

Our Revolution Maryland (OR-MD)

Baltimore County Endorsement Questionnaire

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Desired political office: Baltimore County Council - 2nd District

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

I believe that I am well qualified for this position. I have been community centered my entire life. I am currently the Council Member for the 2nd District of Baltimore County. I grew up in Lochern. I attended Woodlawn High School and earned my Bachelor's Degree and my Master's Degree at Towson University, both in Geography & Environmental Planning. I am an urban/county planner by profession and I have worked in civic life at the highest levels of state, county and local government. I have volunteered in my community and I have worked with elected officials, business leaders, clergy and civic organizations on behalf of the priorities that matter to Baltimore County, Baltimore City and the state of Maryland, including public education, a stronger economy, affordable health care, efficient transportation, public safety and a healthier environment.

I have a track record of getting things done. I have been appointed to serve on local and state transition advisory committees. I was the founding Director of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods in Baltimore City. This office became a model for community engagement offices around the state. I worked in the Governor's Office where I held two positions simultaneously. I was the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives and the Director of the Governor's Intergovernmental Affairs Office. After leaving the Governor's Office I worked as the Director of Community Development for LifeBridge Health to strengthen communities in the five campus locations in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County.

As a Councilman, I was selected by my colleagues on the Baltimore County Council to represent the council on the legislative committee of the Maryland

Association of Counties (MACo). During the 2020 Comprehensive Map Process (CZMP), I focused on environmentally friendly zoning requests. I am nationally certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

During my time working in Baltimore City, my Office was recognized as a recipient of the National Association of Counties' (NACO) Multicultural Diversity Award for extraordinary outreach to ethnic communities. This prestigious award was cosponsored by the Women Officials in NACO (WON), the National Association of Black County Officials (NABCO) and the National Association of Hispanic County Officials (NAHCO).

Additionally, I have been presented with the distinction of Fellow with the Academy for Excellence in Local Governance by the University of Maryland's Institute for Governmental Service.

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

I believe in improving the nuts and bolts of government which is why I serve on Baltimore County's Code Enforcement Work Group, the Solid Waste Work Group and the Work Group on Affordable Housing.

I believe development must be done with respect to the environment, with respect to the community and with respect to main streets.

I believe it is important to improve communities at the neighborhood and block level. Throughout my career I have worked to build capacity and make improvements to the quality of life in the most challenged and marginalized communities in the region.

I believe all residents need to be treated with dignity and honesty. What I say in one room, I will say in the next room. I won't change the message to please the current room even if it means some discomfort. We all can't agree on everything, but we can share common goals.

I am not just talk, I am hands on. That's why my team and I organized and participated in seven ongoing and regular food distribution operations over the past two years during the pandemic.

Immigration/Civil Rights

3. What is your position regarding voluntary state and local cooperation with federal immigration enforcement beyond that required by Constitutionally mandated

federal law? Where do you stand on efforts to sign a 287g agreement with the Federal government for the Baltimore County Department of Corrections?

My parents were immigrants and non-English speakers. I was raised to support the cause immigrants. Families should not be separated and everyone deserves appropriate legal counsel and should not be subjected to inhumane treatment. I do not support any efforts to harm residents irrespective of their documentation.

When I worked for the State of Maryland I had an instrumental role in the formation of the Council for New Americans and along with Tom Perez I was one of the principal author's of their report "A FRESH START: Renewing Immigrant Integration for a Stronger Maryland"

4. What specific policies would you introduce to eliminate racial disparities in Baltimore County?

I played a leadership role in the adoption of police reform legislation so that black and brown communities are treated fairly and humanely when engaged by law enforcement officials, prior to its delay and reformation into a new bill.

I sponsored a successful Council resolution to add seven young people, one from each district, to the Baltimore County Equitable Policing Workgroup to allow young voices to be heard in the work group.

Additionally, I serve on the Work Group for Affordable Housing to review progress to date, examine ongoing challenges, and develop actionable recommendations to further support and incentivize the creation of affordable housing units.

5. What is your opinion about the Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL)?

I plan on keeping the integrity of the Urban-Rural Demarcation Line, which was established in 1967. Inside the URDL is higher density development. Outside the URDL is much lower density. So the idea is to have growth where you plan to have growth. This demarcation line is a model for the state and the entire nation in terms of how to plan for good development. The URDL also aligns with the locations of public water and sewer. High density development outside of the URDL would have a significant negative impact on our environment.

Education

6. There is a deeply concerning persistent achievement gap in Maryland public schools that affects many students in economically disadvantaged communities and minority communities. What specific actions would you take to help close that gap?

I have supported the Blue for Maryland's Future and the Built to Learn Act since its early formation. The state of Maryland reported a \$2.5 billion surplus at the close out of Fiscal Year 2022 in October of 2021. Additionally, the Report of the Baltimore County Spending Affordability Committee issued on February 15, 2022 reported a surplus of over \$239 million at the end of FY 2022. Clearly, there is room to address the unmet needs that our schools and education system face. Education is a top priority for me and I would work to earmark appropriate levels of those funds to meet unmet needs that significantly impact disadvantaged communities and minority communities.

7. What recommendations and specific course of action would you introduce to improve the state of Baltimore County public schools?

We must have not only competitive wages for our teachers and school staff, we must have wages that are at a level so that Baltimore County is the school system that professionals want to work.

The workplace environment should be one that fosters teacher and staff retention. We should also encourage and allocate time for professional development as well as classroom preparation time.

We can be creative, like Tennessee. In order to deal with teacher shortages Tennessee has a new residency program. The first-of-its-kind program allows teaching candidates to work full-time in the classroom while pursuing their degree. The program squeezes a four-year degree into three. If teaching candidates commit to working in the district, night school is free. They co-teach during the day with a mentor and earn up to \$27,000 a year. When they graduate, their salary almost doubles. The program is funded through the school district's regular budget, and with the help of state and federal grants. Further, we can make greater use of programs like, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Teach for America especially as we emerge from a post pandemic learning environment. This will result in smaller classroom sizes and for a better teacher to student ratio.

A recent survey of 4,746 public school employees, including teachers, education support professionals and administrators, who are all members of the association, found:

- **96% of educators say staff shortages are a serious or very serious concern;**
- **92% of educators say that their workload is a serious or very serious concern;**

- 91% of educators say burn out is a serious or very serious concern;
- 60% of educators are more likely to leave the profession or retire earlier than they'd planned due to the pandemic.

The poll also found:

- 61% of educators said they would be somewhat or much more likely to stay in the profession if class sizes could be reduced;
- 90% of educators said that having the ability to reduce class sizes would somewhat or greatly improve their working conditions.

Teachers' unions are forbidden by state law to negotiate class size during contract negotiations, but the poll findings suggest "making class size bargainable could have a significant impact on educator retention and working conditions — as well as increased individual attention for students."

I support House Bill 890, which is under consideration by the Maryland General Assembly, would no longer consider the issue of class size an off-limits subject during collective bargaining.

Public Transit

8. What specific actions would you introduce to improve public transportation in Baltimore County?

Governor Hogan has been an enemy to public transit especially in the Baltimore Region. Eliminating the Red Line committed Baltimore to being a minor league city in terms of transit for at least a generation. It was a tremendous job killer for Baltimore. Further it has had and will continue to have an incredible negative impact on the ability for people to get a job, get to a job and created an environment to limit the ability for people in the Baltimore Region to travel. I am pleased to see that Senator Ben Cardin has taken steps to bring back the Red Line and I will do whatever I can to help this effort. At the local level, no one took political leadership until it was too late and that is why it was so easy for Governor Hogan to kill it. We need efficient east-west transit in the Baltimore Region!

Affordable Housing

9. What are your ideas regarding permanent affordable housing?

Planners across the country are discussing the idea of a revisit of zoning codes to address a post pandemic economy in terms of what retail will look like what office space requirements will be. This may create opportunities for permanent affordable housing areas (like shopping centers and office buildings) that may not have the same demand and could rezoned to for residential and affordable locations.

I serve on Baltimore County's Workgroup for Affordable Housing. The Work Group has been meeting since April 2021. We are closing in on 34 recommendations to increase safe and affordable housing. At this time these recommendations are not yet approved. Please stay tuned.

Women's Issues

10. What is your plan to help income disparities for women?

I believe that there should be equal wages for all people irrespective of gender. I also believe that women should have the right to make their own choices about their body and reproductive rights.

11. What are your thoughts about the increase in domestic abuse that women have faced due to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Studies have shown that nearly one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports from those on the front lines, have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has intensified.

Resources should be allocated for the prevention of violence and access to essential services, such as health, justice and policing, social services, help lines and coordination of these services, to provide support to those who have experienced and/or witnessed violence.

12. What are your ideas to provide more affordable childcare in Baltimore County?

Childcare needs to be addressed while the world is in a pandemic environment and also post pandemic. We need to careful balance the ability for remote work opportunities that would allow for childcare and also for return to work

childcare. Post pandemic childcare may include incentives to employers that provide for childcare. Studies have shown that workers' performance increases when they are close to their children. Also, employers need to be sensitive to the needs of their employees with children.

Further, I support HB 8 which would establish a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program that would make paid leave available to Maryland workers for up to 12 weeks following the birth or adoption of a child, and when needed to provide care for a family member or oneself. The leave would be funded through an insurance pool, into which workers and their employers contribute.

Environment

13. The climate crisis is an urgent and existential threat. What actions will you take to reduce Baltimore County's greenhouse gas emissions and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change, and how quickly must those actions take effect?

One of the primary concerns that I have is overdevelopment at the sacrifice of sorely needed open space. During the 2019/2020 Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (CZMP), I down-zoned approximate 225 acres in the 2nd District as a proactive measure to protect the environment. I only support development that is respectful to the environment, respectful to the community and respectful to our main streets. I helped to create new open space opportunities in the 2nd District with Church Lane Park, Pahl's Park, Woodley Avenue Park and Gwynnbrook Park rather than having development in these areas

I am researching and working with environmental advocates to identify the applicability of plastic bag bans that were implemented in other jurisdictions in Maryland.

I am researching and working with environmental advocates to identify the applicability of the reforestation legislation that recently passed in Frederick County. Baltimore County established a goal to complete renewable energy projects to generate the equivalent of 100 percent of Baltimore County's baseline electricity demand by 2026. The County awarded a contract for solar photovoltaic systems on two landfill sites and is currently investigating the feasibility of two rooftop sites. The expected level of renewable energy production proposed for the landfill solar projects would be equal to approximately 35 to 40 percent of the County's

total baseline electricity consumption. I will continue and work to enhance these early efforts

I was the only Baltimore County Council member to vote against an agreement with the nation's 9th largest polluter (incineration), Wheelabrator.

14. What environmental justice issues exist within Baltimore County and how will you address them?

Education and adequate infrastructure are key elements that relate to environmental justice.

For decades the landscape for Baltimore County has been unbalanced to favor land use decisions that benefit the development community more so than our ability address the increased infrastructure needs to support new development. This is particularly true as it relates to schools. These are three priorities for me.

Priority 1 - The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance needs to be updated to relieve overcrowded schools and to address other infrastructure needs. On December 31, 2020 The Adequate Public Facilities Task Force to the County Council. These are the key recommendations:

- **A shift in the timing of the APFO school test from the earliest point in Phase I of the development process (prior to development plan approval) to a more flexible time selected by the developer during Phase II of the development process (following plan approval, prior to building permit issuance);**
- **Elimination of exception opportunities, including the "adjacent district" exception, that allow APFO approvals to be granted in overcrowded districts;**
- **Basing the overcrowding determination on a 3-year projection of school enrollment that includes the projected enrollment yield associated with the proposed development along with the projected yield from all vested and unvested developments with active APFO approvals;**
- **An eventual tightening of the overcrowding standard to 100% of State-rated capacity, from the current 115% utilization rate;**

- A queuing process for developments awaiting APFO enrollment approval, with a 5-year limitation on wait time, at which point an automatic APFO enrollment approval would be granted; and
- A 3-year expiration for APFO enrollment approvals, upon which a development in an overcrowded district would need to enter (or re-enter) a queue and potentially face a (first or additional) 5-year wait.

The County Council needs to review and take action on these recommendations.

Priority 2 – Build a Recreation Center in the 2nd District. The 2nd District has very little public open space. Further, the 2nd District does not have a stand alone Recreation Center. The Greater Pikesville Recreation Council shares space with the schools in the area. This is not fair to the residents that would use open space and recreation nor is it fair to the schools that are asked to give up their already overtaxed space.

Priority 3 – Direct more resources to inner-beltway and aging neighborhoods,