

Delegate Heather R. Mizeur
Maryland District 20
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MARYLAND STATE-OFFICE CANDIDATES

1. Health Care

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. In my role as a member of the White House State Legislators for Health Reform Work Group, I had the opportunity to meet and discuss my priorities with HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and Nancy-Ann DeParle, Director of the White House Office of Health Reform. At that meeting, we made it very clear to the White House that many of our constituents strongly support single-payer, and that any reforms short of single-payer should include a robust public option. While I am very encouraged about the progress made with passage of federal health reform legislation, I am disappointed no public option was included.

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?

I strongly support increased mass transit funding, because we cannot pave our way out of gridlock. We need to invest in and build the Purple Line and Corridor Cities Transitway, continue to foster transit-oriented development, and expand bus routes for transit riders. Recent Metro ridership numbers show that more transit options means more riders and fewer cars on the roadways.

A highway solution long in search of a problem, I have also always opposed the ICC. Marylanders are driving less and turning to sensible mass transit options to travel from place to place. Building an 18-mile highway will only add cars to our roadway and destroy pristine environmental areas. Its construction in District 20 also lies only yards away from a public elementary school, and I sponsored ultimately unsuccessful legislation in 2008 to require air quality and health impact studies of the project – assessments that were not conducted in the rush to approve construction. Anyone who doubts the impact of a six-lane highway should look no further than research that demonstrates much higher rates of asthma and cancer near interstates and other major roads. The ICC makes no sense for our state's long-term future.

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

Yes, we need to act now to limit pollutants entering the Bay. Stormwater runoff is responsible for a significant percentage of the phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment polluting the Bay, and contributes more metals and oil than from industries, federal facilities, and wastewater treatment plants combined. We took the first step in 2007 with passage of the Stormwater Management Act. Now we need to pass the Watershed Restoration and Protection Act, which would require local jurisdictions to create residential and commercial user charges for impervious surfaces.

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

Yes, I support stricter limits on gas consumption, and believe we should finally modernize the state fuel tax. The current rate was set back in 1992. Raising the gas tax is critical to keeping our roadways safe and structurally sound, and it should be changed to reflect inflation, higher construction costs, and greater demands. Increasing the fuel tax will also incentivize Marylanders to drive less and purchase more fuel-efficient cars.

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?

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

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

I strongly support these and other revenue generating measures, and have either co-sponsored or voted for legislation to implement them. If we required corporations to adopt "combined reporting" accounting standards, multistate corporations would have to disclose profits of all their subsidiaries – generating between \$109 million and \$170 million in additional revenue. Making the “millionaire’s tax” permanent would bring in another \$100 million annually. Raising alcohol taxes, which have not increased in 40 years, would generate more than \$200 million per year and fund developmental disabilities, addiction treatment, mental health, and state Medicaid programs. Finally, increasing fuel taxes by two cents per gallon could generate more than \$100 million every year. I support each of these revenue raisers and believe they are long overdue.

I believe we must also focus on initiatives that – with a small state investment – can end up saving critical budget dollars. I sponsored the Family Planning Works Act this session to require the state Medicaid program to cover family planning services for low-income women up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level (about \$27,000 per year for a single woman). For a modest upfront investment of \$2.3 million, these services would save the state \$22 million each year. Passage of this bill would relieve pressures to cut critical services elsewhere.

4. Courts and Imprisonment

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

I strongly support repealing the death penalty. Capital punishment is irreversible, unevenly applied and extremely expensive – all while neither deterring crime nor guaranteeing justice.

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?

Yes, and my votes on several gang prevention bills this session reflect this position. I voted in favor of House Bill 1160 (Safe Schools Act of 2010), which requires increased sharing of information among courts, law enforcement agencies, and schools regarding juvenile delinquency, criminal activity, and suspected gang activity by students. I opposed HB 756, which makes additions to the list of common traits indicative of criminal gang membership and adds several offenses to the list of underlying crimes that prove criminal gang activity. I am concerned this new law will have unintended consequences on those living around but not participating in gang activity.

5. Immigrant Rights

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

Yes, I support that approach, and opposed 2009 efforts to impose strict regulations on Maryland driver's licenses. This issue is about both public safety and fairness for all Marylanders. In the past, our Motor Vehicle Administration has never required driver's license applicants to prove their citizenship status, which is appropriate because it is not an immigration agency. Millions of Marylanders – including thousands of undocumented immigrants – do not have access to or cannot always rely on public transportation, and so our public policy should seek to ensure that we are all able to use roads and highways safely and legally.

In 2009, the federal government forced Maryland to come into compliance with the REAL ID Act, which mandates that the state verify a person's lawful status in the country before issuing a driver's license. This requirement does little to solve our immigration issues while also making us less safe, because many undocumented immigrants – who must drive to work regardless – will now be driving without licenses.

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.)

I oppose local police enforcement of federal immigration laws. Before being elected to the House of Delegates, I served on the Takoma Park City Council. The City has had regulations in place for several decades that prohibit police and municipal employees from enforcing federal immigration laws. As a City Councilmember, I supported that position and worked to ensure it was not altered. As a state delegate, I will continue to oppose any efforts to require other local municipalities to enforce immigration laws.

6. Women's Rights

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

Yes, and I was proud to be a lead sponsor of the Lilly Ledbetter Civil Rights Restoration Act in 2009.

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

Yes. As a female elected official, I have no stronger commitment than protecting the reproductive rights of Maryland women. I have been proud to stand with NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland, Planned Parenthood of Maryland, and Maryland NOW to expand access to reproductive health options and safeguard the right to choose from opponents seeking to restrict access to reproductive health services.

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?

Fighting for LGBT rights will always be personal for me and my spouse, Deborah. We were married almost five years ago in a private ceremony on the Chesapeake Bay, surrounded by family and friends, and in 2008, we were also legally married in the state of California. The opinion recently issued by the Maryland Attorney General is one big step toward equality that should be celebrated.

Before this opinion, in Pasadena, California – 3,000 miles away – Deb and I were treated as a married couple, but in Pasadena, Maryland – just over 30 miles from our home in Takoma Park – we were not. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, our marriage would protect us if life deals a bad hand. In Cambridge, Maryland, we were two unrelated women with very expensive legal documents and a lot of uncertainty. Now, our location is no longer a determining factor in the legal recognition of our relationship.

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 support both the county and statewide Gender Identity initiatives. Transgender Marylanders routinely face discrimination on the job, in our communities, and in the housing market, simply because of their gender identity. Montgomery County – along with Baltimore City, thirteen states and more than 100 counties and municipalities – has already implemented protections against discrimination in labor, employment, and housing. I have been a lead co-sponsor of the statewide legislation, and provided Basic Rights Montgomery – the advocacy group that helped adopt the County law – with extensive campaign advice and assistance during its efforts.

8. Labor Rights

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

This issue is a very personal one for me. As the daughter of a lifelong factory welder and member of the United Auto Workers, I believe strongly that collective bargaining has the power to improve

employment conditions for working people. Wherever possible, we should implement public policies that enable the extension of collective bargaining rights to more Maryland workers.

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?

For the last two years, I have championed and sponsored the Earned Income Credit Information Act. Each year, the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits lift more than 4 million Americans – including 2 million children – out of poverty. In Maryland, 80 percent of these benefits go to families earning less than \$20,000 per year. Unfortunately, thousands of Marylanders fail to claim their credits. The Earned Income Credit Information Act will require employers to notify workers that they may qualify for the federal and state credits. This legislation passed the House, but failed in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee this year.

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)?

I strongly support full funding of the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI/Thornton Commission) as a funding mechanism and have worked as an Appropriator to ensure it is not a goal but a reality. Providing sufficient K-12 education funding in Maryland is much more complicated than splitting the state into twenty-four jurisdictions and sending off proportionate-share state aid. In a County as diverse as ours, it costs more to educate our children than in other regions. The GCEI formula examines the percentage of students receiving subsidized lunches, housing costs, commuting times, crime rates, and other indicators in determining additional educational funding for a jurisdiction. I am proud we fully funded the GCEI for the first time last year, and we must work hard to ensure it remains a top priority.

I also believe public funding should only support public schools. Because of our state's difficult fiscal situation, programs are being eliminated, teacher and educational support positions are being cut, and class sizes are rising. If we want Maryland to remain a national leader in educating children, steering public funding towards private schools is not the answer.

As you know, legislation was introduced this session to establish the BOAST tax credit, which would have directed as much as \$50 million in state funding to non-public schools. I strongly opposed this bill, and would have voted against it had it reached the House floor. Private schools do not link tuition subsidies to need, income, or quality of education and they are not accountable to the state on student achievement, attendance, graduation, or dropout rates. For these reasons, sending public money to support private schools is neither fiscally responsible nor sound public policy.

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?

No matter one's position on No Child Left Behind, all would agree that K-12 education needs accountability and assessment to ensure we educate our children effectively and stay competitive. Unfortunately, NCLB should be renamed "No Child Left Untested" for its emphasis on standardized test evaluations. Its strong focus on math and reading tests and punitive responses for failure (including school closures) means a test alone is determining the success of a student and a school.

Although NCLB remains in place, I'm generally pleased with the Obama Administration's approach to education policy, which embraces a more comprehensive accountability model. If we are to educate our children successfully, we need a broad, wide-ranging approach that does not focus solely on a test. This nation has not had the world's best thinkers, problem-solvers, and inventors because of standardized tests and answer bubbles. If we ignore creativity and diversified learning, and only teach to a test, then we will have failed.

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?

Yes, I proudly support each of these measures, and was a lead co-sponsor of 2007 legislation to allow the children of undocumented immigrants to receive in-state tuition.

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?

I strongly support enacting a voluntary public campaign finance system for Maryland General Assembly elections. Money plays a much too significant role in shaping politics and public policy, from the race for the presidency down to local elections. More than \$1 billion was spent in the 2008 presidential election between the two major candidates alone. Public financing of campaigns is a change whose time has come.

I also support the package of bills first introduced in the 2010 session to limit the influence of corporations in state elections.

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

Yes. Marylanders that have served their time and completed their sentences deserve the right of enfranchisement after their release. And as a former Takoma Park City Councilmember, I supported the City's policy of allowing all residents to vote in municipal elections, regardless of immigration status.

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?

This session, I was a lead co-sponsor of House Bill 1037, which would have directed the Governor of Maryland to request the return of the Maryland National Guard when federal military authorizations had expired.

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, and that's why I introduced and championed the Maryland Open Government Act in the 2010 session. Transparency and open access to state government allows everyday Marylanders – our neighbors, nurses, and network administrators – to bring their expertise to the policy process. The Maryland Open Government Act enjoyed bipartisan, majority support in both chambers, and garnered significant attention thanks to the advocacy of Progressive Neighbors and dozens of other statewide organizations. I'm proud to report that many of its provisions – posting committee votes online, free access to the General Assembly website, webcasting standing committee and Board of Public Works hearings – were recently adopted.