

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MARYLAND STATE-OFFICE CANDIDATES

**Responses Submitted by
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Maryland State Delegate, District 18**

1. Healthcare

1A. As an individual or an elected official, did you take any actions last year to advance the national issue of universal, single-payer healthcare solution, and if so, what were those actions (to include taking a public stance and making contributions, etc.)?

Yes. I have been working very actively towards a more inclusive, affordable healthcare solution at the federal level. As a progressive Maryland state legislator, I worked closely with the Progressive States Network, <http://www.progressivestates.org/> together with a national, small group of progressive state legislators to promote passage of federal health care reforms that would move us forward toward universal, single-payer healthcare. We wanted to ensure that none of the more progressive state policies that have already been implemented at the state level, including promising public option legislative initiatives in three states, were not pre-empted or weakened by federal compromises in the final efforts to get enough votes to pass Senate legislation. I participated in weekly conference calls with the White House and met directly with White House senior staff working on messaging and strategies for passage of the Senate healthcare bill. I also helped to organized two lobbying trips by state legislators to the Hill to lobby key congressional leaders on healthcare reform. We developed position papers, letters to the editor, op-eds, and other informational materials to ensure the final successful passage of this important and historic legislation. If re-elected, I will continue to work hard to ensure the effective implementation of federal reforms by Maryland State Health agencies, insurance, and other health care regulating boards and commissions.

I have co-sponsored and supported universal healthcare bills introduced but never successfully passed in prior sessions: HB 400: Maryland Universal Health Care Plan (2007), HB 1125: Universal Health Care Plan (2008), and HB 1186: Maryland Health Security Act (2009).

This past session, I again co-sponsored the Maryland Health Security Act of 2010 (HB 767) establishing the Maryland Health System to provide healthcare services to all residents of the State under a single system not dependent on employment. Unfortunately, it did not pass out of the Health and Government Operations Committee.

2 Environment

2A. Do you support increased funding for mass transit, as well as the Purple Line, and do you oppose the Inter County Connector (ICC) in particular?

Yes, absolutely! We MUST increase funding for transit and promote more efficient modes of transportation as alternatives to road construction and/or highway expansion. I am a STRONG Champion of the Purple Line—a model of effective transit with the highest ridership of any transit project nationwide! I have been a dedicated, long-time supporter of the Purple Line, since its initial proposals by prior State Administrations (Governors Schaefer and Glendinning). I am also a founding member of the Purple Line Legislative Caucus in Annapolis and have worked with other progressive legislators to garner full support by Gov. O’Malley, our entire Mo. Co. Council and Executive, and our Congressional Senate and House Delegations. I have participated in on-going meetings with State Highway Administration officials to monitor the progress of our State’s transit proposals with the Federal Transit Administration as well as with key Congressional committees.

Yes, I have always opposed the ICC.

2B. Do you support limiting the Maryland pollutant runoffs reaching the Bay?

Yes. I consider protection of the health of our Chesapeake Bay one of our top environmental priorities in Maryland. I have co-sponsored and/or voted in support of all pollution control legislation brought to the House floor over the past eight years, including the Critical Areas Act (HB 1253, 2008) and the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund (HB 369, 2008). I have earned a 100% rating by the League of Conservation Voters this past year and have a lifetime (8 year) rating of 98%.

2C. Do you support legislation that places stricter State-limits on gasoline consumption to force auto makers to create more efficient vehicles?

Yes. I have supported State legislation to promote more efficient vehicles in Maryland. Several legislative proposals which attempt to limit gasoline consumption by large “gas guzzlers” and to improve automobile gas efficiency have been introduced in Annapolis in prior years. In 2007, I co-sponsored Del Bobo’s progressive bill, HB 131, the Maryland Clean Cars Act of 2007 which became state law. It required the Department of the Environment and the Motor Vehicle Administration to adopt regulations by December 31, 2007, to establish a low emissions vehicle program applicable to certain vehicles, and required establishing motor vehicle emissions standards and compliance requirements. In 2010, I co-sponsored HB 710 establishing a Blue Ribbon Commission on Maryland Transportation Funding which is tasked to review, evaluate, and make recommendations concerning alternatives for long-term, sustainable transportation funding. I expect that recommendations will include increasing gas taxes and vehicle licensing fees based on vehicle gas efficiency.

3. Taxation

3A. Do you support a full, graduated income taxation solution for Maryland residents, including the “Millionaires’ Tax; and eliminating tax breaks for wealthy individuals?

Yes, I strongly support progressive taxation and revising income tax rates that are reflective of individual’s ability to pay. In 2004, I introduced the Maryland Progressive Income Tax Reform Act of 2004 (HB 1306) to establish a more progressive, graduated tax structure by revising the tax rates and rate brackets under the State income tax on individuals. My bill

exempted individuals with \$19,000 or less in federal adjusted gross income from State income taxation and established new income tax brackets and rates for all other individuals ranging from 4.75% for taxable incomes of \$3,001 through \$160,000; 5.75% over \$160K through \$300K; and 6.75% for all incomes above \$300,000. This proposal would have increased General fund revenues by approximately \$284.0 million in fiscal 2005! By establishing higher rates based on higher income brackets, i.e., a higher rate for all incomes over \$300,000, my proposal would have raised the rates higher than the so-called millionaire's tax top income tax rate of 6.25%.

3B. Do you support combined reporting for corporations, and imposing higher corporate tax rates in line with neighboring states?

Yes, I strongly support legislation and passage of both combined reporting and higher corporate tax rates in Maryland---these measures are long overdue!

I voted in support of the progressive Tax Reform Act of 2007 (HB2) which passed the House during the 2007 Special session but was not passed by the Senate. This bill proposed to overhaul the State's tax structure increasing State revenues (all funds) by \$149.8 million in fiscal 2008 and \$420.3 million beginning in fiscal 2009. It also established new individual income tax brackets and rates with the top rate set at 5.75%, and increased the regular personal income tax exemption from \$2,400 to \$3,200 for individuals with federal adjusted gross income of up to \$100,000 (\$150,000 for joint filers) but gradually decreased to \$600 for taxpayers with higher incomes. Most importantly, HB 2 increased corporate income tax rate from 7% to 8.75% and required affiliated corporations to compute Maryland taxable income using "combined reporting;" and it imposed recordation and transfer taxes on the transfer of real property through the sale of a "controlling interest" in specified corporations beginning in fiscal 2009. Unfortunately Del. Justin Ross's Combined Reporting bill (HB 584) did not pass out of the Ways and Means Committee for a floor vote this past session.

3D Do you support an increase in the alcohol tax?

Yes, absolutely! I have been a strong, aggressive proponent of increasing the alcohol tax. Maryland's Alcohol Excise Taxes are among the lowest in the nation. These taxes have not been increased in a long time—37 years for beer and wine and 54 years for hard liquor!!! Maryland's current liquor tax rate rank us LAST—as 50th in the nation, tied only to the District of Columbia. I sponsored Alcohol Excise tax bills in the 2007 Special Session (HB 13), in 2008 (HB 904) and 2009 (HB 1160). The latter would distribute revenues to the Waiting List Equity Fund serving developmentally disabled individuals and a special fund for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.

In support of a single alcohol tax bill this past session, I co-sponsored the The Lorraine Sheehan Health and Community Services Act of 2010 which again attempted to increase the State tax rates for alcoholic beverages sold in Maryland from \$1.50 to \$10.03 per gallon for distilled spirits, from 40 cents to \$2.96 per gallon for wine, and from 9 cents to \$1.16 per gallon for beer. It provided for the distribution of the additional revenue to special funds to be used only for the purpose of providing additional funding for specified health services. *As all bills increasing alcohol excise taxes in the past 8 years, the bills died in the House Ways and means Committee!*

4A. Do you support the repeal of the death penalty in Maryland?

Yes, absolutely! While I served on the House Judiciary Committee, 2003-2006, I voted to repeal the death penalty in Maryland or for a moratorium every year that legislation was brought forth. Unfortunately, in the past eight years, this important legislation has never been voted out of the House Judiciary Committee and brought to the House floor for a vote.

4B. Do you support policies/legislation to strengthen gang prevention in Maryland without punishing young victims of gang violence and intimidation, and further eroding communities where gangs dominate?

I have opposed gang-related legislation that is simply punitive, with a narrow focus on suppression and increased penalties, while providing zero or minimal funding to prevent gang formation and youth violence. Based on my longtime interest in working with at-risk youth, I passed HB 686 in 2006 establishing a Delinquency Prevention and Diversion Services Task Force to study effective youth service programs and recommend State-wide strategies and funding levels. My task force highlighted the need to increase evidence-based programs and recommended early intervention strategies as well as more appropriate and stable funding for effective, measurable prevention services. More than 50,000 juveniles are arrested per year, yet only 2000 are processed through Intake and are provided services by DJS. Over 48,000 youth must have access to better, more effective prevention and counseling services, ranging from anger management, educational support, drug programs, etc. I am now serving on a special task force focusing on girls and young women in detention and how the Department of Juvenile Services can best meets their needs.

5. Immigrant Rights

5A. Do you support granting of Maryland drivers' licenses without any restrictions dependent on immigration status?

Yes. For seven of my eight years on service in the MD House of Delegates, most of my time and energy as a legislator was dedicated to maintaining access to driver's licenses for all Maryland residents, regardless of immigration status. The changes made to limit access to driver's licenses in our 2009 session to conform to federal Real ID legislation have had a devastating impact on working families. These changes are counter to public safety policies as many workers must now drive without a license and without insurance, increasing the over public safety risk for all Maryland drivers.

5B. Do you have a history of support for legislation to make Maryland a "sanctuary state" and/or are you willing to support it in the future? (In a sanctuary state, no agent, officer or employee of the state, may assist the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the investigation or arrest of any persons for violation of the U.S. immigration and nationality laws.)

Yes. I have a long, long history of working in support of immigrants in Maryland and would willingly support legislation to protect their human rights and their wellbeing. I served for over five years as president of the Board of CASA de Maryland which was started in the early 1980's in a church basement in Takoma Park to provide "sanctuary"

protections to new Latino immigrants escaping the civil wars and military violence in Central America. I continue to work with CASA to establish essential employment, education, advocacy, and health services and to protect immigrant civil and human rights. I have also worked actively with local governments (Montgomery County and Takoma Park) to stop the increasing use of local police to enforce federal immigration laws.

6. Women's Rights

6A. Do you support enacting state laws that require equal pay for equal work irrespective of gender?

Yes. This is important legislation for ensuring women's rights in the workplace.

6B. Do you support women's access to government-funded abortion under MHIP, or have you opposed restrictions on those rights?

I am a longtime, strong supporter of a woman's right to choose. As a legislator, I have fought to defeat all right-wing proposals to limit government-funded abortion services for low-income women.

7. LGBT Rights

7A. Do you have a history of advocating for legalizing same-sex marriages in Maryland, and for opposing restrictions on recognizing same-sex marriages performed in other jurisdictions?

Yes, I have supported every bill that advocates for and promotes marriage equality in Maryland, including HB 351: Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act (2008), HB 1055: Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act (2009), and Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act (2010).

7B. Do you support Montgomery County's Gender Identity Law, and have you taken any actions to defend it when it was under attack, and if so, what actions; in addition, do you support a similar State-wide law?

Yes, I proudly co-sponsored HB 1022, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – Antidiscrimination-- which prohibited discrimination based on gender identity with regard to public accommodations, housing, and employment and by specified licensed or regulated persons; prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity with regard to commercial leasing, and defined the term "gender identity" among other actions.

8. Labor Rights

8A. Do you support the rights of Maryland's private and public-sector workers to have collective bargaining and union representation?

Yes, of course. As a member of the House Appropriations where such legislation is heard, I have consistently voted to support legislation to protect collective bargaining and expand union representation in state government agencies as well as universities and libraries.

9. Human Rights

9A. Outside of the context of health insurance reform and the other "rights" cited above, as an individual or an elected official, did you take any actions over the last six years to advance the needs of what is sometimes called "the underprivileged" (e.g., economically disadvantaged, mentally ill, developmentally disabled, etc.); and if so what were those actions?

Yes. I have been a strong and consistent supporter of those who have no voice in Annapolis. As a member of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the House Appropriations which is responsible for a major portion of the State's health and welfare budget, I have fought to ensure no cuts to programs that serve the economically disadvantaged, developmentally disabled, the mentally ill, victims of domestic violence, the homeless, as well as those dependent on essential social welfare programs such as TANF, rental assistance, WIC, Medicare and Medicaid.

As the only Latino elected official representing Montgomery County and a former Board president of CASA de Maryland, Inc., I have fought for many years to protect the human and civil rights of recent immigrants and low-income children and families.

10. Education

10A. Do you support full funding of the Thornton Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence, and for opposing public funds being used for private schools (including the use of vouchers or the BOAST Bill)?

Yes, I have always supported full funding of Thornton including the GCEI. We have finally been able to fund the GCEI this past year using federal ARRA (recovery) dollars. I will continue to safeguard Maryland's education funding by ensuring that state revenues are allocated as a budget priority to education.

Yes, I have voted in support of full funding of Thornton recommendations over the past eight years of service in the House. I am totally opposed to any and all use of public funds for non-public schools. I have voted against initiatives that would divert public funds to private institutions, such as BOAST and the use of cigarette restitution funds for books and training for private schools. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to cut off all funding. There are too many legislators who support these policies, especially those from the Baltimore and more conservative delegations.

10B. Do you oppose the current level of reliance on standardized test scores as the measure of student success and evaluating schools, or would you make changes, and if so, what changes would you make?

Yes. I have been publicly opposed to using a single set of tests, the high school assessments (HSAs) and have worked for a broader set of evaluation tools including portfolios, individual projects, and individual growth measures. I am currently working with national education reform groups to ensure fair, progressive reforms in assessments and student evaluations are part of the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

10C. Do you support the right for undocumented residents and their children to have equal access to the public school systems at all levels as apply to other State residents; for applying the same in-state college tuition, and for using the same formula for scholarships as applied to other State residents?

Equal access to a K-12 public education is a constitutionally protected right for all undocumented children. In 1982, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982), that public schools are prohibited from denying immigrant students access to a public education. The Court stated that undocumented children have the same right to a free public education as U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Undocumented immigrant students are obligated, as are all other students, to attend school until they reach the age mandated by state law.

I believe that undocumented students should be considered eligible for in-state tuition because they have indeed lived in the state, attended and graduated from Maryland schools, and their parents have been paying taxes for many years—just like any other student in Maryland! Their immigration status should not be a barrier to higher education! I have been a co-sponsor and strong advocate for In-State tuition legislation in Maryland as well as a champion of the federal Dream Act that would eliminate federal prohibitions to scholarships and grants for undocumented students. Though the General Assembly successfully passed an in-state tuition bill in my first term, Gov. Ehrlich vetoed the bill. Unfortunately, similar efforts to pass in-state tuition since then have failed in the MD Senate. We will continue fighting for this important legislation here in Maryland.

11. Elections

11A. Do you support enacting State campaign finance reform and laws that curtail corporate influence on elections, and laws that enable voluntary public financing of campaigns for state offices in a way that would allow candidates to receive funding after demonstrating significant community support?

Yes, I am a strong supporter of publicly financed elections and have co-sponsored legislations to establish state funding mechanisms and special funds for public financing of campaigns. In 2010, I co-sponsored the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2010 which established a system of public financing of campaigns for General Assembly candidates via a Public Election Fund, set limits on contributions and transfer, and authorized county governments to regulate public campaign finance activity for county offices. The bill died in the Ways and Means Committee without a House floor vote.

11B. Do you support the right enfranchisement for all residents of Maryland, regardless of legal status.

Yes. I strongly support enfranchisement of Maryland residents in local and school board elections, regardless of legal status. I was actively involved in passage of such voting privileges in Takoma Park municipal elections several years ago.

12. Peace and Anti-War

12A. Do you have a history of opposing the use of the Maryland National Guard in non-humanitarian military assignments in other countries?

YES, of course!

13. Good Government

13A. Do you support enacting open government and transparency legislation that would include the public web-posting of the entire record and votes of all meetings/hearings of General Assembly official bodies at every level, including subcommittees; and the posting and sign-up sheets for all General Assembly hearings?

YES. I have supported and voted for this type of legislation in past sessions. During the 2010 session, I was a co-sponsor of the Maryland Open Government Act (HB 344) , requiring that individuals be allowed to sign up on the General Assembly website to present testimony on a bill; requiring information about bills to be posted on the General Assembly website; requiring bill hearings to be broadcast on the General Assembly website; requiring a meeting of the Board of Public Works to be broadcast on the Board's website; requiring specified broadcasts of Board meetings to be archived. A number of these actions have already been implemented, although this bill was referred to summer study. I will continue to support any additional measures to make state and local government more transparent and accountable to Maryland residents.