

# Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

## *Baltimore City Endorsement Questionnaire*

Candidate Name: Dave Heilker

Office and District Running For: Baltimore City Council — District 12

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

As the only candidate in District 12 (and one of only maybe THREE non-incumbent candidates citywide – check out Joe Kane in District 14) to have **advocated against the JHU private police**, ending police oppression and occupation is a priority of mine. I am also the **only candidate in District 12 who has called for radically defunding the BPD, and who has publicly called BPD the organized crime syndicate that it operates as**. I advocated against Commissioner-Designate Fitzgerald, long before announcing I was running for office, and created the website [bmorevseverybody.com](http://bmorevseverybody.com) in order to help digitally organize advocates around the city and state against police oppression. I am also the **only candidate in District 12 who participated in the protests that preceded the Baltimore Uprising, including assisting then-candidate for City Council in District 1 Zeke Cohen with organizing a march with more than 200 neighbors from Patterson Park to City Hall in the wake of the murder of Freddie Gray by Baltimore Police**. (I was Mr. Cohen's communications director during his primary campaign from January 2015 through April, 2016).

Public safety is improved when people have resources: water, housing, jobs, utilities, but as a country, and especially in our city where the police have the insidious distinction of originating as slave-catchers for The State, we have criminalized poverty, especially black and immigrant poverty. We know that it is incredibly expensive to be poor in the United States. We must do more to ensure that people experiencing poverty are not only considered when we craft policy, but that they are made a priority through parallel investments, to create the generational security that is associated with property ownership.

We must, as a city, **cancel any contracts we have with ICE** and further, we must **end our contracts with institutions which have contracts with ICE**. Finally, we need to, in all things, consider that we are literally exporting (because so many officers live in our surrounding counties, and not in the neighborhoods they occupy) HALF A BILLION

DOLLARS OR MORE ON POLICE, who have **not made our city safer**, and in fact have acted as an organized crime syndicate for much of the last two decades. Redirecting that money to communities that are the victims of redlining and real-estate based oppression (both of which, Baltimore unfortunately invented) would be one salvo in the absolutely necessary community reparations needed to approach radical racial justice in Baltimore.

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 have made a Commitment to fully funding and implementing the Kirwan Commission recommendations the center of so much of my community organizing work over the last five years. We belong in a city that is committed to our future. I want Baltimore to at least double our commitment to education spending. In 2018, I worked with BEE (Baltimoreans for Educational Equity) as a member of our Leadership Team to fight alongside education organizers to **lead Baltimore City's effort on the Education Lockbox Amendment** (Question 1) which we won, overwhelmingly. I am still a member of that Leadership Team, and, additionally, am currently working as the communications director for **Strong Schools Maryland** to empower other education organizers to ensure the Kirwan recommendations are implemented and that Baltimore funds what is needed for our kids' futures.

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

Fighting Blight Homelessness, Joblessness, and Recidivism with A Green New Deal for Baltimore: The city owns approximately 15,000 vacant homes and almost 15,000 vacant lots.

We can create jobs through improving many of these homes as green homes for people who wouldn't qualify for traditional financing. We will do this while working alongside of community land trusts by identifying families who have rented in communities, sometimes for decades, to provide housing as the human right that it is.

Improving these homes and the infrastructure required for them creates hundreds of new jobs for Baltimore residents. Especially students and persons who have fallen victim to the oppressive, white supremacist criminal justice system.

These jobs can be on-ramps to **sustainable, low-carbon careers which are fair-paying, union-backed, and the kind of career that doesn't care about higher education or the shortcomings of our racist, oppressive criminal justice system.** On vacant lots, we need to consider creation of green spaces (community solar farms

to subsidize power costs, and reduce the heat islands in the poorest neighborhoods in our city -- and put the city on a path to municipalizing our power grid), pop-up farmers' markets to help combat food deserts, and carrier-grade municipal wifi to help provide the more-than-60%-of-people in our city who don't have access to high speed internet in their homes.

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

Equitable investment starts *in the community*. That means being in the neighborhoods that are traditionally disinvested/redlined/segregated and **listening to the residents and what they want**. As I've canvassed across the district for my campaign (and across the city for others including Ben Jealous, Councilman Cohen, Del. Robbyn Lewis, and many others), I've listened to people asking how we get grocery stores into food deserts, how we attract businesses to neighborhoods where they've closed or moved. We've convened in community events and discussed modes of innovative community-driven investment: fostering black-owned businesses, opening pop-up farmers' markets in food deserts and places with low walkability or high concentrations of senior citizens. When we invest in communities that have been disinvested, and when we do it with community input, we can rebuild neighborhoods from the **inside out** while preventing gentrification.

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 absolutely support the establishment of a regional, intra-county transit authority. In order to improve transit access for people, we must stop incentivizing cars, and immediately redouble our efforts to implementation of complete streets. Some of the options to [make transit more reliable, efficient, and sensible, are by adopting true Bus Rapid Transit](#) initiatives. Bus [routes need to be made more intuitive](#), one way we can do this is by configuring routes to travel the entire distance of one street east-west or north-south (and using parallel E/W N/S streets to return across the city). Buses **really shouldn't turn** unless they are compelled to by the street itself.

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?

While a councilmember cannot declare a state-of-emergency with any of the formality that would be necessary to compel action from city agencies, we can and should coalesce to formally resolve that there is a climate emergency in Baltimore and that it must be the top-of-mind priority for all of us. As a port city on a major tributary to the

Chesapeake, we should be the vanguard in canonizing a local, municipal green new deal, setting an example for the rest of the US, and become a hub of climate action where leaders from all over the world come to learn about turning cities **green**.

We have aging infrastructure, citywide, that needs to be updated for the health of residents **as well as** the health of the planet. Those contracts **will be awarded**, so let's make sure that a component of those contracts is hiring Baltimoreans who may have served time or who lack experience/education into fair-paying jobs that will act as a pathway-to-apprenticeship and eventually, more financial independence. We know that jobs, specifically paid-trainings, and access to resources reduces recidivism, let's make that part of our environmental plan. We can start with identifying traditionally disinvested neighborhoods (broken down by ward/precinct) and impose a fee on developers who don't meet the minimum threshold of jobs in one or more of those precincts.

Things to be mindful of during this process:

- a. We have to protect salaries and benefits of people moving from high-carbon jobs to jobs and training in green/lower carbon
  - b. We need to bolster jobs that are already lower-carbon (things like child and elder-care) through expanding those jobs into fair, livable pay
  - c. We need to make YouthWorks an on-demand, year round job, with opportunities to plant trees, do neighborhood cleanups, and do light, low-supervision manual labor for money in your pocket **daily or weekly**.
  - d. Also, because of our uniquely "Baltimorean" historic inequity, White L neighborhoods must pay their climate debts to impacted neighborhoods, especially in the Black Butterfly. They must also move more quickly by comparison to undo the damage that they have allowed to happen in impacted neighborhoods.
  - e. We must, above all else, center our climate work on undoing what Dr. Lawrence Brown calls the "Baltimore Apartheid" — any movement for climate that doesn't center very intentionally on justice, we create compounding stresses on communities that are **already very deeply stressed**.
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 stand against any development that isn't explicitly green, especially actively polluting industrial development like the trash incinerator. Any new industrial facilities that create measurable pollution would need to contribute significant funds to community greening and carbon offsetting in impacted communities (providing solar power to the surrounding neighborhood, for example). Additional priority components of improving public health are: addressing trauma head on, expanding mental health-care, opening supervised-injection sites, advocating for substance abuse disorder cessation rescheduling at the state level (making Bupe legal in mobile and pop-up clinics), creating green spaces, and strengthening water-security by stopping all water cutoffs in houses with children under 18, and completely removing water bills for seniors age 60 and up. Transit and bikeability/walkability go a very long way to better health outcomes for our city, as do the shutdown of polluting industries like the trash incinerator. We also need to municipalize recycling in lieu of compounding the mounting masses of compostable and recyclable materials in landfills. Finally, providing incentives to both residents and small businesses to add healthy, fresh food options including fruits, vegetables, meat-alternatives, and non-sugary drinks.

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?

(partially copied from above) A crucial component of my policy prescription is a **local Green New Deal**. As a port city on a major tributary to the Chesapeake, we should be the vanguard in canonizing a local, municipal green jobs policy.

We have aging infrastructure, citywide, that needs to be updated for the health of residents **as well as** the health of the planet. Those contracts **will be awarded to someone**, so let's make sure that a component of those contracts is hiring Baltimoreans who may have served time or who lack experience/education into fair-paying jobs that will act as a pathway-to-apprenticeship and eventually, more financial independence. **We know that jobs, specifically paid-trainings, and access to resources reduces recidivism, let's make that part of our environmental plan.** We can start with identifying traditionally disinvested neighborhoods (broken down by ward/precinct) and impose a fee on developers who don't meet the minimum threshold of jobs in one or more of those precincts. Importantly, fully funding the Kirwan recommendations in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future will provide additional Career and Technical Education programs for students who may not choose to attend college.

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

We need to eliminate the Board of Estimates, and de-concentrate the power of the Mayor of Baltimore. We need to amend the City Charter to allow the City Council to not only strike items from the Mayor's budget, but to reallocate funds as is democratically determined by members of council. We need to implement participatory budgeting to help more people become engaged in our city politics, and we need to transition to a school board that is at least 2/3rds elected (and to publicly fund those elections and stipend meetings so that we don't exclusively elect people who have the privilege required to take a night off work to improve the outcomes of their children). I would be in favor of having a decennial "City Charter Convention" where The Mayor, lawmakers, and residents come together to sunset laws that are inequitable and add new, important policies to the city charter.

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.

As a city, we must do more to support beautification projects both functional and aesthetic. We must support these projects through monetization, additional, city-provided artist housing, low cost housing for city workers (including community land-trust based programs for ownership for people who wouldn't traditionally qualify). At the risk of sounding repetitive, I would again cite my Local Green New Deal policy as a way to provide fair-paying, low-carbon jobs up-and-down the experiential ladder.

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

Borders are arbitrary, and people shouldn't be denied access to services and resources just because they weren't fortunate enough to be born in the US.

I will **immediately call for the cancellation of all city contracts with ICE, and the suspension-pending-cancellation of city contracts with vendors who have dealings with ICE**. We need to, annually, reaffirm ourselves as a Sanctuary City, and provide additional funding to MIMA (the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs...also, I designed their logo!!! :-D). As a community organizer and a person of color, I hold fast to the maxim **"nothing about us without us,"** and would sit in community with residents who are expats from other countries (especially undocumented Latinx

residents) to find out how we can best serve them and how we can best partner with folks from other cultures.

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

We must center Fighting Blight, Homelessness, Joblessness, and Recidivism with A Green New Deal for Baltimore: **The city owns approximately 15,000 vacant homes** and almost 15,000 vacant lots. We can create jobs through improving many of these homes as green homes for people who wouldn't qualify for traditional financing.

As a councilmember, I will partner with Community Land Trusts to create more affordable housing for people who have lived in communities for years (sometimes decades!) but who don't qualify for traditional financing. **We also need to help tenants organize citywide.** I'm a part of an organization that has helped to start a tenants union in some of the housing in Baltimore City (it is in its nascent stages, and to protect those tenants, I won't go into detail on the location).

We need to **protect and expand public housing in the city, and end the moratorium placed on new public housing applications.** We also need a leader who will go to Annapolis to lobby for our elected leaders to **authorize rent control** in Baltimore City. My Local Green New Deal plan does a lot to remove parasitic, gentrifying landlords from the equation: by intentionally, and through policy, naming housing a human right in our city, we can divert funds away from developers and to development that is not only an improvement for communities, but that shares in those communities' values to identify the priorities and needs of the people who [already] live there.

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

Our campaign's plan for #waterbillrelief is a vision for a Baltimore where people experiencing poverty are not further oppressed by unaffordable water bills that force many folks to choose between their medication and keeping the water on.

First, we will stop charging people 60 or older for water, which prevents those most at risk from needing to make a medicine-vs-utilities decision.

We must also put a moratorium on water cut-offs in homes where there are children 18 and under. There are only about a dozen schools in Baltimore City where the water is safe to drink, and we know that water insecurity is comorbid with higher push-out rates, learning disabilities, and poorer test performance.

Students should not be held responsible for the financial hardships of their families, which are already burdensome enough without the additional oppression of the government.

We can fund this and, I believe, **ALL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**, by tiering the costs of water [and other utilities, which will necessarily need to be put on pace to be municipalized].

A single person uses, on average, 1500 gallons of water a month. For contrast, **Johns Hopkins and UMMS hospitals use about 500 gallons of water per staffed bed PER DAY.**

Water is not the type of resource where we should give you a discount for buying in bulk, but we allow **HUGE, often parasitic institutions to use exponentially more water than residents, and because they don't pay taxes, they heavily overclock our infrastructure without contributing to its improvement.**

My proposal would correct this by making water progressively and severely more expensive once consumption reaches a level that families and small businesses couldn't reasonably attain. This would cap and reduce water bills for most residents, and finally compel huge corporations to pay their fair share.

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

I'm a dues-paying member of Our Revolution MD, and, because of a chat with Ms. Barb Friedland, I've been participating in the #dontshopontuesdays boycott. I've been endorsed by Sen. Mike Gravel's 2020 presidential campaign (prior to him suspending his campaign and endorsing Sen. Sanders), the Greater Baltimore DSA, and the Salisbury University Democratic Club.

I'm a dues-paying member of the Baltimore Democratic Socialists of America, and a community organizer with Baltimoreans for Educational Equity. I canvassed several thousand doors in 2018 for Ben Jealous, and orchestrated the communications for Del. Robbyn Lewis' 2018 campaign against an opponent who outraised us by as much as 5-to-1.

I am committed to running a campaign without a corporate fundraiser, as I believe that the political machine in Baltimore has endemic corruption that led to the incarceration of fully 20% of all of the people in Baltimore during the O'Malley years. Our campaign is led by grassroots organizers, from across Baltimore who know that our city cannot heal without erasing the arbitrary lines of geography and privilege.

I will be an unapologetic fighter for class, racial, housing, and economic justice, and I am fully committed to adding my voice to the progressive chorus present in many of our council districts, and partnering with other organizers, socialists, and community members of all ages to further democratize our city and re-center people in the political process.

Your website: [daveforbaltimore.com](http://daveforbaltimore.com)

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