

# Our Revolution Maryland and Howard County Local Candidates Questionnaire - 2022

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## 2022 MGA CANDIDATE **QUESTIONNAIRE** OUR REVOLUTION HOWARD COUNTY STATE DELEGATE AND SENATOR ENDORSEMENT REQUESTS

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Name: *Jen Terrasa*

Campaign Website: [teamterrassa.com](http://teamterrassa.com)

# QUESTIONS

Why are you running for state legislature? What have you done in recent years to benefit your district (e.g. civic engagement, testimony, activism, etc.)?

*For the past 4 years, I have represented District 13 in the House of Delegates. Prior to that, I served as the Councilwoman for County Council District 3 for 12 years. Prior to that I was a community activist, and I also served my community on the Howard County Planning Board, Kings Contrivance Village Board, and as Stoneridge HOA president. As a kid, I marched for jobs, peace, and justice etc. on numerous occasions, participated in protests, and even once tried to organize my fellow lifeguards. I am running to continue serving my community, as I have for almost 18 years, and because I think it is critical that we continue to have strong, experienced, consistent, progressive voices in the Maryland State legislature.*

What actions would your office take on any of OR's 6 platform issues? <https://ourrev.us/Platform2022>

*All of these are issues I firmly support and I have worked on in some way either in the past or during this session.*

## 1) Democracy: Protect Voting Rights & Get Money Out of Politics -

*As noted below, I think virtually every other issue hinges on our ability to get money out of politics. As an elected official, I have continuously supported protecting our voting rights and getting money out of politics. For example, when I was on the County Council I was one of two primary sponsors of the Citizen Election Fund in Howard County. I have supported many measures as state delegate including the creation of a permanent absentee voter list.*

## 2) Medicare for All

*Converting to a universal, single payer system is one of my main priorities. Not only does it help guarantee that we treat healthcare as the human right that it is, but it will also ultimately reduce healthcare costs and strengthen employee bargaining power by removing healthcare from the mix and freeing workers from the fear of losing healthcare if they choose to leave a unfavorable workplace. I think this can be accomplished by expanding medicare to medicare for all, I support reducing the age of eligibility until we get to everyone. Ideally, this should be done at the federal level but until that happens, we will have to address it at the state and local levels, which I support. To this end, when I was on the County Council, I was a champion for Healthy Howard (Howard County's precursor to Obama care). I also have and will continue to support Delegate Ruth's efforts to study and develop a plan for single payer healthcare for all.*

*I would also point out that one of the major obstacles to single payer health care is the heavy lobbying by the private insurance industry. We can help overcome this through campaign finance reform and by electing strong progressive leaders.*

- 3) *Climate Action: Keep Fossil Fuels in the Ground - I agree that we must stop subsidizing those who are continuing to knowingly contribute to our climate crisis. Subsidizing can be in many forms such as tax breaks and permitting drilling on public land, but also continuing to pay for the enormous cost of the damages they knowingly cause. That's why for the past two years Delegate Ruth and I have co-sponsored legislation to give the attorney general the ability to sue fossil fuel companies for the damages they knowingly caused. Unfortunately, that legislation has not passed. However, we plan to bring this legislation again. In addition, I have spoken to both democratic candidates for AG and several governor candidates about this important issue in hopes that the AG will be able to hold the fossil fuel companies accountable.*

*My committee worked hard this session (and last albeit unsuccessfully last year) to pass Climate Solutions Now. While I wish we could have done more, especially with electrification, I am proud of the aggressive goals set in this legislation and believe this should be looked at as a step in the right direction and look forward to continuing to work on this with Our Revolution and other environmental activists toward these goals.*

- 4) *Fight for \$15 and a Union - I completely agree with the statement "Vast inequality is destabilizing our democracy and economy." Throughout my time in office I have supported unions, collective bargaining, and raising the minimum wage. One of the first*

*pieces of legislation I co-sponsored on the County Council was a living wage bill, and as a state delegate I have supported legislation to increase our minimum wage to \$15/hour. However, I frankly think \$15 is just the beginning. It is not enough to support a family. As noted, I am also a long time supporter of unions and strongly believe supporting workers ability to collectively bargain is critical to getting everyone to \$15 and beyond, maintaining safe and healthy working conditions, and keeping and expanding good benefits.*

- 5) *Criminal Justice Reform - I am very proud of the legislation we passed last year on police reform and accountability but think we can do more. I support many aspects of criminal justice reform including ending qualified immunity. I also support bail reform. No one should remain in jail awaiting trial simply because they have limited financial resources. I support decriminalization of drugs, including legalization of marijuana (see question below for my thoughts on our efforts to move in that direction).*
  
- 6) *Protect Reproductive Rights - I am horrified by the threats to Roe v. Wade that we see across the Country and that exist because of the current composition of the Supreme Court, and I am committed to strengthening and expanding that right in Maryland. That's why I supported both the constitutional amendment (that did not pass) and the Access to Abortion Bill (that did pass) proposed this year and will continue to do whatever I can to protect reproductive rights.*

Do you support a bill for public campaign financing? If not, why not? Are you accepting campaign contributions from corporate interests, such as property developers or their associates?

I absolutely support public campaign financing and was one of two primary authors/sponsors of Howard County's Citizen Election Fund legislation. I believe getting money out of politics is critical to the future of our democracy and to achieving virtually every other goal we as progressives have. At a bare, bare minimum, all candidates for local (in addition to state, federal, and BOE) elections should be required to report who they received donations from and what they spent money on. That is why I sponsored HB93 which requires candidates for office in certain municipalities, cooperative housing corporations, condominiums, and homeowners associations report donations as well as expenditures to their campaigns. I was alarmed to find out that nothing in state law required such reporting for these candidates. Unfortunately, this legislation did not move forward this year. However, I definitely plan to file this legislation again next session if I am fortunate enough to be re-elected.

Please identify a few serious challenges facing Maryland that your office would address over the next two years. What steps would you take, what obstacles do you anticipate, and how can we overcome them?

*Two of the issues I see as key to almost everything else are: Healthcare for all and campaign finance reform. As I noted above, I believe getting money out of politics is one of the most critical things we can do both for our democracy generally and to achieve our progressive goals. I plan to file HB93 again to require reporting in local elections and continue to support legislation to get money out of politics. I am definitely interested in working with you to sponsor legislation in this area if you have other legislation on your agenda.*

*Health care is another critical issue from my perspective. From my perspective it is a human right, and I don't truly believe we can address issue of poverty and inequity without a single payor healthcare system which I support.*

*One of the main obstacles for me in working on either of these issues is that there are not issues handled by my committee (the Environment and Transportation committee).*

*In terms of topics in the purview of my committee, I am very concerned about both climate change and also tenants rights and housing. I have put in several bills and cosponsored many others on climate change related issues including several related to expanding EV charging infrastructure and reducing the use of plastics while creating a market for recycled plastics. I also worked closely with Delegate Sheila Ruth on a bill to give the Attorney General the ability to sue the fossil fuel industry for the damage caused by their impact on climate change they knowingly cause. I have either worked on or co-sponsored many tenants rights bills as well including a bill to make sure we are tracking eviction data, another bill that would shield COVID related eviction records so people who suffered loss of income due to COVID and subsequently had eviction cases filed against them are able to rent again in the future, and a bill to protect people's pets in case of evictions.*

## What changes would you make to state taxes and/or constitutional limits for county taxes?

*Our tax structure is upside down and backwards. Small tax breaks like the ones we passed this year for diapers, car seats, and dental products are nice, but the problem is much more fundamental than that and we must address the underlying issues. We need to make sure corporations and the rich are paying their fair share. We should tax wealth not just income which disproportionately impacts lower income families. Legislation like the bill we passed last year that allows counties to set progressive taxation levels is also helpful. We also need to remove loopholes, expand the EITC, and adopt combined reporting legislation.*

## What would you do to make housing more affordable for low-income residents?

Creating affordable housing takes the following:

- (1) Requiring developers to build affordable housing when and where they build market rate housing.
- (2) A fund to help with the cost of affordable housing and also to make moderate income housing available to people in the lower income housing range. A fund can also be used for housing down payments or first months rent to help low income people get into better housing.

This is an issue I am passionate about. I care deeply about it, and throughout my time on the Council, I have worked tirelessly on this issue. Locally, counties can do much more than they do to create and maintain affordable housing. Counties should require affordable housing to be built whenever and wherever housing development is happening, not just in some areas, but across the County. Counties should not let developers out of these requirements by allowing them to pay a minimal fee-in-lieu instead of building actual units or by having the County build units for them instead with merely the donation of land.

Unfortunately, the conversation on the state level seems to be focused more on an unproven theory promulgated by developers that increasing development of any kind of units (by removing/reducing zoning requirements or increasing density either directly or through ADU development) will somehow automatically lead to more affordable housing.

This is trickle down economics at best!

The state should do its part in creating and incentivizing affordable housing, and also look at ways to prohibit fee-in-lieu agreements that allow developers to pay small amounts to “get out of” local affordable requirements. Delegate Atterbeary tried unsuccessfully to pass legislation to do this several years in a row. There also may be a way for the state to directly require affordable housing to be built but that is more complicated because those types of requirements are generally seen as within local authority.

In addition, pro-tenant rights legislation such as we have been discussing in my committee over the last few years is an important piece of this puzzle. And lastly, but perhaps most importantly, raising wages/paying living wage makes existing housing more affordable.

How would you improve transportation and reduce traffic congestion in an equitable and sustainable manner? What are your views on public-private partnerships in transportation, such as variably-priced toll lanes?

*We need to change the way transit is funded in this state because continuing to fund it through the gas tax pits cars and roads against buses and trains. Moreover, as we move toward our goal of using more and more electric vehicles and using more and more transit instead of single occupancy vehicles, the money we have available through the gas tax will continue to diminish. The time is now to relook at how we prioritize and fund transit.*

*Note, two places we could look to shift money spent in other areas to transit are: (1) reducing the amount of subsidies we give to the fossil fuel industry; and (2) reducing the amount of money we spend combatting the effects of climate change by slowing it down and by putting the responsibility for damages on those who knowingly caused it and continue to do so.*

*I should also note that I was a strong supporter of Delegate Sheila Ruth’s legislation on Transit Equity (HB141) which as proposed would require that equity be considered when State transportation plans, reports, and goals are developed and require the Department of Transportation, in collaboration with the MTA, to conduct a transit equity analyses and consult with certain communities before announcing any reduction or cancellation of a capital expansion project.*

*I oppose P3s. While we call them public private partnerships, that is generally another word for privatization of governmental capital projects and services. There is no free money and the sad but unspoken truth is that P3s are much, much more expensive than government funded/bonded projects. But more than the increased cost, I am very concerned about these from the employee perspective and also the service perspective. I see attempts to privatize transit and transportation throughout, including proposals to use Uber and Lyft for mobility services, and also to let private companies perform driver's license tests.*

*I detest variably-priced toll lanes, and frankly think they put the financial burden on those in the lower socioeconomic status because they are the ones least likely to have flexible hours that allow them to avoid using them in peak hours.*

**How would you increase police accountability, decrease racial disparities in policing, and maintain public safety? Do you support full LEOBR repeal?**

*I think many of the things we put in place last year with our police accountability legislation moved us in the right direction, but clearly there is much more work to be done, including expanding investigatory powers of civilian review committees and banning all no knock warrants and increasing transparency. I voted for the full repeal of LEOBR and to override the Governor's veto but I know we need to do more.*

**How would you engage racially and economically marginalized communities to address inequity in our society? How would you ensure more impacted communities have a voice in state government?**

*One of the few good things that came out of COVID was increased transparency and accessibility in the House of Delegate, through online hearings. One way to engage marginalized communities is for us to maintain these even after all other COVID precautions are lifted. I think we can also use zoom for commissions and task forces as well.*

*I also think it is important that those in marginalized communities have the opportunity to serve in government leadership positions. We can do this through better pay and making these positions full time, this includes elected official positions as well as our staff who also have a considerable ability to give input on legislation before the General Assembly.*

*Other ideas include improving membership on commissions and task forces which means moving away from constantly giving the same organizations like the Chamber automatic seats but instead looking to name community activists and members.*

*And as I have mentioned in many of my answers, campaign finance reform can be a key piece of this. I had a bill this past session (HB 93), which unfortunately did not pass which would have increased transparency by requiring reporting of donors and expenditures in local races (municipalities and large HOAS/CONDOS etc). From my perspective this type of transparency is critical but only a minimal step toward the type of campaign finance reform I think we need for all our offices. Another great bill that did not pass was one filed by Eric Luedke which would have shed some light on astroturfing campaigns (Fake grassroots campaigns supporting legislation, or contracts in the case of De. Luedke's bill. These public relations campaigns are sponsored by big money but made to seem like they originated from grassroots participants). Astroturfing both undermines and manipulates community input and is something I think we should be acutely concerned about going forward because astroturfing makes it even more difficult for impacted communities, which often lack the monetary resources to launch public relations campaigns, to amplify their voices and be heard.*

**What should state government do to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and job opportunities?**

*Collective bargaining, living/prevaling wage, and other labor standards should be part of every contract involving state money. We need state "Davis-Bacon" type legislation. This is especially important in the area of climate solutions. In addition, we should make sure that the new jobs created by our move to renewable energy sources are good paying union jobs. And, we should stop contracting out everything. Services regularly performed by the government should not be contracted out or privatized. Three examples, I can think of off the top of my head on this are education, transportation, and prisons.*

What should Maryland do to improve healthcare beyond what the federal government does, in the short-run and long-run?

*As noted above, converting to a universal, single payer system is one of my main priorities. Not only does it help guarantee that we treat healthcare as the human right that it is, but it will also ultimately reduce healthcare costs and strengthen employee bargaining power by removing healthcare from the mix and freeing workers from the fear of losing healthcare if they choose to leave a unfavorable workplace. I think this is better accomplished at the federal level, however, unless and until that happens I support moving forward with medicare for all on the state level. Similarly, when I was on the County Council, Howard County moved forward with Healthy Howard (Howard County's precursor to Obama care) which I championed until the Affordable Act passed and was implemented on the federal level.*

*In addition, the state should continue to expand access to mental health, dental, and eye care.*

Do you support changes to state voting methods, such as ranked choice, approval voting, or proportional representation?

*Yes! I support ranked choice voting. I am less familiar with approval voting and proportional representation. Both sound like methods that I would support but I would want to hear a little more about how they are proposed to be used by the states.*

What are your top priorities to address environmental justice, sustainability, and nature conservation?

*As a member of the Environment and Transportation Committee, it is hard to narrow this down. Clearly, climate solutions is one the key things we need to do as a state, country, and world. I support the goals set forth in the legislation we passed as well as passing specific measures going forward to move rapidly toward that goal such as building electrification. Additionally, I have submitted bills several years in a row working on expanding electric vehicle infrastructure. I also had a bill this year to create a market for recycled plastic and worked with Delegate Love on her chasing arrows bill which would help reduce confusion and misleading information surrounding plastic recycling. Another*

*bill, I have already mentioned is HB596 which I co-sponsored with Delegate Ruth two years in a row to give the Attorney General the tools he/she needs to hold fossil fuels companies accountable for damage they knowingly caused. Once we are able to get this bill passed, it will help in two ways. First, it will provide a source of funds to clean up from damage and build barriers etc that help prevent further damage such as protection measures being worked on in Ellicott City. And second, it will, hopefully, in addition to others suing the fossil fuel companies serve as a disincentive to continuing this purposeful action which is causing so much damage.*

*On another note, I think we need to be careful with privatizing markets around stream restoration especially as it relates to allowing developers to buy their way out of onsite mitigation. And we should also require the minimization of removal of mature trees in both stream mitigation and development of both residential and commercial parcels. It is important to look at net benefits when evaluating mitigation projects instead of letting a private market drive this.*

What changes would you make to state minimum wage law, including tipped and agricultural workers?

*As noted above, I frankly think \$15 is not enough and the implementation timeline we passed is too slow. Fifteen dollars an hour is not enough to support a family. You shouldn't have to work multiple jobs to support your family. In addition, everyone working full time should make a living wage, not just some people. Workers should not depend on tips to make a living. Paying agricultural workers less is wrong. Young people should not be making less than the standard minimum wage. Note, many are raising their own families or are helping their families of origin afford to live.*

Would you support legislation to enable public workers to have the right to form a union and bargain collectively for contracts statewide?

*Yes. The right to collectively bargain and join a union is fundamental to workers rights and there really is no legitimate reason to keep them from doing so.*

How would you change cannabis policy, including retail sales, distribution, and past criminal convictions?

*I think the legislation we passed last week is a step in the right direction but does not really truly legalize cannabis. I think we need to stop treating cannabis as an illicit drug and fully legalize it. Retail opportunities need to be aimed at/reserved for communities that have been most impacted by the war on drugs, and past convictions should be automatically expunged like the latest bill passed in the US House.*

*I am glad we approved medical marijuana, however, the reality is that it left a real equity issue in terms of access as those with means were able to both get a doctor to sign off that they needed it and afford to pay for it without insurance.*

Do you support legislation to require special elections instead of appointments for vacancies in elective offices?

*Yes. People should be elected! Not appointed. Appointments should be a temporary thing if at all.*

What should the state do regarding insurrectionists and conspirators against our democracy?

*Insurrectionists and conspirators should not be allowed to be on the ballot.*