

Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

Baltimore City Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Nicole E. Harris-Crest

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?

I will invest in a multifaceted approach to reduce crime in Baltimore. We must hold repeat violent offenders accountable. Having lost my father to gun violence, this issue is deeply personal for me. One of the men responsible for my father's death was released from prison for a serious gun charge just six weeks before my father's killing. I have and will continue to advocate for legislation and policies which provide stiffer sentencing for those who illegally possess guns.

On the other hand, we must provide mental health counseling, job training, education, and resources to support and empower individuals before they become entangled in the criminal justice system. As Chief of External Affairs to the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, I create preventive measures to reduce crime, including youth and diversion programs. One such example is the AIM to B'More program, where I, along with my staff, have provided over forty first-time non-violent felony drug offenders with workforce development training, mental health counseling, and a career. Upon successful completion of the program, participants have full-time employment and are eligible to expunge their felony record.

To rebuild Baltimore, we must address the root cause of crime and support residents to thwart the development of criminals and repeat offenders. I would like to see additional programs such as AIM to B'More that support those who have had a troubled past but need the proper support and resources to turn their lives around. I will use my passion for the community, legal background, and personal experience as a homicide survivor to help take back our city by advocating for the following measures: (1) community policing, (2) cultural sensitivity and diversity training for police officers, (3) resources to address substance abuse, and (3) relationships with grassroots organizations and clergy to address the needs of the community and the root cause of crime.

We must also move forward as a city with criminal justice and police reform. I support a community policing model whereby officers build trust, and both formally and informally engage residents in the community. I also support problem-oriented policing where officers

identify problems, analyze data and associated factors, develop appropriate responses, and evaluate the results of chosen responses. As Councilwoman, I will inquire about the progress and implementation of both community and problem solving policing. I will encourage the public safety chair of the Baltimore City Council to call for hearings where council members can hear the outcomes of these models and determine how the Baltimore Police Department measures its improvement. I also support providing cultural and sensitivity training for police officers. As Councilwoman, I would welcome the opportunity to attend such training to more clearly understand how officers are trained and offer feedback on any concerns. I am also interested in working with the Baltimore Police Department and the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office to analyze any trends in recent police misconduct to determine how to eradicate this issue. We should look for patterns to identify the instances in which police misconduct is more or less prevalent and look at factors such as the officer's police district, years of service, ranking, etc. Also, we must continue to allow the Office of the State's Attorney to hold officers accountable for any police misconduct. I realize that the Baltimore Police Department requires a complete culture shift, and it might require additional time to witness the impact of these recent changes.

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?

Quality education is essential to help students reach their full potential. As an attorney, as well as a non-profit and government leader, I will use my advocacy experience to push for additional resources, smarter investment, and accountability in the education of our students. To ensure that every child in Baltimore has an equal opportunity for an education that prepares them for college or a career, I will champion real solutions to improve education within the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS). Solutions include advocating for the following:

1. Increased state and local funding sent directly to the classroom for students, with a particular focus on schools in areas of concentrated poverty. Baltimore City Public Schools must have adequate funding to provide students with a quality education. As Councilwoman, I will also continue to advocate for Baltimore City to increase its contribution to City Schools and ensure there is legislation to maintain adequate funding that takes into account inflation and the future needs of students. I agree with the current recommendation of the Kirwan Commission for Baltimore to increase its contribution to \$330 million by 2030. As Councilwoman, I will look for creative ways to fund education. Before I support any new businesses or opportunities on behalf of the city, I will continue to consider how we might negotiate additional funding for City Schools. I will support the collection of revenue from online gambling and lottery sales and red light camera fines. I will also work to ensure the city properly allocates these revenue sources to fund Baltimore's education. We must be creative in how we consider funding City Schools, and education must be a priority for Baltimore.

2. Strong academic achievement across the school district that provides students with a 21st Century education. A strong core curriculum and opportunities to take honors and advanced placement courses will allow our students to be competitive and marketable for post-secondary education and the workforce. As such, the curriculum should provide students with skills and knowledge to attend a four-year college, community college, trade school, or enter the workforce with technical skills.

3. Accountability such that BCPSS sets and achieves benchmarks of success with spending targeted to address areas of need to result in increased student achievement. As a Councilwoman, I will request hearings and regular status updates to evaluate student performance.

4. Adoption of a community school model across BCPSS to provide students and families with access to wraparound services within the school community, including mental health, afterschool, and social services.

5. A community approach with the support of churches, clergy, community groups, and community members all working together to benefit our students.

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

To move Baltimore forward, our communities must thrive with successful businesses and a growing housing market. I will gather community input and actively seek partnerships with representatives of the community's unique makeup so that our shops and businesses can thrive for decades to come. We must focus on the health and well-being of our neighborhoods. As a real estate and transactional development attorney, I supported real estate development deals to improve commercial activity in Baltimore. I will continue to use my legal and community relations expertise to revitalize neighborhoods throughout the city, and especially within the 4th district with:

1. Additional funding for recreational centers for youth to enjoy sports, arts, and technology, and to commune with other members of the community.

2. Restored neighborhood shopping center as we work to maintain commercial business in Belvedere Square, and attract similar businesses to the York Road corridor and the Loch Raven and Alameda shopping centers.

3. Grocery stores with fresh produce and meats where residents can purchase items to meet their daily shopping needs.

4. Clean streets and parks to keep our neighborhoods and parks free of trash and debris.

We must ensure that any tax incentives and benefits that businesses receive will also result in benefits for the community. Moreover, it is key that all community stakeholders be involved and have a voice regarding any new development projects. The community should feel that the revitalization is for the good of the existing community, not a tool to push out residents.

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

The Black Butterfly is an issue that should not only be a concern of those in disinvested areas but the entire city. We must appreciate the history which has created the hyper-segregated city. We must move forward to clearly identify those communities in the Black Butterfly and work to develop a strategic plan with priorities for investment. There are local non-profits that exist to revitalize disinvested communities. As such, the city must identify opportunities to provide funding to support these organizations in providing developers and investors with financing to revitalize these communities. As Councilwoman, I would advocate for a multifaceted approach to ensure the Black Butterfly receives equitable investment. That approach should include new school construction and measures to improve school performance, commercial development, and improved housing. The city, developers and investors must collaborate with the community to meet residents' needs with grocery stores, parks, recreation centers etc. Each Baltimore resident should live in a community where they are proud to call home.

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 can achieve clean, reliable, affordable transit for all Baltimore residents by promoting different transportation practices and expanding our current transit system. As Councilwoman, I will promote electric cars and buses powered by renewable energy to reduce pollution from cars and buses. Also, I will advocate for the creation of communities where residents can walk and bike to and from their destinations. Moreover, I will champion the expansion and improvement of our existing public transit system. We need a public transit system similar to the Red Line proposal, which would allow Baltimore residents to travel back and forth from West to East Baltimore. I will also work to improve the reliability of our current transit system. Off-board payment and dedicated lanes are just a few examples of how we can work to improve efficiency. I support the creation of a Regional Transit Authority to provide transit independence from the state. More local control of Baltimore's transportation system would allow Baltimore to develop a strategy to enhance its existing service and maintain repairs and service needs.

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?

As Councilwoman, I seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the Climate Action Plan adopted and implemented by the city in 2012. There was a goal set to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15%. I will assess and review the specific objectives that aided or detracted from achieving that goal and identify where there have been any improvements in climate change as a result of the legislation.

I will encourage the City Council to continue to identify and assess new technologies and energy to address climate change. I will promote electric cars and buses powered by renewable energy to reduce pollution from cars and buses. Also, I will advocate for the creation of communities where residents can walk and bike to and from their destinations to alleviate the need for driving and the emission of fossil fuels. I will also advocate for the use of more efficient energy, such as solar energy, to address concerns regarding climate change.

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 will work with the Baltimore City Health Department to improve public health in the city. I will also consider partnerships with local hospitals to address many of the city's public health concerns. We must develop public awareness campaigns regarding these issues and develop clear plans of action to combat these concerns. As Councilwoman, I will unearth concerns regarding racial and economic health disparities, partner with city agencies or local organizations/hospitals to alleviate these concerns and create policy and legislation to address these issues.

Asthma hot spots are one issue that plagues Baltimore communities where conditions such as decrepit houses, rodents, and bugs trigger the disease. Asthma hot spots are most prevalent in low-income African American neighborhoods, especially those with empty homes. One such area plagued with asthma hot spots is zip code 21223. Ironically, this area is not far away from the University of Maryland Medical Center and Johns Hopkins Hospital. These hospitals continue to receive government tax breaks, but fail to address the public health needs of the community in a significant way. Those hospitals that fail to contribute to eradicating the public health concerns of our city should not receive tax incentives. As Councilwoman, I will hold local hospitals accountable for providing meaningful and impactful community benefits. Moreover, I support and advocate to expand the health department's asthma program.

We must address issues of food insecurity and food deserts in our community. This issue is also most common in low-income African American communities. Access to healthy food options is a human right. Many of our communities are plagued with liquor stores and dollar stores. As Councilwoman, I will consider legislation to require fresh produce and milk in convenience stores, grocery markets, and dollar stores. I will also look to partner with organizations such as the Baltimore Development Corporation to determine how we can offer incentives and opportunities to bring additional grocery stores into our city.

Finally, trauma and violence continue to plague our city. I will advocate to provide families with mental health counseling and support. As a homicide survivor, I suffer from trauma. I have benefited from a strong support system that has helped me to manage the pain of losing a loved one to gun violence. I will support initiatives such as Councilman Cohen's Trauma Responsive Care Act, and identify ways to address trauma, particularly among youth. A community schools model, on-site school social workers, and teachers and staff trained in trauma-responsive care can assist with addressing the issue.

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?

I support the legislative efforts that resulted in an increased minimum wage in Maryland to \$15 an hour by 2025. By increasing the minimum wage, we provide families with a greater ability to improve their economic status. As Councilwoman, I will work to partner with business leaders to bring well-paying jobs into the city. We have small businesses that we must incentivize to hire city residents. I will also work to continue attracting corporations to Baltimore, particularly those with a focus on growing technologies. Moreover, with many local universities in Baltimore, I will look for partnerships and incentives to encourage these institutions to hire city residents. I will also advocate for policies and legislation to increase employment opportunities within city government available to Baltimore residents. In addition, I will promote ways to improve the reliability of our transit system for residents to travel to and from work. Finally, I will work to ensure all students, regardless of zip code, have a quality education. As Councilwoman, I will advocate for the city to increase its funding contribution to BCPSS, and call for hearings to measure school performance and student achievement. Education is the cornerstone to success. To increase upward mobility, students must receive a quality education. Finally, I will also encourage the city to evaluate the success of the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, identify ways to promote the services and expand the outreach and workforce development opportunities to aid residents in obtaining employment and building a career.

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

With the corruption we have experienced in our city, I am a proponent of legislation and initiatives that advocate for ethics reform. I support publicly funding Baltimore City elections. Publicly funded elections will help level the playing field for strong candidates who may not have access to big donors. Public funding for local elections will also allow elected officials to serve free from bias and concern regarding the financial interest of those who financially supported their campaign.

I also support a shift from five to three members on the Board of Estimates. This shift would limit mayoral control and guard against the temptation for a mayor to vote to protect the financial interests of donors. We must rebuild trust in our city, and I believe these strong measures would be a step in the right direction.

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 employee, I have many relationships with city agencies. As a City Councilwoman, I will utilize those strong relationships to hold city agencies accountable. We must take pride in our communities and ensure they are free of trash, debris, and provide opportunities for recreation. As Councilwoman, I will advocate for additional funding for recreational centers for youth to enjoy sports, arts, and technology, and to commune with other members of the community. I will also advocate for clean streets and parks to keep our neighborhoods and parks free of trash and debris. I will work with the Department of Housing and Community Development to conduct walkthroughs in my district and provide warnings and citations to residents who fail to maintain their properties. Moreover, I will hold city agencies accountable for providing quality service. Finally, I would advocate for legislation which requires trash pickup twice per week and recycling once per week.

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

As Councilwoman, I will ensure the safety of undocumented immigrants. Immigrants, both documented and undocumented, should feel safe and protected in Baltimore. No individual who visits our city should be subjected to harassment, threats or discrimination. Each individual deserves the same rights and protections of any Baltimore resident. I will address the needs of immigrants by encouraging our city to partner with organizations that serve the immigrant population. Immigrants often struggle with language barriers and may also be unaware of their legal rights. The city must partner with organizations to offer available

resources such as translators, interpreters, and legal aid, which specializes in immigration law.

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

To move Baltimore forward, our communities must thrive with successful businesses and a growing housing market. I will work with local developers and investors to increase affordable housing and decrease vacant housing and blight through our communities. As a realtor, real estate investor and real estate and transactional finance attorney, I know it is possible to revitalize communities with affordable housing, especially when coupled with strong commercial businesses, proper financial investments, incentives to developers, and a strategic development plan. We must build communities where individuals are proud to live, work, attend school, and raise families. I will use my knowledge of real estate development to partners with investors, developers, and the Department of Planning to prioritize areas in the 4th district in need of revitalization.

Moreover, I will identify real estate investors or developers that have a special talent for rehabilitating vacant homes and building affordable housing developments. I will gather community input and actively seek partnerships with community representatives to revitalize neighborhoods. In collaboration with community associations, neighborhoods, and the Department of Planning, we will assess the needs for housing and commercial development in the community, and prioritize projects to offer opportunities for individuals to live in a clean, safe house that is affordable.

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 current Water Accountability and Equity Act, whereby residents living in poverty will receive income-based bill credits for water. No resident should be plagued with an unreasonable water bill, especially with little to no explanation. I also support the new process to streamline customer complaints and disputes. As Councilwoman, I would take advantage of those oversight measures included in the bill, which allows for hearings on the issue and resident testimony regarding any concerns.

I will balance providing services while paying for infrastructure upgrades/repair and replacement by evaluating our city services budget, assessing our efficiencies, and prioritizing our needs moving forward. As Councilwoman, I am interested in reviewing the Department of Public Works' budget and speak with leadership to assess whether spending levels are reasonable and efficient. I would look to identify any areas where we might carve out additional dollars for system upgrades for the water system. I would also weigh the costs and benefits of maintaining our current system when compared with possible upgrades and repairs. Moreover, we must identify new leadership for the Department of Public Works after the resignation of Director Rudolph Chow. We must identify a director who is forward-thinking, environmentally conscious and has a vision regarding how we can improve services in Baltimore. We must also find a director who is knowledgeable regarding new

technologies and desires to find new opportunities for greater efficiency and cleanliness in our city.

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

Throughout my personal life and professional career, I have advocated for and supported progressive policies to improve public safety and reduce crime, provide employment and resources to the less fortunate, improve educational opportunities for our students, and revitalize our neighborhoods. As Executive Director to the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools, I advocated for Maryland's 50 charter schools lobbying local and state governments to endorse policies that provide charter autonomy and equitable funding for more than 20,000 students statewide. Moreover, as Chief of External Affairs to the Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore, I serve over 2,700 youth and their families with school and summer programming. Such programming exposes students to the positive aspects of the criminal justice system, encourages careers in criminal justice, and provides resources such as education, afterschool, financial literacy, and workforce development training. Finally, as an attorney, I have represented Fortune 500 clients and managed difficult and challenging cases and legal issues. I desire to use my expertise, talents, and experience to serve my district.

My experience, coupled with my innovative nature, allows me to champion and lead in the collective fight to build a city where all residents have the opportunity to thrive. As a homicide survivor, I have been directly impacted by the lack of progress in our city. As such, I understand the tremendous cost it has on individuals, families, communities, and generations. Moreover, I understand the sense of urgency required to move these issues forward. Despite these obstacles, I remain committed to our city and the fight necessary to work today to create a better future. While I share the frustrations and concerns of many Baltimore residents, I also share great optimism and hope for the great potential on the horizon to turn tragedy into triumph. I have successfully overcome many obstacles in my life and will use that same tenacity to fight for the growth of our city. With a great sense of urgency, I am positioned to champion to create a better Baltimore.

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