

2022 Baltimore Jewish Council Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE NAME: Becca Niburg

Briefly tell your personal story and why you are seeking this elected public service position. (Please limit your answer to no more than 250 words)

As an immigration attorney, I work with the laws every day and I see the places where the laws, as written, do not make sense or do not accomplish the objective set forth when passed. In my over ten years of federal service at the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and then in non-profit service, I appear before courts and administrative agencies advocating for the appropriate application of laws and protection of my clients. The laws need to be written in such a way that everyone benefits regardless of access to trained professionals and my daily experience with these laws means I am ready day one to put pragmatic solutions in place.

For years, I have advocated on a wide variety of issues from human trafficking prevention to mental health to criminal justice reform and the next natural step is to help write and pass those laws that protect and affect our most vulnerable citizens. One of my biggest priorities if elected will be to increase mental health support through recruiting more – and more diverse – practitioners to the field, pressuring health insurance companies to cover mental health services without making practitioners jump through so many hoops that they decide taking insurance is not cost effective for them, and making sure we have out patient recovery services available to families and those struggling.

What are the 2 or 3 biggest challenges facing Maryland (or your district), and briefly describe how would you address those challenges over the next four years? (Please limit your answer to no more than 250 words)

Small business suffered under Covid with many not being able to survive the sharp drop in customers during the pandemic. We need to cut through the red tape and make it easier for entrepreneurs to get started and be successful by reducing the hoops new businesses need to jump through to get off the ground and by providing education regarding how to start a new business especially for marginalized communities. One of the best places for this revitalization and small business initiative is along the Rt 1 corridor that runs through District 13.

Another issue facing the District and State is the cost for retirees and military veterans to remain. The legislature took an important first step in making the tax

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burden realistic for these valued segments of the population but the legislation did not go far enough, eliminating the tax burden only for those very socio economically disadvantaged. The middle class will also face issues remaining in Maryland, so we need to address those needs to keep our seniors and veterans in their homes and contributing to our communities.

Lastly, we need to end the partisanship bickering that occurs at all levels of politics and make sure that more diverse candidates can enter politics by eliminating the socio economic divide in who can afford to run for office.

*Baltimore and Maryland are blessed to have so many committed foundations and non-profits. How can government better support the work of these non-profits in providing the care and services needed by vulnerable Marylanders?
(Please limit your answer to no more than 100 words.)*

Foundations and non-profits are continuously asked to do more with less. The State should provide more resources including unused buildings that can be repurposed to housing for those needing a place to stay; stipends for survivors of violence to live in an apartment away from an abuser; and discounted services including business and tax services to reduce overhead costs. We also need to look into a public service stipend or reduced cost college tuition for those individuals who go to work in public service positions including at non-profits (not just federal debt forgiveness).

*Over the past several years, we have seen a rise of hate and antisemitism in schools, college campuses, and the general community. What could you as an elected official do to help combat this alarming trend?
(Please limit your answer to no more than 100 words.)*

As part of the JCRC Team for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, we conducted a survey of parents and students to assess the problem of antisemitism in our schools. We found bullying by teachers and fellow students from elementary to high school, most of which was not being addressed. The state needs to conduct a similar survey and then make sure that proper education both combatting antisemitism as well as teaching past history to keep it from ever being repeated. As we place restrictions and requirements regarding the teaching of race and a diverse history in our schools, we must make sure that the Jewish experience is also included.

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Do you support continuing the initiatives begun by the state over the past several years to provide security grants to faith institutions, schools, and other entities that are threatened by hate crimes?

(Please limit your answer to no more than 100 words.)

Yes, we have seen a rise in antisemitism, islamophobia, and other attacks on religious institutions. I appreciate the increased presence in front of my synagogue so that in case something unthinkable should happen, we have someone trained and ready to act. In addition to the uniformed officer in front of the synagogue, we need assistance with everything from physical to cyber security for our faith institutions and the government initiatives are an important part of keeping us all safe.

For more than three decades, Maryland and the Jewish community have jointly invested in developing a flourishing business relationship between our state and Israel – creating jobs and economic activity both here and there. As part of that relationship, Governor Hogan signed an executive order in 2017 prohibiting all executive branch agencies from entering into contracts or conducting official state business with any entity unless they certify that they will not engage in a boycott of Israel during the duration of the contract.

<https://governor.maryland.gov/2017/10/23/governor-larry-hogan-signs-executive-order-strengthening-marylands-opposition-to-bds-movement-against-israel/>

Do you support maintaining and enforcing this executive order?

(Please limit your answer to no more than 100 words.)

Yes, BDS initiatives hurt innocent people and are a clumsy attempt to effect policy abroad. As with any nation, we should not do business with a company that does harm to its citizenry or others around them (i.e. we should vote with our dollars for those companies and persons acting in a way we find acceptable), a nationwide boycott does no harm than good. As a result, the executive order should continue.

Over the past several years, Maryland has created the BOOST program – a scholarship opportunity to assist low-income families in attending non-public schools. Do you support continuing the BOOST program?

(Please limit your answer to no more than 100 words.)

Even as a big supporter of the public school system, I understand and realize that the public schools are not able to meet the needs of every student and every family. We should allow and assist those students in attending schools that best meet their needs; we should not be discriminating based on income level in making sure all of our students' education needs are met.

*What are your 2 or 3 biggest priorities to help protect the environment?
(Please limit your answer to no more than 100 words.)*

Climate change is without a doubt the greatest threat facing all of us at this moment. We have to focus not only on reducing our emissions and reversing climate change but also mitigating the impact of the problems we have already wrought. Measures such as changing building codes and requirements to include the mandated use of renewable energy and green building practices, including more permeable surface area in relation to buildings and plant life are all greatly needed. We also have to incentivize public transport and the use of renewable energy and/or reduced fuel use in that transportation.

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