

# Our Revolution Maryland 2022 Congressional Candidate Questionnaire

Responses to Questions will be made Public

Email \*

jazz@jazzlewis.com

Candidate's Name \*

Jazz Lewis

Website \*

https://www.jazzlewis.com/

Best way to contact you \*

email

## ECOLOGICAL/CLIMATE CRISIS

**We face multiple existential threats: a climate crisis with the unprecedented levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, an environmental pollution crisis caused by our extraction and consumption practices, and the limits to growth on a finite planet. There are so many crises in the world, but the threats to the environment and our climate are the most grave. So we begin here.**

Our Revolution has endorsed the framework of the Green New Deal, with the twin goals of a transformation to renewable energy and promoting environmental justice and economic equity. Will you support the Green New Deal and any implementing legislation in the upcoming Congress? Describe your vision for moving to renewable energy and transitioning away from fossil fuels. What commitments can you make now to voters, to demand action in Congress where we have seen none for decades? \*

To fulfill the dream of the Green New Deal, a dream where our air is free of pollutants, our water is clean and healthy, and our communities are resilient with healthy food and equitable multi-modal transit options powered by clean energy, we will need federal action. It is only through comprehensive, progressive action by our federal government that we can hope to avoid the worst of the climate crisis. If we do not act with the fierce urgency of now to tackle the climate crisis, these problems will only get worse. In Congress, I will work with my Congressional colleagues to continue the electrification of our public transportation system; invest federal dollars into light and heavy rail to increase access to safe and environmentally-conscious public transit; increase the federal government's investment in renewable energy sources; and extend tax credits for electric vehicles and equalize access to electric vehicle charging stations.

In the face of a lack of Congressional action, and the Supreme Court now revisiting EPA authority, will you join Our Revolution in calling on President Biden to declare a climate emergency to take actions at the executive level? \*

Yes

Are there policies you would favor to move to more sustainable levels of consumption and less environmentally devastating practices and products? \*

During my time as Chair of the Democratic Caucus in the Maryland House of Delegates, I have supported a number of such policies, including banning plastic bags that pollute our waters, creating standards for green buses as well as scaling the use of electric buses for public transportation and for our schools, requiring the state to review legislation for its impact on our environment, as well as increasing our use of renewable energy to over 50% while also decreasing our carbon emissions by 60%.

Besides anthropogenic global warming, what other environmental crises are we facing and how do you propose addressing them? \*

Pollution continues to be a problem, with the damage caused by pollution seen throughout Maryland. It can be seen in the Chesapeake Bay, who has provided not just natural beauty and character but has also been an economic engine for our great state. The crisis facing our environment, stemming both from pollution and climate change, has made the degradation of our treasured Chesapeake one more example of what we stand to lose if we do not take active measures right now to address the climate crisis. The damage can also be seen in the city I call home, Glenarden, a historic predominantly African American municipality that was divided in half by the national highway system. As a result, my community has very poor air quality that causes asthma for those who live here, in particular, our children. Building on the success of the Bipartisan Infrastructure plan, we can reconnect communities and address challenges faced by communities like mine, including investing more in equitable transit options over unnecessary highway expansion.

## ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Will you commit to voting for passage of an increase in the federal minimum wage to at least \$15/hour now (indexed to inflation)? \*

I led the Fight for 15 during my time in the Maryland legislature and will continue to fight for raising the minimum wage to \$15 as a Member of Congress.

What is your plan for addressing the homelessness crisis? What are your ideas for addressing the crisis in the cost of housing which has many Americans paying more than half their income for housing? \*

For homelessness, I would support legislation such as the Ending Homelessness Act, which ensures universal rental assistance for every eligible household. The bill also increases the supply of housing affordable to people with the lowest incomes, bans source of income discrimination, and includes other measures to help end homelessness. For housing, in Congress I will work with my colleagues to increase tax forgiveness programs, including student debt forgiveness, for first-time homebuyers; to incentivize the adoption of inclusionary zoning ordinances that allow diverse housing types to encourage homeownership; to direct funds to housing trusts to incentivize state and local governments to subsidize affordable housing projects; and to ensure appraisers are not devaluing homes just because the current owners are Black or Latino.

Do you agree that wealth and income inequality are among the most significant problems we face? If so, why do you believe this is happening, and what specific steps would you take to redress this? Would you support changes in tax laws or rate changes? What other policy changes would you advocate for? Please be specific as possible here. \*

Yes. We must ensure that the wealthy, be that individuals or corporations, aren't able to avoid their civic duty in paying their fair share to society. I believe we should make a more progressive tax rate, including taxing capital gains for those earning more than \$1 million per year. Along with this, there should be corresponding lower tax rates for the lowest income earners. This will ensure everyone pays their fair share and should help us in funding the needed interventions to lift communities out of poverty, while also making things like public transit, college and workforce training, child care, and healthcare more affordable.

What new or repealed laws or regulations would you impose or reinstate on the investment and commercial banking sectors? \*

I support legislation modeled on a bill I am the lead sponsor on currently in the House of Delegates requiring the State pension fund to use minority businesses for at least 20% of brokerage and investment management services and management of 20% of the system's assets. The retirement plan industry manages close to \$70 trillion and we can leverage that to address the racial and gender imbalance of who is responsible for that money.

What steps would you take to protect workers who are trying to organize a union? Do you support the Pro Act? Does it go far enough in your view? If not, what else must we do? \*

As the son of a lifelong member of IBEW and myself a former labor organizer for SEIU 1199 & 32BJ, I know the power of unions to fight for workers, expand the middle class, and make our economy fairer for all. I will support legislation that will not just end the attacks unions have seen from Republican policies over the past decades, but will also expand unions' ability to organize where they are needed most. In Congress, I will support the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act and the Workplace Democracy Act to ensure that it is easier for workers to form a union where they work. I will also support extending the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to better protect our domestic and agricultural workers. If workers want to form a union, they should be empowered to do so. Additionally, I will support legislation to ensure our federal dollars only go towards projects that will provide jobs with living wages, paid leave, quality benefits, and promote workers' ability to organize and bargain collectively.

Would you support or oppose the Congressional Progressive Caucus' plan to create fairer trade deals? (Read more here: [https://progressives.house.gov/\\_cache/files/d/0/d06e29b1-a19e-48e5-8eba-7ca61b0bba94/D363B2756F3792BAEEC7A33B795604EA.cpc-fair-trade-agenda.pdf](https://progressives.house.gov/_cache/files/d/0/d06e29b1-a19e-48e5-8eba-7ca61b0bba94/D363B2756F3792BAEEC7A33B795604EA.cpc-fair-trade-agenda.pdf)) \*

Support

## HEALTHCARE/RETIREMENT

What steps do you support to strengthen Social Security and Medicare? \*

Social Security is a vital lifeline for our nation's seniors and must be protected and expanded. I support lifting the cap on social security taxes to ensure we fully fund this earned benefit for current and future generations. There are a number of ways to improve Medicare for current beneficiaries. First, we can expand Medicare coverage to include oral, vision, and audiology. Second, we can take action to reduce drug costs by allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices. Third, we can cap out of pocket costs for prescription drugs. Fourth, we can expand Medicare coverage to include long-term care services.

Will you join in support of Rep. Jayapal's petition effort to end the Trump/Biden program allowing Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to move Medicare enrollees to for-profit Direct Contracting Entities? \*

Yes

Do you support single-payer healthcare - Medicare For All? Please explain your answer. \*

I support Medicare for All because healthcare is a right and people's access to care should not be determined by whether they can afford it.

## LEGAL REFORM

Do you support legalizing marijuana? Why or why not? \*

One of the most harmful policies from the past few decades has been the disastrous over-incarceration brought on by the War on Drugs. These policies have disproportionately targeted communities of color and young black men, leading to long prison sentences for non-violent offenders, broken up communities, and sky-high prison populations, all while having no meaningful impact on crime. Decriminalizing marijuana is an important step towards undoing these wrongs.

The United States has 5% of the world's population, but 25% of those incarcerated worldwide. Roughly 90% of those in prison have taken plea deals, and even those who get new evidence later are unable to get hearings or convictions overturned. Private prisons further incentivize arrests and incarceration. What steps do you support to reform our Criminal Justice system - police, prosecutors, courts, jails and prisons \*

We should end mandatory minimum sentences to allow judges flexibility in sentencing procedures. Too often, our laws punish people for being poor; ending cash bail will ensure that we prevent people from being stuck in prison simply because they cannot afford to post bail. We also must break the cycle of incarceration and the incredibly high recidivism rates in our penal system. The focus of the judicial system needs to look beyond simply punishing offenders but also at rehabilitating them so that once they serve their time, they can return to society as fully contributing members of the community. We should invest in programs that give the incarcerated the resources and tools they need to live full active lives once they return to society. We also should Ban the Box and ensure full voting rights for the formerly incarcerated to ensure that they have every opportunity to be members of their communities after they serve their time.

Our Revolution Maryland has advocated for justice for the human rights attorney Steven Donziger, who is being persecuted by oil and gas 'Goliath' Chevron through the federal court system. See this link for a discussion of the timeline of events in his case: <https://www.freedonziger.org/timeline-of-the-case>. What steps will you take to rebalance the scales of justice so that 'Davids' like Steven Donziger can bring suit against mega-corporations to seek redress for victims of corporate misconduct, without risking their own freedom? With respect to Donziger, in particular, do you support Congressional hearings and/or Justice Department investigation into possible corruption of process in the Southern District of New York? \*

I support hearings and an investigation into the case of Stephen Donziger.

The federal judiciary is largely composed of pro-corporate/anti-consumer and labor judges appointed by Presidents from both parties. We see this in recent bankruptcy decisions allowing profitable corporations to claw back pension funds from employees and retirees. There are also high-profile abuses of bankruptcy protections, such as the 'Texas Two-Step' to shield assets of billionaire owners and Fortune 500 companies from deserving plaintiffs and claimants. What reforms and court oversight would you support to prevent predatory corporations from abusing judicial process to evade responsibility for egregious conduct injuring thousands and even millions of Americans? \*

I support legislation banning the 'Texas Two-Step' through legislation such as the Nondebtor Release Prohibition Act, which would eliminate the use of non-consensual, non-debtor releases in private claims and those brought by the government.

## IMMIGRATION

If you support a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in our country today, please set forth your vision briefly. What other reforms to our immigration system would you advocate going forward? \*

Immigrants bore the brunt of cruel and dehumanizing federal policies enacted under Trump. However, the dysfunction and gratuitous suffering at the center of the nation's immigration system long pre-date 2016. The system weaponized by Trump was constructed by prior administrations from both political parties, and funded and enabled by laws passed by Congress under both Republican and Democratic leadership. The unprecedented and ever-increasing scale of detentions and deportations have squandered unprecedented billions of taxpayer dollars and devastated millions of families. These detentions and deportations also disproportionately harm Black and Brown immigrants, reinforcing the racial hierarchies and racial injustice that pervade our society. Creating a path to citizenship will allow millions to achieve the American dream without fear, and will stimulate our economy.

## FOREIGN POLICY

The United States spends more on its military than the next 10 countries combined. That enormous expenditure incentivizes conflict over diplomacy and lobbying by our military-industrial complex to maintain the status quo. In Congress, would you work to reduce our annual military spending? \*

I support finding efficiencies and eliminating waste in our defense spending.

## ELECTION & PARTY REFORM

Do you support public financing for every election? Why or why not? \*

I support public financing for every election as that is the only way to truly level the playing field so that those of us who aren't the most connected, have the richest friends, or have the largest bank accounts can afford to run for office.

Do you support or oppose ending the revolving door for elected officials and staffers becoming lobbyists? What will you do about the influence of fossil fuel executives and other industry front-groups on policy-making and elections? \*

Yes I support ending the revolving door. To limit the influence of industry front-groups, we must crack down on the use of dark money in electoral politics through legislation such as the DISCLOSE Act, which would require organizations spending money in elections to disclose donor who have given \$10,000 or more during an election cycle. Additionally, overturning Citizens United via constitutional amendment would permit Congress and states to set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money to influence elections.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

Two decades into the 21st Century, intolerance and discrimination are still plaguing us, and now, incredibly to many of us, activists on the right are trying to purge our schools of any books or curriculum which would involve an honest accounting of our troubled history of social, racial and ethnic strife, prejudice and even exploitation and genocide. Can we address disparate treatment and intolerance without openly confronting our troubled history and persistent injustices? Looking at the 2021 election in Virginia, it seems that GOP's main electoral talking point this year will continue to be a refusal to even discuss racial inequities, as well as creating new forms of oppression of women and LGBTQ people. As a society and as progressives, how should we formulate a response to these political talking points, and going forward to ensure we can equip each generation to discuss difference and discrimination? \*

We cannot back down from GOP attempts to whitewash our collective history. We must push back against these rhetoric, especially as it is being used to justify draconian legislation in state legislatures stifling free speech. That means standing in solidarity with women, communities of color, the LGBTQIA+ community, older Americans, and many more. Additionally, as I have done in the state legislature and my time as a labor organizer, I will champion legislation to make equity a priority, including ensuring we review policies for its disproportionate impact on diverse populations.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms