

# Our Revolution Baltimore City/County

## *Delegate and State Senate Endorsement Questionnaire*

**Name:** Vince Andrews

**Desired political office:** Delegate

**District Number:** 46

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

The issues that I am advocating for on the campaign trail, and the unapologetically pro-Baltimore campaign message that we are advocating, are personal to me.

As a former Baltimore City school teacher, I taught our city's children in a building with little heat, no air conditioning, no drinkable water fountains because of led pipes, and mice running through the classroom. As a member of the Baltimore Teacher's Union, I saw the significant benefits offered by our collectively bargained union contract, including protecting teachers from ineffective and abusive principals. As I shifted from teaching to attending law school here in Baltimore City, I worked in the Baltimore City Office of the Public Defender and worked on access to justice issues to reduce the negative effects of cash bail. Today, as a public health attorney, I work in a non-profit to alleviate the immense pressure that communities experience from inadequate access to healthcare.

Each of these experiences demonstrate my commitment to matching my career with the progressive values that I live by. These experiences also provide me with deep knowledge about how these massively important institutions - education, public justice, health care - function. By leveraging the knowledge and experiences I have gained working in these fields, I will be able to successfully build coalitions and pass quality, equity based legislation to end the generational poverty that we see in Baltimore and throughout Maryland.

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

Collective action, not individualism, is how we will overcome all the great challenges that our society faces. Therefore, we must create a society that ensures all people have access to housing, food, education, and health care and we must finally end the generational poverty that we see throughout our state. The principles and values that guide my public service are best illustrated by the work that I have performed and by the

work I continue to perform; from helping to found my high school's Amnesty International chapter, to becoming a school teacher after graduating Cornell University, and then working in non-profit public health after graduating Maryland law school. I choose to do this work because it is the people who interact with these institutions that I want to serve.

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

Yes, I identify as a progressive. I believe in universal health care, universal pre-K, a progressive tax system, universal access to housing, and so much more (see here: <https://www.vinceandrewsforbaltimore.com/priorities>)

**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 the single greatest threat to humanity (really all current living ecosystems) of our time. These threats are real and people die from the effects of climate change on a daily basis. We are also continuing to discover the negative consequences of climate change on a daily basis - - from droughts, to sea level rise, to the shutting down of ocean currents. If we don't act immediately and decisively, we may never be able to stop the global warming trends that human action has caused.

Additionally, all people, regardless of race, ethnicity or national origin, have the right to live, work and play in a clean and safe environment. However, the effects of air pollution and climate change are not felt equally. Maryland neighborhoods that experience concentrated poverty also experience some of the worst air quality in the state and are least able to recover from the effects of significant weather events, be it flooding, wind or fire damage. Facts as follows:

- In Baltimore City, our two incinerators which drive significant air pollution (Wheelabrator and Curtis Bay Medical Waste Facility) are located in low income neighborhoods. A 2017 Chesapeake Bay Foundation study found that the Wheelabrator alone causes \$55 million annually in health care costs. <https://www.cbf.org/news-media/newsroom/2017/maryland/cbf-study-baltimore-incinerator-causes-55-million-in-health-problems-per-year.html>
- Additionally, a September 2021 study by Johns Hopkins University revealed that low-income people of color live in neighborhoods adjacent to high-traffic roadways or heavily trafficked industrial areas and, as a result, they face the highest level of transit-related inequity, not just in terms of commute times but also when it comes to air pollution and health risks associated with vehicle emissions. [https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-09/JHU-016%20Transit%20Equity%20Report-FINAL\\_0.pdf](https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-09/JHU-016%20Transit%20Equity%20Report-FINAL_0.pdf)
- As a consequence of living in areas with poor air quality, low income communities in Maryland experience higher rates of asthma and other breathing illnesses than

more well-off communities.

<https://www.asthmacommunitynetwork.org/node/15680>

Some immediate steps that the General Assembly should take are as follows:

- Support passage the Climate Solutions Now Act, to achieve net-zero statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.
- Override governor Hogan's veto on the following bills:
  - Maryland Metro/Transit Funding Act sponsored by Brooke Lierman
  - The Advanced Clean Energy and Clean Energy Innovation Investments and Initiatives to increase funding for technology companies engaged in clean energy development.
- At a **minimum**, fund The 2030 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act Plan published by the Maryland Department of the Environment.

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

I support the Green New Deal and believe that its passage not only advances Maryland's climate goals but it can also reduce the systemic economic inequities that persist in Maryland's economy.

**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 fully support any legislation that both highlights the acute climate crisis that we are living through as well as provides specific steps that positively impact Maryland's approach to climate change. This includes:

- Establishing a date certain by which it will achieve net zero emissions. If we do not set a date, then we won't be able to recognize if we've achieved or failed at meeting our goal. 60% reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2045 as currently recommended by Maryland Commission of Climate Change but if there are more aggressive targets that are achievable, I would advocate for such targets.
- Creating an oversight body to ensure such goals are achieved.
- Establishing a tax system that incentivizes companies and individuals to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

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

I support moving towards electrification of buildings over the continued use of gas.

**8. How would you vote on the Climate Solutions Act?**

Support, see answer to question 6 above.

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

Support, counties and other government entities must act as fiduciaries of the environment for future generations.

### Health Care

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

Fully support, as stated on my public facing website.

In my current role as a public health attorney, I helped design the back-end legal framework that enabled all Marylanders to receive free CV19 testing services at the Baltimore Convention Center. We need to build on the lessons we learned during this pandemic - - that providing no-cost health care to the patient both saves lives and in the long-run reduces total health care costs.

This issue is both personal to me and is a field where I am an expert. If elected, I look forward to using this expertise to finally make single-payer a reality.

**11. Would you vote for paid sick leave?**

Yes, absolutely. Our current system is unconscionable and ineffective.

### 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?**

I am against a private university-based police department. Fundamentally, I am against the privatization of any essential public service, from public utilities to public education. However, private policing is a particularly awful idea. One only has to look at the abuse occurring in the private prison industry or the history of the Pinkertons in the United States to understand that.

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

We need to completely reimagine policing in Maryland and transition the institution to a community-based model. Right now, the only time members of our society interact with the police is during the worst moment of our lives, when we are either being stopped for a crime or we are the victims of a crime. Moving forward, we must integrate our public safety professionals into the community such that folks have a relationship with their officers and the supporting fire fighters, EMTs, social workers and other personnel that are fundamental to a new policing model.

To accomplish this goal, the community must also be integrated into the institution of policing, which includes empowering civilian review boards and other community oversight structures. We can no longer tolerate the perpetuation of an "us" vs. "them" mentality when it comes to policing. Therefore, we must create mechanisms where the community has input into the department charged with their safety.

Finally, this vision also means that government would not fund and/or implement coercive surveillance practices which fundamentally represent a government's fear of its own population. Such programs have historically been used to perpetuate classist and racist policing models in our country to suppress low income and minority communities.

**14. Would you vote to end debtor prisoners?**

Yes

**Drug Policy Reform/Legalization of Marijuana**

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

Fully support.

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

We need to add greater urgency to accomplishing to the goal of full and equitable legalization of marijuana in Maryland. To ensure equitable legalization, the implementing Commission should receive the following instructions:

- 1) All outstanding debts for marijuana fines and fees should automatically be forgiven
- 2) Nobody should continue to face the harmful collateral consequences of a marijuana conviction on their record therefore legalization must include a process for clemency, resentencing, and expungement that are speedy, automatic, and free of cost.
- 3) People with a marijuana conviction on their record should be able to fully re-integrate into society by accessing the same rights and services as anybody else including access to public benefits such as financial and housing assistance programs.
- 4) The licensing process for the production, sale and consumption of marijuana must be reasonable, accessible and must prioritize communities of color and small business owners. Additionally, people with prior drug convictions must be allowed to access and benefit from the new legal marijuana marketplace after legalization.
- 5) Tax revenue raised by the legal marijuana market for programs working to end collateral harms and for supporting small businesses owned or run by communities directly impacted by the War on Drugs.

To ensure that records are actually expunged, the State must establish an independent expungement commission which actively reviews and seeks-out people who have prior convictions to ensure that their records are appropriately expunged. The current

process, which relies on people seeking expungement clinics, is not sufficient to address the harms of the past.

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

As a non-profit public health attorney, I've seen how treating substance use as a public health issue, instead of a criminal issue, is the model that must be followed to break the cycle of addiction which does exist in our society. It is upon these experiences that I fully believe the decriminalization movement is key to ending the cycle of addiction and think that the legislature must seek successful examples (such as Portugal) to enable such a movement here in Maryland.

**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?**

Yes, fully support. As the son of a Cuban father and a French mother, I fully believe we need to protect our immigrant families.

**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?**

The rise in hate crime against Asian Americans during the CV19 is unacceptable. We must do the following:

- Actively monitor and track incidents of hate crimes in publicly accessible databases
- Initiate public information campaigns which have proved to effectively reduce hate crimes
- For those who commit acts of hate, focus punishment on bias reduction programs to ensure such acts are never repeated.

**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?**

Both Baltimore and Maryland are made stronger by accepting refugees. Specific actions which can be taken to support these families (as well as non-refugee immigrant families) are as follows:

- Housing - Baltimore should partner with national nonprofits and leverage our existing housing stock to help bring refugees to the community. Research has demonstrated that doing so could create a win-win scenario as refugees have a positive impact on the local economy.
- Support Universal Representation - Every person in America should have access to legal representation. However, in the current system many of our most vulnerable immigrants are left to fend for themselves. I support the efforts from CASA and other immigration advocacy organizations to ensure universal representation for all Marylanders regardless of immigration status.
- Protect Refugee and Immigrant families from ICE - I support the ACLU Maryland's effort to end all 287(g) agreements in the state.

### 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?**

Governor Hogan's decision to cancel the Redline put Maryland's transit policy back 30 years if not more. We must do everything in our power to revive the plan as part of the new Federal infrastructure bill that is being implemented.

**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?**

Specific policies we could propose are as follows:

- Create a Baltimore Metropolitan transportation authority that has the ability to issue bonds and equitably distribute the burdens of building an integrated public transit network between the jurisdictions (primarily Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Anne Arundel County).
- Bring back the Redline (see above)
- Prioritize bike/pedestrian/train/bus infrastructure (both new development and maintenance/improvement of current infrastructure) over further development of roads and highways as discussed further in the answers below.
- Make significant investments to bring-back the Baltimore redline (see above), transition to electric buses, and increase investment in non-gas powered modes of transportation (bike lanes, etc.).
- Revive the plan to run passenger rail along existing CSX rail lines. Though politically very difficult, this has the potential to drastically expand Baltimore and Maryland's train capacity at lower-costs while also respecting legacy communities.
- Support and expand the Baltimore Greenway's trail system, so that it can become a fully connected network. As somebody who has trained along this network for multiple marathons, I find it wildly frustrating that it is so disjointed.

- Support construction of the Middle Branch Park initiative.
- Support construction of a new Hanover Street bridge and conversion of the current bridge into a pedestrian mall, which would connect the Middle Branch park to the Federal Hill peninsula.

### 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?**

Eviction moratoriums do not go far enough because the rent still accrues! We must use the conditions created by the pandemic to provide direct rental relief to struggling families and we should make such relief permanent for families meeting specific criteria (income, disability, child care, etc.). Again, this an area where we cannot forget the lessons we learned during the pandemic.

### Consumer Rights

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

Fully in favor. Tying auto insurance prices to zip codes is discriminatory and reduces access to opportunity in our state. Recently I spoke with a community organization that would have given a free car to one of their members so that they could access a employment however, nobody could afford the monthly insurance premium (upwards of \$400) so the car was never provided.