

Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

Baltimore City Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Phylicia Porter, MPH, MSL

Office and District Running For: Baltimore City Council, District 10

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

Public safety comes first, especially for our children and seniors. But beyond stopping the violence, reducing harm to victims, and ending cycles of criminalization, safer neighborhoods require us to think holistically about factors outside of the traditional public safety sphere. These include factors related to people, like education or economic opportunity, but also environmental factors as well, like lead paint exposure. I will build healthy communities by applying her public health lens to create safe neighborhoods for every Baltimorean. Below are specific actions that I will implement as Councilwoman.

- Rebuilding trust in policing and increasing the effectiveness of the Baltimore Police Department
 - **Increasing the number of patrol officers walking the neighborhood and engaging the community.** I will advocate for the Baltimore Police Department to meet local hiring targets and reform operations so that officers spend a greater percentage of their time on proactive policing (i.e., being present in neighborhoods and engaging the community, as opposed to simply responding to calls and reacting to things that have already happened.)¹
 - **Monthly COP walks.** I will Porter knows that true public safety comes from community partnerships. She is committed to holding monthly community-on-patrol (COP) walks to highlight key hot spots for neighborhood-assigned police officers to patrol.
 - **Supporting Baltimore Police Department's full compliance with the Department of Justice Consent Decree.** I will work with BPD, the Consent Decree Monitor, and communities in the 10th District, to ensure that the Consent Decree is implemented on schedule and in an effective manner. This includes ensuring appropriate enforcement action is taken when officers break the law.
 - **End the use of gag orders.**
- Funding and implementing programs that reduce violence and increase harm reduction an

¹ See [Baltimore Police Department Biennial Performance Audit Report for FY 2016-2017](#) (Finding that the Baltimore Police Department did not meet its goal of 40% of officer time spent on proactive policing. For FY 2016 time spent on proactive policing was just 16%.)

- **Funding violence prevention programs like Safe Streets and Roca.** I will advocate for increased funding to expand programs like Safe Streets and Roca that address violence by intervening before it starts. I will foster community partnerships to ensure these programs are working as effectively as possible.
- **Expanding the response to the opioid crisis and trying new strategies like safe injection sites.** Many years into the onset of the opioid crisis, communities in the 10th District like Morrell Park, Brooklyn, and Curtis Bay, are still waiting for a proportionate response to this public health crisis. Baltimore City now has the highest opioid fatality rate of any City in the U.S. I will Porter will work with Maryland’s Inter-Agency Heroin and Opioid Coordinating Council, the Maryland General Assembly, the Baltimore City Health Department, and community based organizations to expand funding and develop new, innovative approaches like safe injection sites, which have been proven to improve treatment utilization and reduce overdoses and deaths.
- Addressing environmental factors and other public health issues that directly relate to public safety.
 - **Addressing Baltimore’s lead paint crisis by identifying, documenting, and remediating problem properties.** Lead paint remediation remains a huge challenge in Baltimore. Currently neither the City or the State perform adequate oversight of landlords owning lead paint properties. A 2015 audit confirmed that the state agency responsible for Maryland’s lead program is rarely checking properties, and if a property is checked, it is usually done after a child is found to be poisoned by lead.² I will work with the Maryland Department of Environment, Baltimore Housing, community partners and activists to ensure that homes are being registered, checked, and remediated.
 - **Reducing vacant housing, blight, and remediating substandard housing.** Public health issues related to housing don’t stop with lead. Poor housing conditions throughout our communities affect our health and public safety. Vacant and blighted housing is an issue in communities across the 10th District. In places like Cherry Hill, public housing units need investment to fix poor conditions including indoor air quality issues that cause asthma. I will work with the state partners, Baltimore Housing, and community leaders to remediate vacant and blighted housing and ensure that we invest in public housing units and do not displace or reduce our public housing stock.
 - **Providing safe routes to school for our children.** When our communities are hurting, our children unfortunately hurt the most. The walk or public transit ride to school exposes too many children to violence. Research shows that this affects absenteeism and school performance. Additionally, if care isn’t taken to calm traffic on children’s routes to school, they are at risk for injury or even death from traffic crashes. I will work with city and state agencies, non-profits, and the community, to ensure that children are able to get to and from school safely.

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- **Ensuring we have clean air and lower asthma rates.** In addition to indoor air quality issues, we need to ensure that we address the sources of pollution that contribute to Baltimore City's high rates of childhood and adult asthma. This includes

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?

First, I believe that the City Council should have the power to confirm or deny the Mayor's decisions regarding school board members. Secondly, I completely agree that they should have at least 3 years of experience working in public schools. As Councilwoman, I would work to prioritize school board members with public school teaching backgrounds as a voting representative on the BCPS School Board. As a technical expert in public health, I am fully firm in the position that entities that deal with our youth should have the technical background & professional experience related to education. These individuals would support and provide an advisory role on the School Board with proven evidence-based models for programming, instruction, etc. that are specific to BCPS. Lastly, there should be a mandated voting representative from the parent and youth demographic on the School Board. This provides an opportunity for a specific demographics to be represented on the School Board that would otherwise not be represented.

Secondly if elected, I will support legislation that would transition Baltimore City's School Board to a hybrid structure. A hybrid method provides balance and ensures accountability and transparency from elected officials while still maintaining the professional expertise of appointees.

Next, I will advocate for a holistic mental health based approach to discipline in order to identify and address underlying issues that may make a student misbehave in school. As a former student with behavioral issues, I fully understand that there are other underlying factors that inhibit student's behavior. Suspending students with behavioral problems without addressing the underlying causes of those problems does nothing to help the problem student, as well as teachers and other students who may be put at risk by their actions. Students with repeat behavior issues, rather than being suspended, should be recommended to trained mental health professionals.

Moreover, I believe that Baltimore City should increase its contribution to BCPSS by 15%, from 14% to 29% of its annual operating budget, in order to meet Kirwan obligations. While this is not enough to address all of the holistic needs of BCPS, this is a step in the right direction to begin address the decades long underfunding of BCPS.

Additionally, regarding infrastructure, there are several opportunities available to utilize these vacant and/or underused community buildings & resources. Such vacant school properties can be revitalized and transformed into rec centers for the public, multi-unit affordable housing complexes, general community resource centers, and senior centers. Along with my colleagues, we would, of course, prioritize community input when deciding what to do with these empty buildings. This would be shaped as an opportunity for engagement & empowerment for communities to use education institutions are an anchor for neighborhood revitalization. As an advocate for community revitalization & stabilization, I would collaborate with neighborhood stakeholders to create & cultivate opportunities that center on the optimal utilization of housing trusts, land trust, and community development corporations in areas with incredible need.

Lastly, I am in full support of reallocating the City's budget to increase spending on schools. Spending on policing must absolutely come down, but there must be further discussion/investigation into the exact percentage that ought to be cut and shifted. We need our police force to have adequate funding in order to address violent crime and ensure public safety. Yet, investing in public education is just as, if not more, important to prevent crime before it happens. In addition to redirecting police funding towards education, we should do a complete audit of other city agencies (DPW, City Hall, etc.), identify wasteful spending and funnel these funds towards meeting the Kirwan obligations.

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

First, I will ensure that neighborhood revitalizers & real estate developers build low-income/affordable housing projects as a contingency to access necessary resources from local & state government. There is a large portion of developers that utilize public funding, negotiations of secure TIF monies should be attached to community driven projects in the communities served. I will also fight to make sure that we distribute affordable housing to areas where it is needed the most while, at the same time, avoiding high concentration of low-income housing projects.

Secondly, I will support collaborating with neighborhood revitalizers to build community resource centers for youth, students, and families in and around Baltimore's 10th District in order to improve public safety in our neighborhoods and foster direct connection to our schools.

4. 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 support increased smart, common sense transit investments in Baltimore. These include ensuring that are railway, bus system, and other modes of transportation schedules are coordinated to ensure seamless travel to and from work, from East to West Baltimore, etc. Baltimore desperately needs a revamp of its bus and subway systems in order to significantly increase accessibility to schools, employment opportunities, and health resources for its residents. A great transit system must have various modes of transportation that are equipped with the necessary technology that allows for transportation to be efficient, equitable, safe, and comfortable.

There are several initiatives that can be implemented to make Baltimore safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Through zoning, I will work towards educating commercial developments to provide bicycle parking, ensuring streets have sidewalks on both sides, and administering public impact traffic studies for developments to better evaluate the safety conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists in surrounding areas. Providing incentives to small business owners to include a walk- and bike component to their business operations will be key. The intersection of economic/ business development and transportation should be utilized as a model for true neighborhood revitalization. With proper oversight, I would support the creation of a Regional Transit Authority to provide transit independence from the state.

5. 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?

There are specific actions I can take here on the Baltimore City Council, which are important, but equally as important is being able to educate my colleagues and partner to the fullest extent with City & State

agencies, local, state, and national partners such as Baltimore People's Climate Movement, Clean Water Action, Maryland Department of the Environment, Baltimore City Health Department, and the Maryland Department of Health to address the broader systemic causes of climate change that must be acted on at that level. I intend to work with state-level and national partners to lift up Baltimore's specific racial equity needs and concerns in the regional and national conversations about climate strategies

Next, particularly here in Baltimore City and District 10, I'd take specific actions both to reduce climate change-causing emissions and to mitigate the effects of climate change that is already happening. Through multiple levels of my Building Healthy Communities platform, I plan to create and maintain 5 new green spaces, increasing our tree canopy by 10 percent, fight for cleaner air by promoting lower-carbon forms of transportation and following through on the Clean Air Act at the municipal level working with State legislative colleagues and partners, and expand the Code Red heat emergency provisions standards administered by the Baltimore City Health Department that declare dangerous levels. The dangerous heat index felt in Baltimore's heat islands can be significantly higher in various different parts of Baltimore City. As climate change affects our community, it becomes a critical life threatening impact for our City's most vulnerable populations, those working out of doors, and those with chronic health illnesses to evaporate and cool their body off.

Finally, as a City, we also must realize that for households already being affected by indoor air quality problems from mold, more severe storms will make those problems worse as well, so its important to adjust our response to indoor air quality to get ahead of that problem -- one which is now occurring as we speak. There are strong correlations of the effects of climate change, growing asthma rates, added missed days of school for your young scholars, and the likelihood of chronic lifelong health problems through youth, adulthood, and senior life stages.

6. 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.

Public health in Baltimore City is a socio-economic, traumatic, and racial equity crisis.. As Councilwoman, I would work to strengthen the reporting requirements of the "Community Benefits Reports" to include an equity quotient that directly reports out social determinants of health. This equity quotient would be directly tied to reporting and City managed funds throughout the City to hospital & research institutions and health specific community based organizations. This reporting would be managed through a municipal- state - community based collaboration by the Maryland Department of Health & Hygiene, the Baltimore City Health Department, and the Maryland Hospital Association, and key health community based stakeholders. This widespread reporting helps health specific organizations understand how to improve their practices, research and utilization of resources for surrounding residents. For example, due to its location in the southwest segment of the Baltimore Metropolitan Area, Saint Agnes serves a diverse patient population. Saint Agnes' primary and secondary service areas (Southwest Baltimore City and Baltimore County, Northern Anne Arundel County, Eastern Howard County, and Southern Carroll County) have a population of approximately 738,000. The existence of benefit reports encourages hospitals to visualize and actualize strategies for community improvement, Saint Agnes established a Health Enterprise Zone in West Baltimore through a collaborative partnership, the West

Baltimore Primary Care Access Collaborative (WBPCAC) to create a sustainable, replicable system of care to reduce health disparities, improve access to health care, reduce costs, and expand primary care and community health workforce. Ultimately, examples such as this one emphasize measurable and publicly auditable outcomes demonstrating improvements such as reduction of addiction, obesity, and other health outcomes. Outcomes such as high asthma rate, food insecurity, life expectancy, direct & indirect effects of trauma & violence, and housing are some of the parameters. I fully believe if the system is changed, then measures will not cherry-picked for success-- all measures related to public health will be improved.

7. 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?

A good career can make all the difference in a person's life, and when our people do well, our communities are strong and thriving. My approach to economic growth is threefold.

- First, we must encourage investments and promote policies that support small businesses and encourage them to locate and expand in Baltimore.
- Second, we must ensure that small business and corporations hire 10th District and Baltimore City residents and provide the resources to make sure that our residents are connected with job opportunities and vice versa.
- And third, we must make sure that every job is a family-supporting, living wage job because these jobs build healthy communities and further grow the economy.

My proposals to increase both economic growth and economic justice include the following:

- **Living wages for all.** This past legislative session, the General Assembly took a major step forward for economic growth and justice by passing the \$15 minimum wage. Despite a long phase in, it's a huge win. Still, this means that working families need all the advocacy they can get for living wages now. Phylicia Porter will work with local businesses, nonprofits, and the Mayor's Office of Employment Development to encourage public agencies, entities receiving city funds, and the broader business community to raise wages sooner rather than later.
- **Ensuring all communities benefit from major construction and development projects.** When new development and construction comes to our City it's important that we all benefit. One of the best ways to do this is to ensure that developers or construction contractors have Project Labor Agreements and Community Benefits Agreements for these projects. These agreements include the commitments that developers and construction companies make to communities and the workers they will hire, including hiring local workers, paying living wages, and investing in community priorities.
- **Investing in historic main streets and neighborhood centers.** There are so many opportunities for economic development and community revitalization in Baltimore's historic neighborhoods. Nearly every neighborhood has a main street or neighborhood center that can be an ideal site for equitable development.
- **Partnering with anchor institutions to increase investment in the community and create opportunities for small business.** The 10th District is home to some important

anchor institutions in the 10th District, like Medstar Harbor Hospital, St. Agnes Hospital, and Port Covington. With the proper leadership and partnership, these anchors can become true partners with the community, collaborating to build healthy communities. The SB7 Community Benefits Agreement is a good start, but we need to build on that experience to go even further. Phylicia Porter will work with community leaders, city government, and anchor institutions to explore partnerships that increase investment in the community and create opportunities for residents to create and expand small businesses.

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

One of the critical roles of a City Councilmember is to directly advocate on your behalf for services to be provided in a timely and effective manner. But the job doesn't stop there. A City Councilmember should also monitor how agencies are providing services throughout their district and over time, in order to make concrete suggestions for changes to processes or investment priorities that might be leaving communities behind. I will work with City agencies to make sure the trash is picked up, water leaks are fixed, potholes are filled, transportation connections make sense, and green spaces are invested in.

As a measure to restructure the City Government, I fully support a revision to the City Charter to encourage more balanced power dynamics among the City Council, the City Council President, and the 14 Councilmanic districts.

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

First, I would work with 'boots on the ground' immigrant organizations that specialize in wrap around services specifically for immigrants, both documented & undocumented. These include, but are not limited to, housing, education, transportation, human trafficking, citizenship status, and overall civil protections. Secondly, I will support Policy 1021 to ensure the safety and peace of immigrants in our city. Baltimore, a sanctuary city should not have its police act as immigration officials, and must protect the privacy of each resident.

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

First, I would address Baltimore's lead paint crisis by identifying, documenting, and remediating problem properties. Lead paint remediation remains a huge challenge in Baltimore. Currently neither the City or the State perform adequate oversight of landlords owning lead paint properties. A 2015 audit confirmed that the state agency responsible for Maryland's lead program is rarely checking properties, and if a property is checked, it is usually done after a child is found to be poisoned by lead. I will work with the Maryland Department of Environment, Baltimore Housing, community partners and activists to ensure that homes are being registered, checked, and remediated.

Secondly, I would reduce vacant housing, blight, and remediating substandard housing. Public health issues related to housing don't stop with lead. Poor housing conditions throughout our

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

I will bring a unique and valuable perspective to the Baltimore City Council. My background as a public health professional will allow her to work with agencies, community members, and her council colleagues to develop new approaches to Baltimore's challenges.

In the past few years, more attention is being paid to the importance of taking a public health approach to addressing Baltimore's toughest challenges. This is encouraging, but so much more work needs to be done. I believe that my skills as a communicator and relationship builder, my public health expertise, and my knowledge of community organizing and the communities of the 10th District are all essential to the job of Councilperson.

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