

# Our Revolution Maryland 2022 Gubernatorial Questionnaire

Responses to Questions will be made Public

Governor Candidate Name \*

John King

Lt. Governor Candidate Name

Michelle Siri

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Do you support legalizing cannabis possession and use in Maryland? If yes, If yes, what steps do you support to provide redress to those individuals and communities that were targeted by police and prosecutors in past years when attempting to enforce laws against the use and non-violent distribution of marijuana? \*

Yes. I support full legalization of adult use of cannabis. I will also expunge the records of all nonviolent, cannabis-related charges and release those incarcerated for them. After legalization, my administration will prioritize investment in cannabis retail businesses owned by people of color and women. I support Sen. Jill Carter's bill, which not only would legalize up to 4 ounces of cannabis flower for people 21 and older in Maryland, but also dictate that 60% of the tax revenue generated go to communities most negatively affected by cannabis criminalization.

Regarding the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 on Police Discipline and Law Enforcement Programs and Procedure - What is your perspective on the final legislation which came out of last year's session? Does it represent real reform and create accountability and transparency? Are you satisfied with the progress at the state level and county efforts counties to respond to and implement the changes directed by the new law? What, if, any changes would you push for as Governor to strengthen the provisions enacted last year? \*

I am proud that the legislature passed police transparency legislation last year, however it is only a small step forward and there is a lot more to be done. At the county level, it is hard to assess since the law is so new counties are still in the process of forming their police accountability boards, however I believe county governments need to do a better job of including their community members in the process of setting up their boards. It's important to involve stakeholders and advocates in the discussion so we don't see fine print being added that misses the point of reforms. Also, I am disappointed that numerous counties have yet to even pass the legislation necessary to establish their civilian oversight boards and some places have not even drawn up proposals yet. As Governor, I would demand local jurisdiction create their police accountability boards immediately and ensure boards are transparent, hearing from the community members actually being policed. I also support the current reform bills in the legislature, like Del. Jheanelle Wilkins' bill that would eliminate qualified immunity and Sen. Jill Carter's bill that would strip the pensions of officers convicted of a crime committed while on duty, and I will sign them as Governor if they do not pass this session.

Currently courts are operating under a broad directive from the Court of Appeals to consider various options before imposing cash bail. But there is no legislation due to a concerted pressure campaign by the bail bond lobby. Would you prioritize a law limiting or eliminating cash bail for (most) non-violent offenses (with exceptions for clear flight risks)? \*

Yes, I support eliminating cash bail. No one should be incarcerated while awaiting trial simply based on ability or inability to pay, especially on charges that are nonviolent. Cash bail is costing people their jobs and taking them away from their families when they have not even been convicted of anything. While Maryland has made attempts to reform our unfair pretrial detention system, we must pass a law that fully eliminates cash bail. Our own state attorney general has raised concerns our current cash bail system may be unconstitutional.

Will you support public financing for all statewide offices and for the state legislature to enable everyday citizens to run for office? \*

Yes. We have already seen counties and Baltimore City implement public financing at the local level. The public financing system for gubernatorial candidates has existed for decades. At this point, there is no reason it should not be an option available for all state elected offices. However, it is critically important that the funding level for public financing is high enough for candidates who choose public financing to be truly competitive.

Will you support legislation that will enable all county-level offices to be eligible for public financing? \*

Yes. We have already seen Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties as well as Baltimore City approve public financing systems for their county offices. All county candidates should have access to public financing opportunities. As Governor I would not only support public financing at the local level but would advocate nationally for the end to citizens united to ensure we get dark money out of politics.

Will you support a constitutional amendment to ban appointments and fill vacancies in the General Assembly by special elections as 25 states in the U.S. currently do? \*

Yes. Given the advantages incumbents have in running for re-election, it is vital that legislators are first elected, not appointed.

Will you advocate on behalf of an effort to establish a statewide office for Public Advocate (and a public fund for candidates)? \*

Yes. COVID-19 really highlighted the need for increased transparency and accountability, from the struggle to source PPE and the Governor buying faulty tests from a South Korean company while bypassing the procurement process to his use of encrypted messages to hide conversations with staff from the public. We have seen other states and cities with their own Public Advocate and ombudsman positions and Maryland is behind the times in this area. Instead of responding to cover-ups and government misconduct one-by-one as they are discovered, a Public Advocate would be a constant watchdog and could prevent impropriety before it happens. New York City's public advocates, for example, have worked on the gender pay gap, government transparency, police accountability and affordable housing. In creating a Public Advocate position, I would also include a fund for public financing campaigns for the position.

The last round of state elections raised examples pointing to the insular nature of our judicial elections and the slates which dominate the voting. Would you initiate an effort to reconsider the process for appointing and electing judges in Maryland? \*

It is incredibly important that Marylanders have faith in our judicial system and its judges. In order to earn that faith, our judiciary must be free of racial and gender bias and be representative of the communities it serves. While voters and the legislature have made clear over the years they are supportive of appointed circuit court judges standing election, that does not mean we cannot do more to ensure that the nominating process is more transparent and more accessible. Our overall goal should be to ensure that judges being appointed are representative of their communities and come with not only the requisite legal expertise but the necessary lived experiences in their communities. As Governor I would work with Chief Judge Getty, as well as with the legislature, to ensure Maryland's appointment process is transparent, accessible, and prioritizes the diverse needs of our communities. I would issue an Executive Order diversifying the pool of Commissioners, and broadening the pool of candidates for consideration of appointment, so that they are reflective of the diversity of the jurisdictions they serve. This would allow us to break the mold of the "good old boys club" that often permeates these insular selection processes. As the Executive Director of a legal services organization, my running mate, Michelle Siri, has addressed this issue head on in the past, calling out the all white-male selections by the Baltimore County Bar Association for that county's Judicial Nominating Commission, and forcing the association to resolicit applications to the commission and name a more diverse panel of Commissioners. In the law, as in all things, representation matters.

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Do you support Medicare for All at the federal level? \*

Yes. I believe healthcare is a human right and Medicare for All at the federal level is the most effective way to guarantee healthcare for all.

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Do you support single-payer health care in Maryland? If elected, will you commit to ask for a legislative study or create an executive agency study of the feasibility of implementing single-payer health coverage in Maryland? \*

I support the Commission on Universal Health Care bill currently in the General Assembly that would develop a plan for a universal health care system in Maryland, uncoupling healthcare from employment to boost the economy. But while we do the work laid out in the study bill, which I am proud to testify at the Maryland legislature in support of, we must do everything we can to ensure every Marylander has the health care they deserve. As Governor, while I advocate for Medicare for All at the national level we will be doing the work here in Maryland. My administration will work to block Direct Contracting Entities around Medicare services administered by the state, to ensure that Medicare services are not privatized in Maryland. I will work with the legislature to put an end to Medicaid privatization that has allowed managed care organizations to profit off denying care. I will ensure that no Marylander is denied health care services on the basis of immigration status.

My administration will also work to ensure that low income and communities of color have stable and reliable medical providers, both general and specialists, in their area by creating a permanent task force to analyze racial disparities in Maryland's health care system, and making targeted investments to eliminate those disparities. Furthermore my administration will incentivize providers to locate in underserved communities, prioritizing much needed specialists. Health care is a human right and it is long overdue in Maryland that we treat it as such!

Connecticut has shown that when a state administers Medicaid, administrative costs are slashed. Will you commit to request a federal CMS waiver to remove MCOs from our Medicaid program and have the State administer the program? \*

Yes. As Governor, I would plan to restructure our Medicaid payments away from prepaying MCOs and pay Medicaid providers directly at Medicare rates instead.

Will you support corrective legislation to include all workers, including tipped and agricultural workers, in our state's minimum wage law? Do you support HB8 Maryland Family and Medical Leave Insurance program, or an alternative to provide paid parental or medical leave for Maryland workers? \*

Yes. I support speeding up Maryland's timeline to reach \$15 an hour, and we especially need to include tipped workers and agricultural workers who are often also some of the most vulnerable. We've also seen how the tipped wage exacerbates the gender pay gap, because two-thirds of our tipped workers are women. I fully support paid family leave in Maryland and I've said throughout the campaign it would be the first bill I would sign into law as governor (if it does not pass this year as we hope). I support HB8, the Time to Care Act, and my running mate Michelle Siri and I rallied in support of the bill in Annapolis. In her role as Executive Director of the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Michelle Siri has been a consistent champion for paid family leave.

Do you support workers' rights to organize in the private and public sectors? Will you make it a priority that all public employees be covered by a public employees relations act, similar to the National Labor Relations Act, which has governed work in the private sector for over 80 years?

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Yes. As governor, I will protect the right to organize and collectively bargain for all workers. I support legislation that protects public employees under the same rules we use to protect private sector ones.

How will you address continuing inequities in school infrastructure and help redress persistent problems like undrinkable water, classrooms without climate control, and mold? \*

As a former teacher, principal, Secretary of Education, and a public school parent, I fully understand the deep inequities in education and outdated school infrastructure. I will address the inequities in our school system by fully funding and expanding upon the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the Built to Learn Act. I will ensure public funds are reserved for public schools by eliminating the BOOST voucher program and increase the starting salary for teachers to \$60,000 to attract the best educators to Maryland. I also have a plan to upgrade our schools for the climate crisis, switching them to 100% clean energy use, and to prioritize funding for schools in communities with little access to green space and that are heavily impacted by heat and runoff issues. This massive investment in school facilities will improve and increase the efficiency of schools' air conditioning, HVAC and ventilation systems and ensure they have clean, lead-free drinking water.

Education stalwart Dr. Alvin Thornton has said that racism prevented the construction of schools in Prince George's County for 20 years. In order to address the backlog in school construction, the State legislature sanctioned a Public Private Partnership (P3) program for Prince George's - the first P3 program for school construction in the entire nation. Do you think a P3 program is an appropriate way to respond to racism in the county and the state? \*

No. I do not think P3 programs are an appropriate way to respond to racism in the county and the state. As we have seen with the Purple Line, P3 programs are plagued by delays and cost overruns, both of which will impact the quality of school children attend. If we see similar contractor problems in school construction as we have seen with the Purple Line, the racial disparities we are trying to fix will just be made worse.

What will you do to create a more progressive tax structure in Maryland? \*

Yes. I support reforming Maryland's tax code so we have a more progressive income tax and fixing corporate tax loopholes by implementing combined reporting. As Governor I would push the legislature to pass parts SB 611 and HB 275 from the 2021 session that would have created a new top tax bracket for those making over a million dollars a year and increase that top marginal tax rate to 7%. I would also support updating Maryland's tax code to include capital gains with income. This would help level the playing field and address the huge disparity of wealth inequality in Maryland. My administration however, would not stop there. We would work to ensure that the wealthiest among us and large corporations pay their fair share and are no longer able to use the tax code to shield them from their responsibilities.

Additional reforms I will support are reforming our Enterprise Zone Tax Credit, which costs the state money but has not proven to be effective, improving the utilization of the EITC by sending low-income families pre-filled out tax returns so they can claim the credit when they otherwise might not have filed a tax return at all, and expanding the Maryland Child Tax Credit. Smaller reforms we can make are repealing the special use tax assessment for country clubs and golf courses.

What can the State do to accelerate the construction of affordable and inexpensive housing as we seek to create walkable diverse communities in response to the pressing concerns of climate change? \*

To accelerate affordable housing construction, I will reform exclusionary zoning laws, which stem from racist redlining policies, which would allow high-density housing and move away from requiring single-family homes. This would also decrease the amount of space allocated to driveways, parking lots and parking garages, giving more space for housing and encouraging public transit use. My administration will fully use the state's Housing Trust Fund, which has been vastly underutilized for years. Our Housing Trust Fund received \$49 million from 1992 through FY 2018 while neighboring DC, with a population ten times smaller than Maryland, received nearly \$179 million in its equivalent housing trust fund in FY 2018 alone. I also support expanding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), which would have an almost immediate impact on the housing supply since it would take advantage of existing structures. I was disappointed last session that Del. Vaughn Stewart's Social Housing Act did not make it out of committee, as it would have increased affordable housing. Besides building affordable housing, we should be strengthening eviction protections, like fully funding the access to counsel for tenants and blocking unlicensed landlords from using the courts' fast-track eviction procedures by requiring landlords show a valid rental license in Failure to Pay Rent eviction cases. Most importantly, we need to implement just cause evictions that disallow evictions for arbitrary non-lease renewals. I actually testified in favor of Del. Wilkins' bill this session that would allow local governments to prohibit landlords from failing to renew leases without just cause.

How will you improve public transportation in the state? What can the state do to promote or support efforts to develop low-cost or free public transit alternatives? Will you rebalance the transportation budget away from car dependence with highway construction to more public transportation all across Maryland? Why or Why not? \*

Due to the federal infrastructure funding package, the next governor will have a unique opportunity to dramatically improve our transportation system. My first transportation priority is finally building the Baltimore Red Line that was canceled by Gov. Hogan. Other priorities are finishing the Purple Line, building the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit light rail project, expanding the MARC train west and increasing the frequency of MARC trains, and improving the reliability and frequency of bus service in communities that are not served by light rail. I will move our transportation budget away from road and highway expansion and towards public transit. As we have seen, building more roads or widening current ones does not reduce traffic congestion in the long run, and it is also irresponsible to pursue highway expansion in the face of climate change.

Governor Hogan has proposed rebuilding the American Legion Bridge, widening connecting highways, constructed and managed by a public-private partnership will derive revenue from added variably-priced lanes that will serve only a fraction of drivers, primarily those who can afford the high tolls we can expect. What is your stance on the Hogan proposal? If elected will you use your position on top of Maryland's administrative agencies to revisit the Hogan plan? \*

I oppose Hogan's proposal. I do not believe widening highways will reduce traffic long-term and I do not believe a private company should be managing public infrastructure and collecting toll revenue. If elected, I would use my vote on the Board of Public Works to deny funding and contracts for the project. My administrative agencies will not support the project and I will effectively cancel it. In addition, Montgomery County Executive Elrich has proposed thoughtful alternatives like reversible lanes worthy of exploration.

Do you support or oppose the proposed Maglev project for the DC-Baltimore corridor? Why? \*

I oppose a DC-Baltimore Maglev project. The proposed route could damage ecologically sensitive areas like wetlands and streams. Additionally, it would disrupt neighborhoods during construction that would see little benefit from the finished project. Prince George's County would see disruption from construction but not get a single stop. The Maglev would also be so expensive as to be accessible only to those at the top of the income scale. Investing in the public transit projects described above (building the Red Line, completing the Purple Line, building the Southern Maryland Light Rail project, expanding the MARC west and increasing the frequency of MARC trains, and improving bus service) is a much better use of resources to advance the public good than the Maglev.

Will you commit to funding MARC expansion to make it a 2-way commuter rail system? \*

Yes. We need to make the MARC schedule more commuter-friendly if we want to encourage more people to use it, which is a key element of our climate action plan.

Do you support the removal of trash incineration and other dirty technologies from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard (HB11)? Why will you do in your four years to scale up the amount of clean renewable energy being used by Marylanders? \*

Yes. I support removing trash incineration and other dirty energy sources like poultry litter from the Renewable Portfolio Standard. As governor, I have committed to reaching a carbon-free electricity sector in Maryland by 2030. We will transition all government buildings (including state offices, schools, and higher education campuses) to be net zero buildings, but will also provide education and in-home consultations to help private consumers navigate the process. We will also provide financial incentives to make sure low and middle-income households can afford to update their homes and vehicles for clean energy and phase-in battery-powered appliances, like lawn mowers, to replace gasoline-powered ones.

Do you agree with the goals of the Green New Deal Resolution in Congress? What will you do to advance each or any of the goals listed in the resolution, for example energy efficiency in existing and new buildings, sustainable land use and reduce agricultural pollution and emissions, reducing waste and disposal of hazardous materials, and protecting fragile ecosystems, all while still creating a fair and just transition for all communities and workers? \*

Yes. As governor, I will take advantage of Maryland's renewable energy potential, like offshore wind, and also make sure our renewable energy infrastructure is built with good-paying, union jobs. My plan to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay involves encouraging sustainable agriculture practices, reducing nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizer runoff, and restoring the limits on poultry pollution that were removed by Governor Hogan. I will implement green building codes, reduce impermeable surfaces by increasing green space, and improve storm and wastewater management. I will also develop a climate corps as a service and education opportunity.

While corporations make huge profits through industrialized agriculture on the Eastern Shore, families face bankruptcy via the franchise model, and taxpayers are left holding the impossible task of cleaning the Bay. How would you address these interrelated issues in a way that creates a fair livelihood for farmers and addressing pollution on the land in the Bay? \*

It's time for large corporate farming operations to pay for their own clean up. As governor, I would support revisiting the Poultry Litter Management Act that failed to pass. Finally passing the Poultry Litter Management Act would put the responsibility of cleaning up excess chicken manure on corporate producers like Perdue and Tyson, sparing taxpayers and small farmers. While enforcement often focuses on individual farmers, we need to be leveraging fines against the larger corporations who have immense control over the farmers they contract with but have little incentive to make changes when their franchise model shifts costs onto small farms. From June 2017 to November 2020, 84% of poultry operations inspected by MDE failed, but only 4% were penalized by the state, and only 2% paid fines. MDE is also very understaffed to effectively carry out inspections, and as Governor, I will fully staff the agency. MDE can also help small farmers while improving pollution by being a partner to them, providing guidance and consultations to small farmers on areas like keeping phosphorus levels compliant with state limits and increasing its own testing of air and water for ammonia emissions. Other ways to help farmers while reducing pollution is to significantly shorten how long MDE can administratively continue a water discharge permit and to clear our current backlog of permits that have been administratively continued, like proposed by Del. Sara Love's and Sen. Paul Pinsky's bills that would eliminate the backlog by 2026. We also need to pass the Solid Waste Disposal and Diversion and On-Farm Composting and Compost Use bill, introduced by Del. Regina Boyce, that would invest in diverting and reducing waste and would specifically benefit farmers through grants to help their implementation of on-farm composting and compost use, reducing their waste without burdening them with huge costs.

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