

Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

Baltimore City Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Phillip Westry

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 the criminal justice system?

It is my firm belief that creating a culture of public safety is done by investing in children, rather than focusing on the arrest and incarceration of adults that Baltimore let fall through the cracks. Right now, the BPD budget is 10 times greater than Rec and Parks. As a City Councilperson, my power is limited in affecting the City's budget, but I will be a strong advocate for the Kirwan Commission recommendations. I will also sponsor and support charter amendments that allow the City Council to add line items into the budget to better appropriate funds into youth investment.

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 mentioned above, the City Council has limited authority to affect the machinations of the Baltimore City Public School system. I will be a strong partner with the Baltimore City Delegation in Annapolis to promote the expansion of the Community Schools program in elementary/middle schools as well as the expansion of the 21st Century school program. In addition, I will advocate for the full funding of the recommended budget set by the Kirwan Commission. As mentioned above, I will advocate that resources be reallocated from the BPD to City Schools.

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

Having worked at St. Ambrose Housing Aid, I understand the struggles of community development. St. Ambrose, which functions as a non-profit developer, worked to

revitalize blighted homes and sell them at an affordable price. I believe that this kind of development is sustainable and necessary to help repopulate East Baltimore, which is largely in my district. One thing that the city must also prioritize when developing, to increase density to encourage businesses like grocery stores to move back into formerly blighted areas. Right now, East Baltimore is largely a food desert. There are no grocery stores in my district east of Greenmount Avenue. My capstone research project at the University of Maryland School of Law was on the food desert crisis in Baltimore.

I will firmly stand against the big developer's interests in my district. Building luxury apartments and condominiums, especially aided by TIFs cannot be the priority of a city with so many blighted neighborhoods. I will work with developers and even consider TIFs if the development is for the overwhelming good of the neighborhood and for the creation of a community center, grocery store, or other staple required in creating a connected, healthy community.

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

The Twelfth District straddles the "Black Butterfly" and the "White L." When canvassing my district, it is a stark reminder of how rapidly the quality of life shifts from block to block. It will be my priority to bring the investment necessary to East Baltimore that other parts of my district can already take for granted. Eliminating food deserts in underserved areas will be a priority of my first term in office. Shifting the focus of development from the waterfront by incentivizing developers to create new grocery stores, commercial districts, and affordable housing outside of the L will help improve the quality of life in the butterfly without necessitating the displacement of gentrification. Creating walkable neighborhoods and revitalizing vacant lots into parks and shared space will create more community and encourage further investment from the residents into their neighborhoods.

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?

Quality, reliable public transportation needs to be a priority of Baltimore City moving forward. I would support the creation of a Regional Transit Authority because I believe that MDOT does not have the Baltimore region as a top transit priority. I would support the recreation of the Red Line or any other heavy rail investments in Baltimore City. As a more immediate plan to alleviate the current system, I would seek to implement the creation of Bus Rapid Transit. Increasing the number of dedicated bus lanes, floating bus stops, and creating off-board fare collection are some of the methods I see being implemented to increase the reliability and speed of our current system.

As a bicyclist, I would seek to increase the number of protected bike lanes and to see the Baltimore Greenway Trails Network completed. With bicycles as with mass-transit, reducing the dependence on personal motor vehicles is not just beneficial for the health of our city and planet, but will also be necessary to increase the density and population of Baltimore City.

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 needs to become a leader in environmental issues. Currently, we are a city that relies too heavily on personal automobiles and continues to use regressive solutions like trash incineration to circumvent the issue of our overflowing dump. On the City Council, I will support and champion the increase of frequency and reliability of public transportation for the purpose of reducing Baltimore's carbon footprint. I will look for ways to increase the usage of solar energy in Baltimore while working to shut down trash incineration as an energy source. When in office, I will commit to declaring a state of climate emergency.

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.

Right now, too many people devalue the individual lives of Baltimoreans and look only at statistics. A grocery store chain can refuse to move into a neighborhood because the educational attainment of its residents do not meet their quota. A landlord can be allowed to rent unlivable property on the assumption that someone will always need a place to live. The Police Department treats murder victims as statistics where clearing the case from their docket is the top priority. This mentality of corporate and bureaucratic interest over the value of Baltimoreans needs to end.

As a City Councilperson, I will introduce legislation that will further require landlords to comply with stricter standards regarding lead paint and other safety hazards. I will seek to create incentives for grocery stores and small businesses in opportunity zones. I will work to increase the number of recreation centers throughout the city as a way

to give children productive things to do outside of the classroom. Helping provide a path forward for our youth will help stem the tide of violence for future generations.

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 believe that all contracts awarded by the Board of Estimates should require that contractors not only pay the Prevailing Wage but require the contractors to prioritize the hiring of Baltimore City residents. In addition, I would seek to expand the availability of apprenticeship programs and subsidize or eliminate the cost for Baltimore City trade schools and Community College. Providing access to these jobs is a priority for me because I seek to represent a district with neighborhoods with a dramatically higher unemployment rate than the city average. Increasing the accessibility to well-paying careers will be a major priority when I'm on the City Council.

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

I support the charter amendments being introduced into the newly founded Equity and Structure Committee in City Hall. As mentioned above, I will work towards giving the City Council greater power in the yearly budgeting by allowing the Council to add line items into the budget. I also support the restructuring of the Board of Estimates. Right now, that system is entirely corrupted by a Mayoral majority on the Board. With restructuring, I would look to see that the Council President, who would represent my vote on the board, be given one of three votes. I also support the lowering of a City Council veto override to a simple 2/3rds majority.

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.

Trash is a major problem throughout the 12th Council District. Vacant lots in Broadway East are treated as city dumps by too many. Eliminating illegal dumping by increasing the fines and increasing camera presence in known dumping areas will go a long way in reducing the amount of dumping. As mentioned above, investing in Baltimore's transportation infrastructure will help make more neighborhoods accessible to the rest of the city. No resident should be required to take multiple buses to get to a

grocery store. With so many vacant lots in East Baltimore, I will seek to turn more of them into green parks and parks for recreation.

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

I stand with the resolution that declared Baltimore a sanctuary city. In these times, our immigrant populations are more at risk than normal. I will be an advocate, standing alongside CASA in action and other organizations that work to protect the rights of immigrants, both documented and undocumented. I will also seek to improve ESL programs in recreation centers to give immigrant children an easier adjustment to life in Baltimore and the United States.

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

We are living in a time of prosperity for some parts of the 12th District, but far too many of our residents struggle with housing, homelessness, and displacement. Unless we preserve and build new affordable housing, the District's growth will come at the expense of pushing out low-income families and people of color, particularly the communities that have made District 12 so vibrant and resilient.

I have spent my legal career fighting for the preservation of housing. I have helped people save their homes from foreclosure and eviction. Sadly, I have also seen my client lose their home. I support the following policies to address the need for equitable and affordable housing:

1. Rent Control
2. Renter's Unions
3. Just Cause Eviction Policies
4. A 21st Century Dollar Homes Program
5. Baltimore-Specific and Income Limited Downpayment Assistance
6. Expansion of Lead Abatement
7. Truly Unrestricted Options for Housing Choice Voucher Holders
8. Land Banking
9. Equity-Based Development in Oliver, East Baltimore Midway, and Johnston Square
10. Expansion of Housing Aid for All Seniors, Owner & Renters

This legislation would aid in providing equity in housing. Housing is my passion and I would be a champion for housing for all in Baltimore City!

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

Several times over the last century, Baltimore's leaders have taken federal and state money allocated for the maintenance of our once world-renowned water system and invested that money elsewhere. As a result, the city, and currently the tax-payers and homeowners, are being required to foot the bill. First, I would seek aid from our state and federal delegations to acquire funds to help invest in our water infrastructure.

These infrastructure upgrades must be a priority, if the State and Federal Governments are unwilling to help, budgetary decisions must be made on the local level to prevent the burden of these investments being placed on the City's residents especially when considering that these upgrades are only necessary due to decades of disinvestment by Baltimore's mayors.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to earn the support of Our Revolution.

I am a public interest attorney. My work at Maryland Center for Legal Assistance involved helping anyone that comes to the District Court without representation. Most of my clients cannot afford an attorney. The job requires a great deal of coaching and teaching litigants about their rights and the procedures of the Court. I am proud to have assisted more than 2000 litigants in the drafting and filing of pleadings, motions, and other court documents, with the majority of my client's cases involving landlord/tenant controversies, consumer debt collection (bail bonds collection, auto repossession, credit card collection). I also assist a number of people that are experiencing wage theft, most of whom have criminal backgrounds or speak English as a second language. Those wage theft cases, often involve construction subcontractors.

Prior to my work at the Maryland Center for Legal Assistance, I was an attorney and compliance officer for nearly five years at St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center. I represented homeowners in proceedings for mortgage and tax sale foreclosures.

While at St. Ambrose, I worked part-time at the Maryland CASH Campaign (Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope) as a Tax Site Supervisor, from 2016-2018. My site prepared more than 1000 tax returns annually, saving Baltimore City residents over \$150,000 in tax preparation fees. Aside from tax preparation, clients had the opportunity to open a

bank account and sign-up for financial coaching. I also am a volunteer attorney with the Maryland Volunteer Lawyer's Service and Freestate Justice.

I have spent my legal career fighting for working families and underserved communities. I have helped single moms save their homes from foreclosure, represented renters against slum landlords, assisted Baltimoreans in expunging their records so they can find work, and aided seniors that have fallen victim to fraud and unlawful debt collection practices.

My work has given me a front-row seat seeing and hearing about the needs of our Baltimore City residents.

I am running to give the working families of Baltimore's 12th District an ally at City Hall. I have heard their stories. I am running to affect systemic change in Baltimore City.

My campaign started with a meeting of about 20 neighbors, friends, and family in October 2018. By the financial filing deadline in January 2019, we had just under 100 individual donors, we now have over 350 donors. The campaign has more than 70 volunteers and has knocked on over 27,000 doors since my official announcement in April 2019, which represents the start of our 4th round of canvassing. Most of the voters we have spoken with name crime as their number one issue, followed by economic issues, then education.

We have built a grassroots campaign that is based around the needs of everyday people in Baltimore. I am proud to receive the early endorsement from AFL-CIO Baltimore Metro Council, 1199 SEIU, Progressive Maryland and the LGBTQ Victory Fund.

I am a progressive! I am a service provider. I am a proud union member. I am a proud member of the LGBTQ community.

Thank you for considering my campaign for possible endorsement.

Your website: phillipwestry.com

Twitter: @phillipwestry

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