

Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

Baltimore City Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Anson Asaka

Office and District Running For: Baltimore City Council District 4

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

If elected, I would adopt a two-pronged approach to address public safety in Baltimore. One prong is a long-term strategy. The long-term strategy will focus on addressing the root causes of the violence in Baltimore such as poverty, unemployment and inadequate education. If elected, I would support and/or sponsor legislation following the Oakland Ceasefire Partnership model, a model that substantially reduced the violence in Oakland. The legislation would call for the identification of all the specific individuals who are at risk. As noted by the Baltimore Police Department (“BDP”), most at-risk individuals include African American men between the ages of 25 years old and 34 years old. Many of them have prior criminal records, previous drug arrests and/or previous gun arrests. The proposed legislation would establish effective lines of communication with at-risk individuals and provide life-saving services for those individuals. The services would include counseling, vocational training, educational programs, mentorships, college scholarships, job programs and other services. I would work to ensure that the Kirwan Commission’s plan is adequately funded without cutting vital public services. In addition, I would support legislation expanding the Youth Works Program into an all-year program and accept more students. I would support increasing funding for youth entrepreneurship programs and/or creating new programs. If our youth have more opportunities to succeed, they will be less likely to engage in criminal activity.

In addition, I would support legislation to end discrimination against non-violent ex-offenders who have served their time. Ex-offenders face discrimination in housing, student financial aid, and employment. Such discrimination prevents ex-offenders from successfully re-entering society and promotes recidivism. Expanded education and employment opportunities will drive down violence.

Moreover, I support legislation to provide more funding for community groups with a proven track record of substantial reducing violence in the city. For instance, according to news reports, Safe Streets helped substantially reduce the violence in Cherry Hill. Similar groups other city such as the Newark Community Street Team in Newark, New Jersey have been successful. Such successful programs need more funding and material support from the City. Instead of paying them using a refund model, I would support disbursing funds directly to such organization. In addition to supporting such

organizations, the city should devote more resources to promote community policing and neighborhood watch programs.

I would support state legislation giving Baltimore city control over its police department. I would support giving the City Council the power to review and approve the Baltimore Police's police plans. My short-term public strategy would focus on pressuring the Baltimore Police Department to embrace more effective policing tactics. As I have done as a candidate, I would pressure the BDP to increase foot patrols and shut down open air drug markets. To increase capacity, I would support calls for more state police to be deployed and stationed in Baltimore. In Newark, New Jersey, increased police help reduce crime in Newark, New Jersey. If elected, I would support legislation calling for longer sentences for violent offenders and repeat offenders. The revolving door for violent offenders must be closed. If elected, I would support legislation calling for increased funding for Baltimore's witness protection program.

To reform the BPD, as indicated on my website, I would support legislation to revise the Maryland Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights and lobby to restore local control of the Baltimore City Police Department. I would support legislation to strengthen Baltimore Civilian Complaint Review Board ("the Board"). The legislation would grant the Board access to personnel records, grant the Board subpoena power, allow civilians to integrate and interrogate officers, expand the types of complaints that the Board can investigate, and establish the appointment of a special prosecutor for all police misconduct cases. These measures are necessary to restore public trust and confidence in law enforcement. Without an excellent relationship between the community and the police, our communities become less safe.

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?

I can support legislation to amend the City's charter to ensure that the City Council has input in the development of the budget. I support legislation restructuring the Board of Estimates. After the passage of such legislation, I would fight to ensure that the City fulfills the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission. Furthermore, I would use my influence to call for the renegotiation of Payment in Lieu of Taxes ("PILOT") Programs to ensure that non-profits pay their fair share. As reported in Baltimore Brew, 11 non-profits are unpaying the city by \$41 million dollars. If non-profits paid their fair share, more funds would be available to improve Baltimore public schools.

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

I would support legislation substantially increasing funding for the demolition of dilapidated abandoned buildings and ensure that demolition sites are safe and secure. The legislation would require all developers to pay into a special fund to support the revitalization of blighted neighborhoods. The funds would be used to train and hire residents to rebuild troubled communities. The legislation would create tax incentives for developers to revitalize troubled communities and to create affordable housing. The development of affordable housing will ensure that working class and low-income families are not displaced by development.

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

To address the legacy of racism, segregation and redlining in Baltimore, I would support reparations legislation on the local, state and federal level as recommended by Morgan State Professor Lawrence Brown. As noted in the City Lab article titled The Black Butterfly New Deal for Equity in Baltimore, the legislation will call for millions to be invested in redlined communities. In addition, following the model of H.R. 40, the legislation would call for a comprehensive study to determine the most effective way to address the horrific legacy of housing segregation in Baltimore. Under the legislation, any development or investment plan would be assessed based on its equity and racial impact.

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?

I would support legislation calling for the Department of Transportation to increase the number of buses. Unfortunately, the buses often do not adhere to the bus schedule. Increasing the number of buses will help address the problem. In addition, I would publicly support renewed calls for the creation of the Red Line.

I would support the creation of a Regional Transit Authority that is independent of the state. As the Capital Region Blueprint for Regional Mobility has stated, Baltimore's transit system is one of the few in the country run by the state. As reported in the Baltimore Sun, the Greater Washington Partnership report notes that "state officials are accountable to constituents across Maryland, many of whom do not live in Baltimore and may not share Baltimore's goals." A prime example of that problem is Governor Hogan's decision to cancel the proposed Baltimore light rail Red Line. As alleged by NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, that decision denied Baltimoreans potential access to job centers and denied Baltimoreans an opportunity to cut their commute times.

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?

I will support legislation creating the Baltimore Clean Energy Community Benefits Initiative modeled after the Portland Clean Benefits Initiative. The legislation would require big businesses to pay a 1% surcharge on gross revenue, and deposit in a separate special fund for clean energy projects/clean energy job training. This program would employ many people in green jobs and improve the environment. Under the legislation, prior would be given to programs reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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.

I would improve public health in the city by supporting the following measures. I support Councilman Zeke Cohen's Trauma Responsive Care Act. As reported by WMAR, the act will "build a task force that will roll out training at all city run facilities including rec centers, libraries, schools, etc." I would do everything in my power to ensure that it is fully implemented.

If elected, I would fight to ensure that the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative's Food Desert Retail Strategy is fully implemented. In addition, I support legislation to assist African Americans and other minorities in opening accessible and affordable groceries stores in food deserts.

To address disparities in life expectancy, I would use my position as an elected official to urge our state and federal lawmakers to pass single payer medical care. Inadequate healthcare is part of the reason for the disparities in life expectancy. Access to excellent and free healthcare must be declared a civil and human right. Poor diet and lack of exercise are other reasons for disparities in life expectancy. I would support legislation ensuring that students in Baltimore schools have healthy breakfasts and lunches in school. I would a public relations campaign to health diets and exercise in Baltimore.

If elected, I would use my position to urge the Maryland Assembly to increase the Healthy School Facility Fund to ensure that schools are able to remove, repair and/or replace lead contaminated water systems in schools. In addition, I support efforts of Delegate Nick Mosby and Sen. Jill Carter pass laws to tighten restrictions preventing landlords from renting properties with chipping lead paint. I support their proposed legislation requiring lead paint companies to pay for remediation programs.

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?

If elected, I would support increasing the minimum wage to a living wage in Baltimore. I would support legislation expanding the Youth Works program to an all year program and increase the number of youths employed under the program. Moreover, I would support legislation to increase funding for youth entrepreneurship and vocational programs. I support establishing full vocational and green job training in most Baltimore high schools.

I would support legislation calling for increasing funding for programs that encourage students to complete high school and college. The legislation would provide career counseling, mentoring, therapy and other wrap-around services. I would support legislation calling for free college education. Free college education will increase job opportunities.

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

I support various reforms already being considered by the Council. For instance, I support proposed legislation to empower the City Council to have a greater impact on the budget. The Council should be able to add items to the budget. I support empowering the Council to impeach and remove the mayor. I would support public campaign finance reforms to reduce the undue influence of corporations and developers on politicians. I support proposals to reduce the number of votes to override the mayor's veto from 12 to 10. I support legislation giving the Council more influence over city agencies. I support legislation empowering citizens to elect all the members of the Baltimore City School Board. I support reforms restoring city control of the Baltimore Police Department.

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.

I will support the expansion of art programs in public high schools. I would support increasing funding for Youth Works to train students and pay them to create more inspiring murals to beautify struggling communities.

If elected, I will work with community leaders and police to shut down open air drug markets on York Rd. I would support legislation imposing tougher penalties against businesses that allow people to sell drugs in and outside of their establishments. Open air drug markets undermine the fabric of the community.

I support requiring the city to remove trash three times a week (including recycling), increasing the number of trash cans on city blocks, doubling fines for littering and dumping, and suspending driver's license of those who illegal dump in the city. I would support a public relations campaign to encourage the city residents to keep the city clean.

I would support increasing funding for recreation centers. Increased funding will enable the city to open more recreation centers and further extend the hours of operation. During the summer, recreation center should serve breakfast and lunch to young people.

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

I would use my public platform to defend Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protective Status for refugees.

I fully support Mayor Young's executive order reaffirming a citywide commitment to immigrant families. If elected, I would continue to do so and would support any legislation to further implement the Mayor's executive order.

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

As previously stated, I would support legislation to encourage developers to build affordable housing in opportunity areas. I support increasing funding for The Baltimore City Community Relations Commission (CRC). Increased funding will increase CRC's capacity to strictly enforce Baltimore's new laws barring discrimination against Section 8 tenants.

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

I support the Water Accountability and Equity Act. It is a progressive law that ensures that water bills are capped for low income residents. That Act will not prevent the city from paying for infrastructure upgrades/repair replacement. If the City Council renegotiated its PILOT agreements with non-profits, that would provide additional revenue to fund infrastructure upgrades.

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

Yes. I have been about revolutionary change all of my adult life. As a student activist at Howard University, I fought against racism, police brutality, and unjust wars. As a student at Rutgers Law School, I helped organize a civil disobedience protest to defend affirmative action. As a civil rights attorney for the NAACP, the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization, I have used the law to fight against all forms of racial discrimination. I want to bring that same spirit of change to city government.

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