

Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

Baltimore City Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Franca Muller Paz

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?

Our community continues to struggle with police brutality, gun violence, [wage theft](#) by employers, and other crimes of poverty and desperation. Despite a police budget that is continuously increased by FOP-funded politicians and the enactment of well-intentioned but ineffectual policing reforms, our City's homicide and crime clearance rates have not meaningfully improved. Instead of doubling down on failed strategies, we must respond to crime by addressing the roots of the problem, which are systemic racism and a lack of opportunity for many in our city while also using proven methods to interrupt and prevent violence. We need to transform the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) into a community-led public safety program that serves ALL Baltimoreans. We must also re-prioritize funding to invest in the physical, economic, and social well-being of our neighbors.

As Councilperson, I will advocate for the [Organizing Black 4-part platform](#) at the City and State level:

1. Immediate divestment from the Baltimore Police Department.
2. 50% of BPD's 2020 operating budget to be invested in Baltimore's Black communities.
3. Immediate abolishment of Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBoR).
4. Control of the Baltimore Police Department must go to the City of Baltimore, not the State of Maryland.

I will work to reorient our public safety budget to address the root causes of crime by investing in:

- Physiological and emotional health services that respond to and care for those struggling with mental health and substance abuse;
- Youth education, recreation, and jobs through expanding YouthWorks;
- Adult education and literacy courses both inside and outside of prison, which dramatically reduce both incarceration and recidivism rates;
- Programs that support the transition from prison back into the community and help formerly-incarcerated people secure and maintain quality housing, healthcare, and employment;
- Housing support for all Baltimoreans, including those who experience homelessness and housing insecurity through universal rent control, city-wide tenant unions, and seizure and redistribution of vacant housing to community controlled institutions like community land trusts.
- A minimum wage that is a living wage of \$15/hour that automatically rises with inflation; and
- Resources to combat anti-worker and anti-tenant crime, such as [wage theft](#) and tenant exploitation.

We must stop needlessly pushing Baltimoreans who commit nonviolent illegal acts into the criminal justice system by:

- Ending cash bail;
- Legalizing marijuana;
- Decriminalizing sex work; and
- Uplifting, funding, and incorporating the work of Safe Streets, Ceasefire, Turnaround Tuesdays, Lazarus Rite, SWOP Baltimore, and Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition.

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?

Although the Baltimore City Council does not have direct power over the School System, which is entrusted to the State, they do have the power to add weight and support to the robust organizing of parents, students, and our Baltimore Teachers Union. Together we can work to win what our community needs with our City's education system:

Equitable School Funding

Currently, Baltimore City allocates only approximately 15% of its budget to Baltimore City Schools. This is in sharp contrast to other districts which allocate over 30%. I will fight for our City to pay its fair share to ensure a quality education for our students.

As councilperson, I will continue to advocate for the statehouse school funding formula and initiative titled “Blueprint for Maryland’s Future”. This will dramatically increase investment in our state’s schools and also take into consideration important variables, such as concentration of poverty, when determining school funding.

This spring, fellow students, educators, and myself led and won a fight for \$3,000,000 from City Hall towards closing the digital divide. However, more must be done to ensure our students can access a 21st century education.

Black Lives Matter at School

We must work as a City to support the recruitment and hiring of Black and Latinx educators. We must also hear the call of students to revisit our curriculums and ensure representation and study of the history of the people represented by our student body. Finally, we must support schools to host meaningful and ongoing anti-racism workshops for school staff.

Creating REAL School Choice

I believe that we must invest in the success of ALL of our public schools, so that all schools can provide a high quality choice for students. As an education access advocate for immigrant students in Baltimore, I’ve seen first hand how many students (especially those receiving English language or special education services, and those living in concentrated poverty) are locked out of high performing schools.

Over the years, we have won important victories, such as translation services for students in the country 3 years or less on high stakes exams used to calculate high-school entrance scores. But more must be done. Our ultimate goal must be to have a fully resourced public school system, free of discriminatory practices, where all students can go to a school that they are proud to attend.

Putting the Brakes on School Closure

I believe school closure must be an intervention of last resort; it must be one where students, parents, and community members agree that it is the only choice forward. Additionally, school re-imagining and re-opening must be profoundly community led, and done in a way that does not disproportionately harm Black neighborhoods and students.

According to one of the largest national studies on school closure done by the Stanford-based group CREDO, school closures do little to move the needle on student performance. Any movement is more likely to be negative than positive. Additionally, the practice of school closures disproportionately impacts and displaces black and hispanic students. Before considering school closure, I will encourage the school district to work with the parents, students, educators, to implement strategies that can have a greater positive impact on struggling schools, such as implementing Community School models.

Teacher Observations and Evaluation

The essential metrics for fair and balanced teacher evaluations are those whose study results in:

- 1) Understanding an educator's strengths and weaknesses;
- 2) Guidance for how educators can improve their practice.

To that end, the BCPSS proposed unannounced “gotcha” observations, which a rubric with over 40 “look-fors” does not support either of these two goals. I will advocate for educators to have fair observations, with practices and rubrics whose designs are anchored in meaningful teacher, parent, and student input and have a meaningful impact on student achievement and educator growth.

BCPSS Educator Voice & Elected School Board

Currently, our Baltimore City School Board has a seat for a BCPSS student commissioner and encourages BCPSS parents to apply. These are important voices that must be heard. Yet, excluded from the Board are BCPSS educators. While educators from other districts can participate, our own teachers and paraprofessionals who have first hand experience of our schools and BCPSS policies are prohibited from Board membership. I will fight for our own BCPSS educators to have a voice at our own School Board.

The current board is also assembled by Mayoral appointments and is only planning to expand to add 2 elected positions in 2022. We need a democratic school board with ALL elected positions, I will use my position on the Council to mobilize families to advocate for that policy in the Maryland General Assembly.

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

Racial segregation dominates every aspect of our city. This systematic lack of community investment and obstruction of tools to build wealth has led to the massive blight many residents across our City endure.

Driven by the profits of developers, investment into certain Baltimore communities has led to many long-time residents being pushed out of their own neighborhoods, leading to even higher concentrations of wealth in certain areas of Baltimore and higher concentrations of poverty in others.

To stop gentrification, we must challenge the multiple systems that perpetuate racial and wealth divides through discriminatory practices. We must center the voices of community members in the community revitalization process. And we must do everything in our power to support long-term residents' ability to live and thrive in their communities.

Modern day red-lining exists in Baltimore in the form of predatory loan practices, such as charging high loan rates for Black and Brown residents. Residents are pushed into cycles of debt which lower their credit, making the dream of owning a home, or renting in certain neighborhoods, nearly impossible.

As a Councilperson, I will fight to:

1. Implement greater regulation of mortgage and short-term lenders like payday, auto-loans, and bail bonds;
2. Establish universal rent control and city-wide tenant unions; and
3. Seize and redistribute vacant housing to community controlled institutions, such as community land trusts;
4. Educate residents on how to use Section 8 vouchers to pay a mortgage, and fight to ease City and State restrictions on this program.

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

White neighborhoods must be held accountable for the damages they have caused in Black poor neighborhoods. Our city must also pay its dues to these communities. Our city has continuously prioritized white neighborhoods over Black neighborhoods, leaving Black neighborhoods to fend for themselves as they lack access to basic necessities like food, creating food apartheid, without access to groceries and other essential items.

I will make it a priority to make sure that we invest and rebuild in communities in the Black Butterfly and that they are no longer ignored.

In Baltimore City, [40.7%](#) of people do not have access to broadband internet. This inequity falls along deep racial lines, with the map of digital access closely mirroring the maps of racial redlining of the 1930s: [73.3% of white households in Baltimore City have broadband internet, compared with 50.2% of African American households and 46.4% of Latinx households.](#)

Students and adults alike need this essential utility for reasons of equity including but not limited to: pursuing education; filing for unemployment and other important, non-mobile friendly city, state, and federal services accessing telehealth and telework resources, organizing together for a better future; and living modern lives. For these reasons, [the United Nations has rightly declared internet access a basic human right.](#)

I will fight to provide equitable municipal internet service for Baltimore by 2026. Organizations around the city are already taking on this challenge and providing free high-speed internet for their communities. It is our job as a city to imagine how these efforts can be expanded citywide. We must financially support community internet infrastructure and ensure that this work is both powered by community voices and accomplished with pro-worker labor practices.

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?

In agreement with the Baltimore Green Party, I believe that Baltimore City needs an “equitable, accessible, efficient, multi-modal transit system which allows everyone to get where they need to go in a timely and safe manner, and to spur economic development for Black and Brown communities.” Our public transit system must be controlled locally, and Baltimore community members should have a meaningful voice at the decision making table.

I also support the Democratic Socialists of America’s (DSA) plan to invest in free public transit and the Red Line.

Additionally, our city must invest in an increase in bike infrastructure that helps keep riders safe and encourages bike ridership.

- I will push for institutions like Johns Hopkins to redirect the money they spend on private busing infrastructure to free MTA passes for their students and staff. This

will both reinvest funds into our public transit and help pay for BCPSS student bus passes to be extended to a 24/7 pass;

- In agreement with the work of the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, I believe our public transit system must be controlled by a Regional Transit Authority where Baltimore community members must have a meaningful voice at the decision making table;
- I will fight for bicycling infrastructure that connects all existing trails, keeps riders safe, and supports bicycle ridership across Baltimore City;

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?

We are facing a global climate crisis that impacts our health and safety now, and our total existence in the future. Air pollution and lack of access to greenspace are deeply linked to higher rates of [type 2 diabetes](#) and [asthma](#), conditions that greatly impact our city's children and residents.

Yes, I will fight for the City to declare a state of climate emergency and push for legislation that will and push for our city and state leaders to apply pressure by supporting investment in energy efficiency, eliminating fossil fuel subsidies, and putting a price on carbon. I will work alongside the Baltimore Office of Sustainability and the Commission on Sustainability and support them in their efforts.

It is important that as a city we prioritize making our city sustainable. We should not contribute to climate change and other issues affecting our environment, instead we should implement plans to make our city a Green city.

In order to accomplish this, I will support the implementation of Baltimore's **Fair Development Plan for Zero Waste** released by the United Workers earlier this year .

In addition to these actions, in order to reduce these risks to our health and existence, I support the Green Party platform of:

- 1) Banning the zoning and construction of gasoline refineries, gasoline or natural gas shipping terminals, and new gas stations;
- 2) Banning waste incineration and other destructive energy production methods;
- 3) Divesting City funds from any investment fund profiting from oil, gas, or fossil fuels corporations;

4) Implementing Councilperson Ryan Dorsey's bill to amend the Baltimore City Zoning Code to replace parking minimums with parking maximums. This will reduce car congestion and the existence of large parking lots that are detrimental to the environment.

In addition to pushing our city and state leaders to make the changes necessary to do our part to slow down climate catastrophe, we must be ready to face the mounting consequences.

We must ensure that residents that live along the city's vulnerable flood zones receive support from city, state, and federal agencies to relocate if they must due to sea level rise. It is crucial that this displacement not be used as a means to further gentrify our communities and that affordable mixed-income housing opportunities be ready to receive these families.

We know that the number of climate refugees will likely increase sharply as global temperatures rise. Therefore, it is crucial that we support our growing immigrant community.

I will also work to expand support for our diverse immigrant community that hail from all corners of the globe by:

1. Pushing City Hall to provide translation service funding for all Baltimore City agencies, such as: print translations, interpreters for events, and telephonic-interpretation. Language support empowers our immigrant community to understand what is happening at City Hall and to have a voice.
2. Ensuring all personnel in City agencies that provide constituent services are trained to do telephonic-interpretation.
3. Empowering the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Community Advisory Board to systematically represent the diverse voice of different immigrant communities from various ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds; have quarterly meetings with the Mayor's office; and share quarterly reports with ALL agencies on what is impacting the immigrant community,

4. Revising the 2019 Equity Coordinators law to include “National Origin,” so that coordinators have the goal of addressing issues that face our immigrant community.
 5. Fighting to maintain the separation between ICE and the Baltimore Police Department and fight back against any efforts to build adult or youth immigration detention facilities, or to have pre-existing facilities serve as detention centers.
- 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.

We are facing a global climate crisis that impacts our health and safety. And a system of racism that undervalues black and brown life, leaving our communities more vulnerable to toxic pollutants and depriving us of access to healthy food.

These intertwined crises impact our health and wellbeing every day. Air pollution and lack of access to greenspace are linked to higher rates of [type 2 diabetes](#) and [asthma](#) within our City. As it stands, [Baltimore struggles with the highest asthma mortality and pediatric asthma hospitalization rate in the state, and has among the highest pediatric asthma rates in the USA.](#)

At the same time, In Baltimore, [1 in every 3 african-american residents and 30% of Baltimore's school children](#) live in food apartheid. The lack of access to healthy food is correlated with higher levels of diabetes and of heart disease.

Meanwhile, [lead poisoning continues to be documented](#), and frequently untreated, in hundreds of young baltimore children. In certain areas of Baltimore, [between 25%-40% of children were documented with elevated lead levels between 2005 and 2015.](#) Children can't drink the water in our schools and across our segregated housing residents await long overdue lead abatement projects from their homes and the soil surrounding them.

All of these have led to shortened life-spans and some, like lead, even contribute to the violence that plagues our city.

In order to reign in these environmental injustices, we must:

- 1) ban the zoning and construction of gasoline refineries, gasoline or natural gas shipping terminals, and new gas stations;
- 2) ban waste incineration and other destructive energy production methods;
- 3) divest City funds from any investment fund profiting from oil, gas, or fossil fuels corporations.
- 4) implement Ryan Dorsey's bill to make the zoning code replace parking minimums with parking maximums. This will reduce car congestion and the existence of large parking lots that are detrimental to the environment.
- 5) invest in Baltimore's public transit and transition more residents from cars to public transit and reduce pollution due to cars;
- 6) hold accountable the paint industry for the death and damage they have caused and place greater regulations to protect tenants from landlords who try to rent properties with lead.

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?

As union veteran and Councilperson, I will advocate alongside community organizers and workers and support:

1. the creation and transformation of more Employee-owned businesses,
2. a minimum wage that is a living wage of \$15/hour that automatically rises with inflation and includes youth and tipped workers;
3. the Project Labor Agreements bill to ensure that proper contracts are made with workers with deserved pay and benefits, and
4. Resources and legislation to combat anti-worker and anti-tenant crime, such as [wage theft](#) and tenant exploitation.

It is critical that we promote and support employee ownership. When workers have ownership of and leadership positions in the businesses they are working for, recent studies show that those businesses are more resistant during economic downturns. This will be crucial in the COVID19 economy. Employee-owned businesses provide

higher wages and are more environmentally friendly. They also increase wealth for employees who would usually fall under low socio-economic status in comparison to traditional businesses. There are several worker owned businesses in or near the 12th District, including Baltimore Bicycle Works and Red Emma's. I will be an ally to them and encourage the proliferation of this more just ownership model.

As previously mentioned, I will also work to improve and expand our public transit system. This ensures that employment opportunities are truly accessible to all Baltimore residents.

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

Members of the City Council should have greater power to determine the budget for our city and reign in our strong Mayor system. The antiquated Board of Estimates is one key example. No other major city has a similar board. It must be reformed (by replacing the DPW Director with the Council Vice President) or abolished all together.

City Hall must also regain greater control of our schools and the Baltimore Police department back from the state.

Our lawmakers should also not be influenced by corporate interests when creating and supporting legislation. As council members elected by the residents of our city, we must serve them and not the interests of corporations who do not have the people's interest at hand. To accomplish this, I will work closely with Councilman Kris Burnett to ensure the Baltimore Fair Election fund has adequate resources and has equitable governing regulations.

More than any other city government agency, the Baltimore Police Department must be radically reimagined. Police overtime sucks city coffers dry, while police corruption and brutality are a daily reality, especially for black Baltimoreans. By reinvesting BPD funds into the Health Department, City Schools, Workforce Development Board, Recreation and Parks, and community-based violence intervention programs, we will have a safer, healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous city.

9. 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.

We must invest in our city to make it look clean and beautiful. I will support funding for legislation that will ensure our city's cleanliness and improved infrastructure. It can be done by implementing a Green New Deal at the local level.

The Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts must be reformed to be more transparent and accountable to the community. As a local musician and traditional folkloric dancer, I've seen fellow artists struggle to learn about and receive the support necessary to anchor their success.

Community and rec centers must be open 7 days a week and in the evenings, which we can afford by defunding BPD. Illegal dumping should be limited by incentivizing reuse and upcycling in construction and renovation, as DETAILS (a project of Humanim) specializes in, and moving toward a Zero Waste economy.

I will work closely with long-time neighborhood residents of the 12th District to ensure beautification of streets and neighborhoods benefits them while maintaining affordability and valuing the unique cultures of Baltimore neighborhoods.

My number one infrastructure priority will be municipal broadband by 2026; we must end Comcast's exploitative near monopoly franchise agreement with the City. In addition to timely trash pickup and recycling, I will advocate for municipal composting (a part of Baltimore's **Fair Development Plan for Zero Waste**), which has been implemented in cities like Oakland, CA for years.

In order to have a stronger and more efficient response to 311 calls, we must create more union jobs for local workers dedicated to connecting Baltimore residents to the solutions they deserve.

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

As a BCPSS educator, I have advocated with the student-led organization SOMOS to secure major victories for English Learners in Baltimore's middle and high school choice process. As a City Councilperson, I would continue to engage the school district to ensure all schools have equitable access for students receiving special education services, living in concentrated poverty, experiencing homelessness, and receiving English language services.

I have successfully lobbied our likely mayor to publicly support legislation that, like College Park and other municipalities in Maryland, would give non-citizens the right to vote in local elections. If elected, I will work to ensure such a bill is brought forward and

passes, giving the right to vote to our community members who pay taxes and care deeply about the decisions made in our city.

I will also work to expand support for our diverse immigrant community that hail from all corners of the globe by:

- 11. Pushing City Hall to provide translation service funding for all Baltimore City agencies, such as: print translations, interpreters for events, and telephonic-interpretation. Language support empowers our immigrant community to understand what is happening at City Hall and to have a voice.*
- 12. Ensuring all personnel in City agencies that provide constituent services are trained to do telephonic-interpretation.*
- 13. Empowering the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Community Advisory Board to systematically represent the diverse voice of different immigrant communities from various ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds; have quarterly meetings with the Mayor's office; and share quarterly reports with ALL agencies on what is impacting the immigrant community,*
- 14. Revising the 2019 Equity Coordinators law to include "National Origin," so that coordinators have the goal of addressing issues that face our immigrant community.*
15. Fighting to maintain the separation between ICE and the Baltimore Police Department and fight back against any efforts to build adult or youth immigration detention facilities, or to have pre-existing facilities serve as detention centers.

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

Modern day red-lining exists in Baltimore in the form of predatory loan practices, such as charging high loan rates for Black and Brown residents. Residents are pushed into cycles of debt which lower their credit, making the dream of owning a home, or renting in certain neighborhoods, nearly impossible.

As a Councilperson, I will fight to:

1. Implement greater regulation of mortgage and short-term lenders like payday, auto-loans, and bail bonds;
2. Establish universal rent control and city-wide tenant unions; and
3. Seize and redistribute vacant housing to community controlled institutions, such as community land trusts;
4. Educate residents on how to use Section 8 vouchers to pay a mortgage, and fight to ease City and State restrictions on this program.

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

I will prioritize the City's efforts to make these upgrades. I will work closely with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to ensure that our residents are receiving the appropriate assistance they deserve and need. It is necessary for the health of our environment and our residents to make sure there is appropriate funding to finish these efforts. I will also support legislation that will ensure the safety of our city's drinking water. It is important that there is an effective and safe water supply and delivery system in place for the betterment of our community and environment.

I support the work being done by Food and Water Watch and Jews United for Justice in this regard. I will oppose proposed future water rate increases, and pay for the needed upgrades by ending corporate developer giveaway TIFS and renegotiating PILOT agreements.

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

I am an award-winning teacher and community organizer leading a progressive campaign for Baltimore's 12th City Council District. Since becoming a teacher in 2010, I have been a fierce advocate for students, families, and educators, served as a 3-term elected Baltimore Teachers Union representative, and advised several youth-led movements, such as *Students Organizing a Multicultural Open Society (SOMOS)*. Together, we have fought tirelessly to empower communities to take their rightful place at the tables of power and successfully demanded City Hall to re-allocate money to where we need it most..

As an immigrant from Perú, my American journey started in the factory town of Patterson, New Jersey. I watched as my parents sacrificed everything. They worked construction shifts day and night, with no health insurance. They struggled to keep the lights on, and battled eviction-threats, just to ensure we could move to a neighborhood where I would feel safe and have a quality education. But your zip code shouldn't determine your destiny, and you shouldn't have to sacrifice it all to live a decent life.

In Baltimore's 12th District, the current democratic party representation has not been fighting for us. Instead, they fight for the corporate interests that got them in office. And while developers and corporations get richer, our kids can't drink the water in our schools, our city's minimum wage can't pay the bills, and 1-in-every-2 black and brown

people can't get adequate internet--with one of the worst connection rates in the country.

I was inspired to take on this harmful status-quo by the Bernie Sanders campaign and my dedicated work as a Community Connector for Unidos Con Bernie. Through relentless organizing, phone banking, canvassing, and the creation of community events, I saw that across Baltimore and beyond our communities were tired of politics that exploited them instead of uplifting them.

That's why our campaign is powered by and for the people. We reject corporate donations. Instead, our campaign is led by students, organizers, and community leaders. We know how to fight back against corporate interests and win the policies we need to thrive: fully funded schools; ending systemic racism in public safety, housing, and transit; covid-responsive constituent services, and free high-speed community internet. Together, we can be champions for racial and economic justice in Baltimore City.

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