

Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

Delegate and State Senate Endorsement Questionnaire

Name: Mark Edelson

Desired political office: Maryland House of Delegates

District Number: 46

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1. How does your experience, along with your life experiences, qualify you for this position?

I am an active community leader, civic-minded attorney, educator and organizer. My passion for service and commitment to inclusive policies that strengthen our collective spirit and success is rooted in my formative experiences as a foreign-born immigrant to the U.S. The resilience, grit, and fortitude modeled to me by my parents – intent on providing every opportunity to succeed despite the struggle and sacrifice this often required on their part – ingrained in me a great sense of purpose, duty, and responsibility.

I am a proven community leader. I currently serve as the President of the Canton Community Association, one of the largest neighborhood associations in Baltimore City. During my tenure, I coordinated the launch of the Canton Farmers Market and led efforts to improve lighting and safety throughout the 10,000 resident community. Recently, I brought together a diverse group of community members, historians, elected officials, and advocates to create the Canton Anti-Racism Alliance. As a result of many community conversations, the Alliance recently successfully advocated for the removal of the statue of Captain John O'Donnell in the Square.

I am also an educator, serving as an adjunct professor at Goucher College, where I teach a pre-law undergraduate course on the intersection of law and society. My course is designed to challenge my students to think critically about the construction, evolution and impacts of our cultural norms and values. We also analyze how the trajectory of society and major events in history have impacted the laws and customs we follow today. We focus an entire section on the union movement, the value of collective bargaining, and the importance of protecting the most vulnerable among us.

I also utilize my legal background to move the ball forward on social issues in the City. In my first major case after graduating from law school, I successfully represented the victims of lead-paint poisoning against the Housing Authority of Baltimore City and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. In addition, in 2017, I won a landmark legal case working with the leadership of Bikemore and a team of lawyers and transit advocates. I successfully argued a Temporary Restraining Order against the City of Baltimore and then-Mayor Pugh, preventing the planned demolition of a protected bike lane on Potomac Street in Canton that serves numerous communities throughout Southeast Baltimore. This victory, on behalf of all Baltimoreans who lack access to reliable transit, is even more critical in light of the fact that MTA is consistently unable to effectively transport our young people to school and because an estimated 30% of Baltimoreans lack access to a car or personal vehicle.

My background in advocacy and leadership and my experiences as an educator and immigrant provide me with a unique perspective to advocate for working families and pursue progressive policies in Annapolis.

2. What will be the principles or values that guide your public service?

My late mother's guiding principle was: "***If you can, you must.***" This principle continues to guide me and my views of public service. Put simply, if we have the ability to help each other and promote sustainable and equitable policies, we must. There is too much at stake for our city and state to take a backseat. I am guided by the belief that we must continue to build on the progress we are making in Canton, making the community more welcoming, safe, and inclusive. In addition, through our progressive advocacy efforts we must continue to push for full funding of the Maryland Transit Administration in order to connect vulnerable Baltimoreans to jobs and opportunities to succeed. A guiding principle of my career and my campaign is "access." My family moved to America so that my sister and I could have access to opportunities to better ourselves through education. Too many Baltimoreans lack proper access: to affordable health care, housing, employment opportunities, healthy foods, and good schools. That is the central wrong that I am hoping to right.

3. Do you identify as a progressive candidate? If so, what specifically makes you a progressive candidate for this political office?

Yes absolutely. I have developed a comprehensive, progressive platform focused on addressing the systemic and historic inequalities facing Baltimore city through

transportation, education, sustainability, and public safety. I believe my focus and track record of addressing the root causes of systemic inequality and generational racism makes me a progressive candidate. I encourage you to read my comprehensive platform [here](#).

Climate Change/Green New Deal

4. Do you acknowledge the existence of climate change and the sense of urgency to address this issue on state and local levels?

Climate Change is real. This year we saw a 60+ degree Christmas day and a massive snow storm just over a week later. We have seen areas of the state that were once covered in snow now barren and it's not going to stop. The only way to tackle this crisis is to take action now to educate the public and environmental policies that will structurally and radically change the way we treat the environment and our planet. Reducing our dependence on the Wheelabrator Trash Incinerator and banning single-use plastics are primary items on my agenda.

5. What is your position regarding a Green New Deal at the state level?

I support the Green New Deal on the state level. I believe a state level approach is vital to stop the continuing climate change that we are experiencing. However, I firmly believe that in order to achieve long-lasting success on this front, we must work in tandem with our federal partners to pass the Green New Deal into law nationwide.

6. In the previous legislative session, House Bill 33, known as the Climate Crisis and Education Act, was not passed. If this bill or a similar bill is introduced in the next legislative session, what is your position?

I would vote in favor of this House Bill 33. It is imperative that we establish a goal of a greenhouse gas reduction target of 60% from 2006 levels by 2030 and net-zero by 2045. The survival of our planet literally depends on it. Marylanders should lead on climate change, and as a Delegate I will be a strong voice that we do so. I trust in science, and our legislative policies should be guided by science and data.

7. What is your position regarding the electrification of renovated buildings as well as newly constructed buildings in Maryland?

Yes - all new buildings and renovated buildings should be net zero emissions and this should be tied to the timeline for the state's net zero emission standard. This should also include focusing on tree canopy cover and water retention ponds and other similar

solutions. I'm also committed to ideas that require buildings to be "green roof" ready or other climate engineering techniques. For example, in California whenever a new building is built (such as a grocery store), they have mandated a certain number of trees or solar covers per vehicle as a way to mitigate the effects of retained heat. We should be looking to enact similar policies in Maryland.

8. How would you vote on the Client Solutions Act?

I would vote in favor of the Climate Solutions Act in the form it was submitted by Senator Paul Pinsky during the last legislative session. It is essential that we compromise and pass a bill intended to help protect the planet and the future of our children and grandchildren. Our climate crisis is urgent. We should be working to do what we can as quickly as we can to address the threat to our planet.

I had hoped that the Climate Solutions Act would pass last session, and I was disappointed when it did not in the final days of session. I would vote for it as a delegate in District 46 and also move to strengthen it to further protect our environment over time.

9. How would you vote on the Environment Human Rights Amendment?

I would vote yes on the Environment Human Rights Amendment. Every American and every Marylander should have the right to a healthy environment. I hope the bill sponsored by Delegate Fisher passes both chambers this legislative session and is added to the November ballot. I hope Maryland voters vote in favor of the amendment, and the Environment Human Rights amendment eventually becomes a part of the Maryland Constitution.

Health Care

10. What is your position regarding a single-payer system (such as Medicare for All) at the state level?

As I stated above, access to affordable health care is an absolute necessity. I support Medicare for All, and polls have shown that most Marylanders do as well. While it is clear that many more Marylanders have health insurance under the Affordable Care Act, there are many more who still do not, and this must be fixed. If we can accomplish this, health care will be less costly for both employers and employees. During the COVID-19 public health crisis, the unemployed and their families have needed health care the most which is why I will be an advocate at the state level for a single-payer system. And the public health care crisis has exposed how broken our current healthcare system is.

While I believe that a single-payer system would lift up so many Marylanders who need it the most, I will also candidly tell you that I am not a health care expert and do not fully know all of the mechanisms that would be necessary to implement this system and how long that would take for full success. I look forward to learning from you and your members to become a more impactful advocate and legislator.

At the end of the day, far too many people in the state and the country are one accident away from bankruptcy. We must ensure that *all* Marylanders are covered. Health care is a right, not a privilege.

11. Would you vote for paid sick leave?

Yes, the past two years have shown us the need for universal paid sick leave. As we are still in the trenches of the pandemic, the need has grown stronger than ever as we continue to see profits being placed over health with infection rates reaching new highs. With universal paid sick leave people will not have to make the tough choice between bills and recovery. This gives Marylanders the opportunity to rest, which is something we now recognize is very necessary for a speedy recovery.

Police Reform

12. Johns Hopkins University (JHU) is moving forward with establishing a private university-based police department. What is your position regarding the establishment of a private university-based police department at JHU?

Safety is a major concern in Baltimore City. I believe that every community leader and elected official should be prioritizing public safety. I also believe that no options should be off the table as we strive to keep our communities safer in a just and equitable fashion. That being said, we must be very cautious not to simply jump at every knee jerk public safety measure simply because it makes us “feel better.” I would put that JHU police force in that category. It is a knee jerk reaction that will potentially keep Hopkins students and faculty to the extreme detriment of the surrounding communities.

It will also not help us improve relations between communities and law enforcement. Rather, I think that JHU should work with surrounding neighborhoods and city leadership on a collective plan that will make all surrounding neighborhoods safer in a way that will not simply result in the targeting of young black and brown men, which this plan inevitably will do. I agree with the concerns that the JHU private police force creates

“islands of policing”, which pushes crime to neighboring communities. I believe we must look at public safety remedies that do not put other neighborhoods at a disadvantage, while serving a small population.

13. What proposed legislation or action will you take to address police reform on a state and local level?

It starts with having conversations and more interaction between law enforcement officers and the communities they are hired to serve and protect. Police officers should spend less time sitting in their cars on the streets and more time talking to residents and building trust within communities. But, we also have to acknowledge that we cannot simply police our way out of the challenges we face as a result of generations of red-lining, blockbusting, inequitable, and outright racist policies.

Rather, we should be investing more resources in programs that assist our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness, mental health and social work professionals, substance use resources, and organizations like Safe Streets and ROCA that have a proven record of success. We should also invest more in youth and recreational centers to keep our children engaged in afterschool programs and activities.

I will support efforts in Annapolis to return control and oversight of the Baltimore Police Department to the City of Baltimore and work to expand upon the gains made in the 2021 General Assembly on police reform and accountability, including taking a critical look at the aspects of the LEOBR that do not improve community/police relations.

We should also increase transparency and accountability in police-citizen encounters such as supporting a statewide body camera mandate and full compliance with the Consent Decree. We must make every effort to remove the culture of corruption that ultimately led to the unchecked offenses committed by members of the Gun Trace Task Force.

I will also work to provide funding for municipal efforts to expand their emergency response programs to include mental health and social services.

14. Would you vote to end debtor prisoners?

Yes, I would. After nearly two centuries there is no reason this form of punishment should have returned. As it is just a way to further criminalize poverty and disenfranchise minorities, as this is used disproportionately against people of color. I would fight for legislation against debtor prisons.

15. What is your position regarding the decriminalization of marijuana possession and use in Maryland?

I am in full support of decriminalizing Marijuana possession and use. I would go further and say that I am in support of the exoneration of individuals arrested for possession. For decades many people have been incarcerated for simple possession of Marijuana. This practice has disproportionately hurt communities of color, where African Americans are four times as likely to be arrested. This rate is terrible as the rate of use is nearly the same. In addition, as we look to legalize recreational marijuana use (which I am very much in favor of), we must ensure that the wealth created by legalization specifically benefits the communities that have been so deeply harmed by the failed and racist “war on drugs.”

16. What is your position regarding the legalization of marijuana for recreational use in Maryland?

Once again, I am in full support of the legalization of Marijuana for recreational use. If legalized and properly taxed, the revenue made can be used to rebuild many of the communities that previous policies have decimated and create programs to assist those previously convicted for recreational use.

17. What is your position regarding the decriminalization of psilocybin and legalization for therapeutic use in Maryland?

I support the decriminalization of psilocybin and legalization for its therapeutic use. Psilocybin has been shown to assist in the treatments for PTSD and Major Depressive Disorder. By legalizing the therapeutic use of it, new doors will be opened to aid Marylanders, especially after this past year and its taxing effects.

Immigrant Rights

18. In the previous legislative session, House Bill 0016, known as the Dignity Not Detention Act, was vetoed by Gov. Hogan. If this bill is reintroduced in the upcoming legislative session, what is your position?

As an immigrant myself and as someone who hopes to represent immigrant communities in Highlandtown and around District 46, I would strongly support the Dignity Not Detention Act. In order to create opportunities for our immigrant populations and create a more welcoming society, we must not let Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) intimidate our immigrant communities. The only way we can build a stronger, more

equitable society is by ensuring we all have the ability to go to work, go to school, or even go to the grocery free from fear or intimidation. Our local governments must not partner with ICE against our immigrants.

19. According to the 2010 US Census, Asian-Americans make up 6.1% of Maryland's population. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in hate crimes nationwide and locally against Asian-Americans. What proposed legislation and action will you take to protect these individuals on a state and local level?

In May 2021, the U.S. Congress passed the COVID-19 Anti-Hate Crimes Act which, amongst several things, provided additional resources to states to create online hate crime reporting databases and state-run hate crime reporting hotlines. We must build upon these efforts in our state by fully prosecuting hate crimes, educating the public on COVID-19 and how it is spread, and directly reaching out to Asian-American communities in Maryland to ensure there is trust and transparency between the state and the community.

20. In recent months, Maryland has become a 'welcome state' in supporting the transition of refugees arriving from Afghanistan. What proposed legislation and action will you take in meeting the immediate needs of Afghan refugees on a state and local level?

With our state's announced \$6 billion surplus from the past fiscal year, I would propose using a portion of these funds to help resettle Afghanistan refugees, many of whom supported America's efforts abroad, and support them as they adjust to American life. These efforts could include direct payments, rental assistance, entrepreneurship incentives, and free access to language and cultural adjustment resources.

In addition, as Chair of the Canton anti-Racism Alliance, we have been working to raise money and provide resources for Afghan refugees being resettled in southeast Baltimore. This once again demonstrates my commitment to progressive values in my daily life and my proven track record of working towards progressive change in my community, even when no one is watching, and long before there was an open seat in our delegation.

Public Transit

21. In 2018, Gov. Hogan canceled the Red Line. Being that Maryland will have a new governor in 2022, there may be an effort to revive legislation for the Red Line. What is your position regarding the Red Line as a viable transit project in Baltimore?

Hogan's decision to cancel the Red Line has put our region and city through unnecessary harm and continued the cycle of disinvestment in the state's largest city: Baltimore. Walking away from nearly \$1 billion in federal funding has robbed communities in both

west and east Baltimore of needed investments, and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities, and exacerbated issues around connectivity in our region. Our bus system, which is woefully underfunded, fails to connect residents to employment and educational centers. Further, the decision negatively impacted unionized employees by robbing our brothers and sisters in the building trades and transit operating unions. I fully support efforts to revive the Red Line.

In addition, as you know, the Maryland Transit Administration, a state agency, controls the vast majority of transit in Baltimore outside of the Charm City Circulator and the Water Taxi/Harbor Connector. I strongly believe Baltimore needs more control over its transit destiny. As a member of the Mayor's Transition Team for Transportation and Infrastructure, I have consistently advocated for the creation of a regional transportation authority with the ability to raise revenue, and, broadly, creating greater local control across MTA's transit assets, like the MARC commuter train.

In the short-term, I will push the MTA to study possibilities of improving our transit system today. This would include studying the potential for extending the light rail into south Baltimore, building the subway system further east, creating state support for ferry services, and building a new MARC station in east Baltimore. While advocating for the restarting of the Red Line, we must also have multiple plans and multiple solutions to build real multimodal connections for Baltimore residents as soon as possible.

22. In a 2021 study conducted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, it showed racial disparities in Baltimore's transit system. What proposed legislation and specific action will you take to address this issue?

Equity remains the leading concern of our transit system in Baltimore. Equity in our transit policy has been my primary area of advocacy for years now and I have worked with Samuel Jordan and BTEC on these issues. First, we know that at least 1/3 of Baltimoreans lack reliable access to a personal vehicle, that individuals from historically disadvantaged communities rely more on transit, and that the current BaltimoreLink bus system woefully fails to provide meaningful, on-time access to employment and education centers. Further, a recent Harvard University study found that the number one determining factor in an individual's ability to escape poverty was their immediate access to transit.

As in the previous question, I believe we need an all-of-the-above approach to address systemic inequity in our transit system. This means prioritizing investments to west and east Baltimore, especially communities not along the waterfront, and looking at ways we

can enhance our existing transit system today, while working on transformational, long-term investments and ideas. This means ensuring that our various, disorganized transit options in the city actually connect to one another and provide real access to Baltimoreans that need it most. It must include fully investing in the Baltimore Greenway Network which will create 35 miles of world class protected biking lanes and walking paths on our currently unused railroad network. It also means expanding circulator routes and expanded bus lines south of the Hanover Street Bridge. It means investing in a Water Taxi station at the Middle Branch Park connecting Cherry Hill, Lakeland, Westport, Brooklyn, and Curtis Bay to opportunities across the harbor. And it means investing in a Marc station on the east side at Hopkins Bayview. All of these systems must connect, run on time, be safe, and clean, and reliable to everyday working families in Baltimore. As the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition recently argued for in Maryland Matters, I also fully support a Baltimore regional transportation authority with the ability to finance and build transit projects not dependent on the whims of the state.

As a board member of Transit Choices, the Baltimore Transit Campaign, and the Get Maryland Moving coalition, I work closely with transit leaders across the city on these issues, including BTEC, and look forward to continuing to utilize these relationships to make real progress in Annapolis.

Housing

23. In August 2021, Maryland's moratorium on residential eviction expired. What proposed legislation or action will you take to address the issues related to tenants who have fallen behind in paying rent?

Equity is one of the main platforms of my campaign, and it is something I will always fight for as a Delegate. In addition, as a lawyer, many of my clients are tenants and I represent them against aggressive, unethical, and unfair landlords. I have seen how these battles play out in court and I have won cases for tenants. We cannot throw people out into the street when they are at their most vulnerable in the middle of a pandemic. People's health, lives, and safety are at risk.

I would have voted for Senate Bill 901 introduced by State Senator Will Smith and Delegate Wilkins during the legislative session last March. This bill would have required the Department of Housing and Community Development, in consultation with the Maryland Judiciary and local sheriffs and constables, to collect, maintain, and provide certain access to certain information on eviction actions. It would have also required certain information be reported to the Department monthly and required certain local sheriffs and constables to provide at least 48 hours notice before executing a warrant

prohibiting a landlord from filing a complaint if a tenant owes less than \$600 of unpaid rent. Frankly this legislation would protect many of my clients and it is a critical need.

Consumer Rights

24. How would you vote on auto insurance prices not being tied to zip codes?

I would vote against auto insurance policies being tied to zip codes. Historically, this practice has been shown to be costly to lower income areas, while more affluent areas have benefitted from lower rates.