

2022 MGA candidate questionnaire

Our Revolution Howard County - state delegate & senate endorsement requests

Name *

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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.)?

In my first term as a Delegate, I have built strong connections within my community and have established myself both as a dedicated advocate for my constituents and as an effective legislator. I am proud of the work my colleagues and I accomplished over the past four years. While we made important progress throughout this term, there is still much more work to do. We must focus our energy forward and continue to work together toward a stronger, healthier, and more equitable Maryland.

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

I have reviewed the platform and support the issues and positions included. I believe my answers below touch on several of them. I look forward to working with you and welcome any suggestions or requests as you may identify specific opportunities for legislation or other action.

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?

Yes, I was proud to be the House sponsor of the Maryland Fair Elections Act. I am pleased that we were able to strengthen public campaign financing for gubernatorial races, and I would like to revisit this legislation to expand the program to include Attorney General and Comptroller as well. I also sponsored legislation to authorize counties to expand their local public campaign finance programs to include state offices elected at the county level. In addition, I support legislation to establish public campaign financing for General Assembly seats too.

I do accept contributions from businesses, including developers. I am also very clear that I make policy decisions based on what I believe is best regardless of who has supported my campaign. For example, David Costello has been a campaign contributor, but when I heard what was happening with the workers laid off from the Merriweather Lakehouse Hotel, his contributions did not sway my position or stop me from actively and publicly supporting the workers and the boycott of the hotel. Similarly, when I introduced legislation to increase the fee for rental licenses to fund counsel for low-income tenants facing evictions, I had several contributors who own rental properties and did not want any increase in the fee, but I still moved forward with the legislation because I believed it was the right thing to do.

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?

This questionnaire does a good job of highlighting many of the issues that are priorities for me. Serving on the Ways and Means Committee, and specifically on the Revenues and Election Law Subcommittees, I have definitely started to focus my legislative efforts more in those areas. Over the next two years, I expect most of my legislation to deal primarily with tax fairness, economic justice, protecting voting rights, and expanding public campaign financing.

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

I support a variety of reforms to make our tax system fairer and less regressive, including measures such as combined reporting, the throwback rule, and taxing carried interest to make sure corporations pay their fair share in taxes. Maryland has a vast assortment of different corporate tax exemptions, deductions, credits and outright loopholes. I believe these provisions need to be carefully evaluated, cleaned up, and in some cases eliminated. For the corporate tax incentives we maintain, we should ensure that the corporations receiving our public subsidies are at least creating good quality jobs that pay family-sustaining wages, provide benefits, and offer opportunities for career advancement. That is why I sponsored HB278 last year to add stronger wage and labor standards to the Job Creation Tax Credit and HB1096 this year to expand those same standards to other tax credit programs. When the State provides an incentive or subsidy to a particular project or business, I believe the State has a responsibility to leverage that public investment for the maximum public benefit.

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

I believe we need a combination of stronger inclusionary zoning requirements and greater public investment in affordable housing and housing assistance. While the State helps with the latter and can and should do more to support such investment, the zoning issues that impact affordable housing really should be addressed at the local level.

One issue I am currently looking into is rent control. I have very recently started hearing from several constituents about inordinate increases in their rent upon lease renewal. This issue is not specific to low-income residents, but it is perhaps most dangerous for our low-income residents who will not necessarily have other options if rent increases price them out of their current homes.

Finally, I think it is important to remember that housing affordability depends not only on the cost of the housing, but also on the income of the individual. Therefore, if we really want to address affordable housing, we should be talking about wages also and recognizing that a living wage must include the cost of housing in that community.

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?

I think we must focus on and invest appropriately in the expansion and improvement of public transit to increase the accessibility, frequency, and reliability of service. We also need to increase our investment in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. I do not support lane expansion, as it only invites additional congestion, and I do not support public-private partnerships for road construction or other public infrastructure projects.

I was proud to support transit equity legislation this year. I think it is an important step forward to require equity to be specifically addressed in transportation plans and goals and to require that a transit equity analysis of any proposed major service change be conducted, including outreach to impacted communities, before the change can be implemented.

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

I am very proud of the work the General Assembly did in 2021 to pass the Police Accountability Act, which included repealing LEOBR. I believe we are making progress toward increasing accountability and decreasing racial disparities in policing, and we have much more work to do. As we assess the impacts of the legislation we adopted last year, we must have sound data to evaluate. That is why it is so important to have accurate reporting and greater transparency in data regarding policing and all aspects of our criminal justice system.

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?

This is one of the reasons I believe public campaign financing is so important -- because it opens up opportunities for candidates who may not have otherwise been willing to run, candidates who bring personal experiences and perspectives that are either underrepresented or completely lacking among current elected officials.

One remarkably simple but effective way to engage members of racially and economically marginalized communities is to ask them for their input and then, most importantly, to listen to their response. It takes some extra effort but is certainly well worth it to actively reach out and solicit input from impacted communities who are not proactively offering their input.

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

I believe we need to re-evaluate our economic development policies from the perspective of promoting economic justice. One of the most important policy shifts is recognizing that not all jobs should be treated equally for the sake of job creation. I do not believe we should provide public subsidies and incentives for jobs that do not even pay a living wage. Instead, our economic development efforts should be focused on jobs that pay a living wage, respect workers' rights, provide opportunities for career advancement, support healthy families, and strengthen our communities.

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

I believe that healthcare is a fundamental right and must be affordable and accessible to everyone. We have made some significant progress over this term including codifying key provisions of the Affordable Care Act and requiring health insurance companies to contribute to the state reinsurance program to help stabilize the cost of health insurance. We also established reverse auctions and the Prescription Drug Affordability Board to help lower the cost of medications for State employees, and I believe these models should be expanded to lower prescription costs for everyone.

We took additional critically important steps forward this past session with the Abortion Care Access Act, which will make abortion care more accessible in Maryland by removing outdated restrictions, ensure that private insurance covers abortion care, and create equity in coverage for Marylanders covered by Medicaid; the Healthy Babies Equity Act, which will expand access to prenatal and postnatal care for thousands of Marylanders regardless of their immigration status; reducing the cost of insulin for individuals with diabetes; expanding dental health coverage for the nearly 800,000 adults in Maryland without dental care; and extending Maryland's reinsurance assessment fee to ensure that large insurance companies pay their fair share to help reduce the cost of insurance in the individual market.

I am proud to have supported these achievements. While we have made important progress, ideally, I would like to see us move toward universal health care with a single payer system. Until then, we still have much more work to do, and I will continue to support all efforts to make healthcare more affordable for Marylanders. One important step would be to ensure that all entities doing business with the State or receiving funding or tax credits from the State be required to provide all employees with health insurance with affordable premiums as a criteria to qualify for their contract, grant, or tax credit.

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

While serving on the Election Law Subcommittee, I have become much more aware of and supportive of ranked choice voting. I am interested in approval voting, proportional representation, and other voting methods, but given my understanding of all of these methods, ranked choice voting is the one I can most comfortably support.

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

I believe climate change must be our top environmental priority because it poses an existential threat to our environment, public health, and the economy. Climate change is an environmental justice issue because it disproportionately impacts Black and Brown communities, and we must ensure an environmental justice focus in how we approach climate change mitigation and resiliency efforts. I am proud to have supported the Climate Solutions Now Act and know that we still have much more work to do.

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

I was proud to support the Fight for \$15, and I will continue to support raising the minimum wage. I think the fundamental issue is that someone who works full time should be able to enjoy some basic level of financial stability, and that basic principle applies to all employees, including tipped and agricultural workers. I spent a lot of time reviewing the United Way's ALICE Report when I was working on my Job Creation Tax Credit legislation. There is not a single jurisdiction in Maryland where \$15 per hour offers a single adult financial stability, or even enough for a survival budget if that adult happens to be supporting a child as well. I think Maryland's living wage law needs to be updated also. At the very least, the wage amounts need to be updated, but I would also want to reconsider policy decisions about exemptions from the requirement.

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

Yes, I will continue to support legislation to expand collective bargaining rights for public employees. I would like to see us enact legislation to simply give all public employees the same rights to organize that private sector employees have. We should not have to keep fighting the same legislative battle for each different group of public employees.

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

First and foremost, I think it is absolutely essential that all prior convictions for marijuana possession be expunged. Of course, there is also additional work to do looking at the impacts of those convictions, but immediate expungement is an important first step. In addition, as we look at establishing a legal market for recreational cannabis, we must ensure that these newly created business opportunities are awarded to and benefit the very communities which were most negatively impacted by criminalization. Finally, as we explore taxation and fees that will be imposed on the legal sale of cannabis, I believe that at least some, if not all, of the revenue generated should be dedicated to restorative services and support to benefit those communities which have been disproportionately impacted by the criminalization of marijuana.

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

Yes, I generally support special elections over appointments to fill vacancies. I am not necessarily opposed to short-term appointments, however, until a special election can be held or in cases where vacancies occur near the end of a term.

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

I believe insurrectionists and conspirators should be charged, tried, and held accountable.

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