

2022 Baltimore Jewish Council Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE NAME: Bilal Ali

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)

I am a former state delegate for the 41st district, appointed in 2017 having served two terms and being the only district House member to have received an A grade both terms from the Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle annual report card; and a lifelong member of the Democratic Party. I was born and raised in Baltimore City, graduating from public school and earning a BA in Psychology from UB, a Master's in Psychology from Coppin State and a Doctorate in Healthcare Administration from the University of Virginia Lynchburg.

I am a healthcare administrator with dual licenses as a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor as well as a Licensed Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counselor, earning a lay community health education certification from Johns Hopkins University. I am currently the Executive Director of Residential Services and President of CMDS – Maryland's leading full-service behavioral health and drug rehabilitative service provider, as well as owner of Bilal Ali Productions. I was a Community Liaison for the State's Attorney's Office for Baltimore City prior to my role at CMDS.

I am seeking a four-year term in the House to continue the work I began in 2017 in addressing systemic issues facing communities across the district including health care affordability, tax breaks for businesses, the middle class and seniors receiving retirement income, improving schools and fundamentally reducing crime in our communities.

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)

The two biggest challenges facing the 41st district is the economic decline and rise in violent crime across the district. We have allowed repeat, violent offenders to make a mockery of the criminal justice system, while causing havoc across the district – and city. This has helped lead to the demise of certain communities, while also leading to one of the main reasons why businesses will no longer come to Baltimore, and residents continue to leave the city in droves.

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We continue to unfairly burden the middle class with a tax debt in order to shoulder the burden of the lower class, while allowing those of increased financial means to skate by without having to pay the same amount of taxes as those within the middle class. We continue to tax our seniors on income that is rightfully theirs, their retirement income, i.e. Social Security, pensions, etc...and do absolutely nothing to address the systemic issues that continue to increase crime and poverty in our communities.

As your next delegate I plan to address those issues with a flurry of legislation aimed at offering tax breaks for small business owners being nickel and dimed right out of business, as well as eliminating the tax burden on the middle class and seniors' retirement income. I will fight to ensure that violent offenders receive the sentences they deserve while working to help low-level, non-violent offenders receive the necessary drug treatment and mental health services necessary to change their lives around and become productive citizens.

*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.)*

First, I think we need to assess exactly what each non-profit group does so we can begin to weed out those who are no longer in operation, while bringing together those doing similar work in order to bring them together while putting together an effective database for local and state government to rely on when doling out resources and calling on them for the services necessary to begin to change the dynamics of this city. We cannot continue to operate in silos and expect to maximize our potential.

*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.)*

Racism and hate are traditionally taught in the home, or learned behavior that they receive from their peers and/or community. We need to begin to identify children at an early age and begin to offer guidance and mental health services for those who are indoctrinated with this hate. However, government is not the answer to all life's issues, and this is something that could be better addressed in the home, and in the religious institutions within our communities.

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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.)

I absolutely support faith-based institutions and institutes of learning receiving as many financial programs and initiatives as possible, as long as the monies are doled out in an equitable manner. I think we have traditionally focused all of our intentions on giving money to catholic and/or Christian based religious institutions while orthodox Judaism and Islamic institutions have been largely ignored. As Delegate I will ensure that all institutes are given their fair share of the funding.

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.)

Absolutely! I do not believe that any institution should be targeted based on their religious or political beliefs, and I will continue to stand up to bullies like those behind this BDS movement to ensure that they never receive any sort of funding or traction with their hateful and divisive measures.

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.)

Absolutely! I think one of the best initiatives created by the Hogan administration was the BOOST program, and I would not only continue to vote for its annual revenue but would fight for an increased amount each year so long as the program continues to enhance the lives of children from a broad background throughout Maryland. This initiative was a God's send for many parents looking to send their children to quality educational institutions but unable to afford their tuition costs. The more parents and children affected by this program the better off the state as a whole!

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

Air pollution and water issues – both affordability and lead containment – have been two huge environmental concerns of mine for years. Baltimore City has disproportionately been impacted by these issues, especially as water rates have continued to rise more rapidly than the national average since 2011 and these continued three-year rate increases that have negatively impacted low-income residents and those of color.

As someone who believes wholeheartedly in creating our own farming system here in Baltimore, which earned me the endorsement of the Farm Bureau, I believe we need to do a better job of reeducating our community on these issues.

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