the highest responsibility to improve education and provide educational equity for all Baltimoreans. Baltimore has spent much more on policing than on public education and has contributed a much smaller proportion of funding to our

schools than the local governments of other Maryland jurisdictions. We need to fund our priorities. It is time for Baltimore City to prioritize education funding and step up and make a stronger financial contribution to and regain local control of our public education system. We need to fully fund the Kirwan reforms we need. I plan to robustly continue and enhance my commitment to education, fighting for schools that give our kids the tools they need to build positive, prosperous, peaceful lives. I've fought side by side with my city colleagues in Annapolis to begin building new, modern schools here in the city and will keep that momentum going. I will re-allocate at least an additional \$20 million to education.

In addition, I've led the fight to bring community schools to under-served parts of Baltimore and other parts of the state. We know community schools are the solution for communities of concentrated poverty and I want to make every school in the city a community school, with trauma-informed and restorative work that will help our students heal and be fully prepared for a prosperous life. By making the school the hub of the neighborhood and combining top-quality academics with on-site health and social services, a community school can be a place where parents work with the school staff to strengthen the entire community and ensure children are physically, emotionally, and socially prepared to learn. Instead of implementing a one-size-fits-all curriculum, community schools take input from students, parents, and community members and implement some of their concerns to provide enriching and necessary classes and services for youth that are tailored to meet the specific needs of that community. Community schools also equip parents with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to lead their families and their communities. Community schools are a cost-savings for us and dramatically reduce the racial achievement gap. For example, a study of the Children's Aid Society community schools found every \$1 spent on community schools generates \$10-\$15 in value to society, and when Cincinnati, Ohio, converted to community schools, the graduation rate rose from 51% to 82% and the racial achievement gap dropped enormously.

We need more of our low-income children in pre-kindergarten programs. Early childhood education makes a significant positive impact on a child's ability to learn and be successful in school and as an adult. It is also one of the highest-yielding investments we can make in a child's development.

Further, our teachers need and deserve to be paid like the highly-educated professionals they are. Our children rely on their expertise; if we expect them to function at a high level we need to pay and train them in a way that makes that possible and brings talented instructors into our schools.

### 3. How will you address blight and revitalize communities while avoiding gentrification?

Making development work for all of us is one of the pillars of my campaign. My administration will not underwrite developments that can support themselves or enrich only a few people, but will instead spur investments in neighborhoods where the market is not active. We will use city resources to bring amenities to communities that haven't seen investment, neighborhoods without grocery stores, banking or libraries. Those

investments will spark private investments. We will also impose an additional tax on housing left vacant and blighted -- as Washington, DC and several other cities do -- to push absentee landlords to keep their properties in good shape and penalize those who leave them to decay at public expense. To avoid gentrification, my administration will focus funds and existing programs to help homeowners in those communities with improvements, bring in new homeowners, and establish a cap on rent increases. We will help small minority-owned businesses to get business loans in the neighborhoods where the city invests. In order to prevent gentrification that displaces residents, these strategies have to happen concurrently and with intention.

4. How will you ensure that communities in the Black Butterfly receive equitable investment?

It's time to end the lopsided investment that has happened in Baltimore and invest in neighborhoods that have been left behind. For too long, the City's focus has been preserving the core while neglecting East and West Baltimore. But Central Baltimore does not need as much help with investment as our neighborhoods in the Black Butterfly. We will focus attention on neighborhoods such as Oliver and Park Heights, both of which are primed for investment. If the City is not willing to invest in these areas, we can't expect private developers to take the risk.

5. How would you improve transit, transportation, and the ability for people to get around in the city? Would you support the creation of a Regional Transit Authority to provide transit independence from the state?

We absolutely must get control of our transit system. The Hogan administration has decimated public transit and favored investments in roads so regaining control of our public transit is critical to making it work for Baltimore City residents. I do support the creation of a Regional Transit Authority. Our administration will also subsidize public transit for city employees and end the parking subsidy for employees who aren't required to travel for their job. My administration will strongly enforce Bus Only lanes so they work and improve the reliability of public transit. My administration will also support transit-oriented development making transit a more attractive commuting solution.

6. How will you address the environment, climate justice, and the climate crisis locally, including not only reducing/eliminating greenhouse gas emissions within the city, but also protecting the people and infrastructure from the consequences of the climate crisis? Will you declare a state of climate emergency?

Baltimore faces a very serious climate and environmental justice crisis, with pollution and rising temperatures concentrated in many of the city's low-income African-American

neighborhoods. Our air quality problems are particularly acute -- and our most distressed communities again bear the brunt of the pollution and the public health problems it causes. Our rates of hospitalization for asthma are about 2.3 times the state's rate, and asthma and other pollution-related woes are concentrated in high-poverty parts of our city.

One major source of our bad quality is the BRESKO trash incinerator in South Baltimore. As a legislator, I've long opposed MD's treatment of waste-to-incineration energy -- like the BRESKO plant -- as a top tier form of renewable energy. That classification in effect encourages and subsidizes the BRESKO facility even as it remains one of Maryland's top polluters.

Working to end the subsidies for dirty waste-to-energy plants is one way we can cut air pollution in Baltimore. Other concrete steps include:

- Imposing tough new NOx emissions standards on that plant as we work to phase it out and replace it with renewable and less polluted forms of energy
- Mandating monitoring of major pollutants from the BRESKO plant and the Curtis Bay Energy Medical Waste Incinerator
- Establishing tougher standards for Sodium Dioxide and dioxin pollution from Baltimore's major polluters
- Imposing tough conditions and strict regulation on permits for any new significant source of air pollution in Baltimore, especially ones in or near the distressed neighborhood where pollution and heat islands are now concentrated
- Improving public transportation to take cars off our streets and diminish air pollution in densely-populated parts of the city
- Continuing to expand our tree canopy especially in low-income neighborhoods

7. How will you improve public health within the city? Please address racial and economic health disparities and social determinants of health. Some things to consider:
- a. The high asthma rate;
  - b. Food insecurity and food deserts;
  - c. Disparities in life expectancy;
  - d. The effects of trauma and violence.
  - e. Lead in water and housing.

The public health disparities and crises our city faces are one of the most tragic examples of Baltimore's failures to use our city's great assets to address our most pressing problems. Many of my previous answers address public health as well because our campaign takes a holistic approach to the issues we face as a city. Expanding community schools not only improves academic outcomes, but will provide families access to healthcare in their neighborhoods. Focused investments on neighborhoods will bring basic amenities such as grocery stores. But we won't stop there.

As the home of two of the country's leading medical schools and two leading schools of public health, Baltimore is one of the world's leading centers for public health research and expertise. I am committed to working to see to it that we finally put those resources to work to address the terrible public health concerns that have long plagued our community. We will treat issues like addiction, gun violence and the trauma it inflicts on individuals and communities as the public health problems that they are. As I noted earlier, my administration will conduct, and share with the public, an annual public health census that documents the data related to those issues -- and highlights where the city is and is not using our public health resources effectively to address them.

8. How will you improve economic opportunities for all residents of Baltimore? What programs would you create or reform to improve access to well paying jobs?

We need to take a critical look at the types of jobs our schools are preparing students for. Part of the Kirwan Commission's recommendations looks at developing trade and apprentice opportunities for youth so they can be employed after graduation. I would support expanding those programs in our community colleges and CACs. I will also provide incentives to have contractors employ students of these programs.

In addition, we will further support small businesses and entrepreneurship through small business loans.

9. What reforms to the structure and functioning of city government would you implement?

I have called for the creation of a non-partisan Department of Legislative Services to help City Council members and city officials understand the implications of proposed legislation and other reforms. I support establishing an independent Office of the Inspector General to make sure city contracting is conducted in fair and transparent fashion and an independent city Ethics Commission to hold city officials, elected and appointed, to clear and rigorous ethical standards. I will make sure we fully fund the Small Donor Fund voters approved in a referendum to amplify the voices of small donors and diminish the impact of pay-to-play politics. I will reform the constitution of the Board of Estimates so that the Mayor no longer has the majority votes by either reforming the size or the ways in which the members are appointed. I will conduct an annual audit of police overtime spending to make sure we're not squandering critical public safety resources on excessive overtime expenses. In addition, I will re-establish the CitiStat program to increase accountability and transparency for all city agencies. I will also conduct, and make public, an annual Public Health Census that reviews data related to critical public health problems like gun violence, addiction, overdoses and opioid abuse and to the ways the city is using (and might better employ) our public health resources to address those issues.

10. How will you improve the quality of life for city residents? Some things to consider:

- a. Community art;
- b. Community centers and recreation;
- c. Illegal dumping;
- d. Beautification of streets and neighborhoods;
- e. Improving infrastructure;
- f. Trash pickup and recycling.

Our City has to do better taking care of its residents. I will utilize the same strategy as I did in HousingStat with DPW to ensure that these basic functions - trash pick up, recycling, beautification and street cleaning - are done well and consistently regardless of zip code. Everyone deserves to live in a clean neighborhood. Baltimore is known for its community art, especially its murals. My administration will continue to support the creation of community art and promote its art through BOPA.

11. How will you address the needs of immigrants, both documented and undocumented?  
Will you ensure the safety of our undocumented neighbors?

I would make Baltimore a sanctuary city. Not only does it send a strong message of welcoming and acceptance, but it also provides a refuge for those who seek a better life--particularly if they are escaping violence, extreme poverty, or war. Across the city, immigrants are helping to repopulate and revitalize some of our struggling communities -- and we need to do more to prompt new Americans to come to our city and build their lives (and our neighborhoods) here. I also plan to protect immigrants from being stopped, arrested, searched, or detained solely to investigate an immigration violation. I have always been a champion for comprehensive immigration reform and look forward to protecting the safety, educational opportunities, and well-being of immigrants and their families.

12. How will you address the need for equitable and affordable housing?

Decent, affordable housing is a critical need in Baltimore. I will work with the City Council to pass an inclusionary housing bill requiring all new development to include affordable units. The production of rental housing in Baltimore is on the rise and there must be inclusion of affordable units. Any future TIF in Baltimore will require the inclusion of affordable housing units. We will utilize the Housing Trust Fund, state and federal funds to create affordable housing in neighborhoods of opportunity within the City. We will also work to help expand homeownership, which once achieved, can often be more affordable than renting.

13. How will you balance providing services, including water, to all citizens while planning and paying for infrastructure upgrades/repair and replacement?

My budget will reflect a new vision for Baltimore, one in which the burden of capital improvements doesn't fall on the working-class people of our city. We will take a critical look at how we spend on our priorities and make sure that low income families are not experiencing a cost burden when it comes to paying for public services. Everyone has to pay their fair share. We will look to renegotiate the PILOTs with our public institutions to ensure we have the tax base we need to fund our priorities. We must prioritize infrastructure improvements.

14. Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

I am guided by the core values of community agency, transparency and partnership. I am dedicated to progressive and equitable change that serves to empower the people of Baltimore. I make a concerted effort to bring people together to work on issues to build a better Baltimore City. I believe that communities should have a seat at the table when solutions are debated. There is no room for back-door deals in a democracy.

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