

2022 Baltimore Jewish Council Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE NAME: Reginald Benbow

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)

It is time for change. We cannot expect different results by electing the same career politicians and perennial candidates.

I am a son of Baltimore, raised by a single mother with a father in prison. Few expected me to succeed. Yet, I rose to become the first person in my family to graduate from college. And after, I became a Baltimore City public school teacher. I fought to overcome obstacles, fought to teach students and fought to make healthcare more affordable for all. I have what it takes to be our champion and fight for change

I promise to be the progressive, bold, results-driven champion we need. I've fought for myself, I've fought for students, and now, I want to fight for us in Annapolis.

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)

Baltimore is becoming unaffordable. The minimum wage in Maryland is \$12.20/hour, but you are only meant to spend one-third of your income on rent. This means that if you and your partner are working full time, you still wouldn't be able to afford a one bedroom apartment in Baltimore.

In northeast Baltimore, rent and home prices are up by double-digit percentages since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, residential tax assessments have increased in conjunction with home values; hurting seniors and long-term home owners with limited incomes. In 2012, I purchased my home in Ednor Gardens-Lakeside on a teacher's salary. Ten years later, I would not be able to afford my home on the same salary as home prices have increased by \$100,000. We must address our affordability crisis by preserving and expanding the supply of affordable rentals, and holding developers accountable for building affordable homes.

We need an economic bill of rights. I will work to legislate an Economic Bill of Rights guaranteeing the right to a job, housing, food, water, and public

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transportation. This will lay the foundation for a sustainable care economy. Furthermore, I will work with my colleagues to pass legislation preventing price gouging. Lastly, we must address the affordability crisis: we must establish rent control as rent prices continue to outpace inflation. We must incentivize developers to build affordable housing and not just luxury apartments and condos.

*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.)*

I am proud to support many youth and education focused organizations; including Reading Partners Baltimore, which focused on advancing literacy; and I have sponsored events at Walter P. Carter Elementary/Middle, my elementary alma mater. The state can expand partnership programs with NGOs to leverage local knowledge expand services and reach Marylanders in need, especially difficult to serve populations.

As a Delegate, I'd support free community college and organizations promoting digital equity, upskilling and jobs training.

*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.)*

We must lean into our “free state” roots and make Maryland a mecca for human rights, reproductive rights, people of all faiths, trans and racial minorities while other states seek to “ban” everyone nonwhite and non-Christian.

Systemically, we can address the rise in hate, including antisemitism, through comprehensive historical education in our schools. As a former Baltimore City social studies teacher, I know firsthand that our state curriculum must be improved to teach history accurately and inculcate the norms of inclusion and compassion. We must also strengthen and enforce hate crime laws.

*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

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.)

As someone who has traveled to Israel and grew up in Upper Park Heights, we must celebrate the diversity of the Jewish community AND of Israel. The executive order is limiting and should not be extended under a new governor.

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.)

No, public money is for public school. Many private schools have large endowments. I'd vote against BOOST and no to tax breaks.

What are your 2 or 3 biggest priorities to help protect the environment?

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

The climate crisis threatens Maryland with rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and severe economic disruption. Let's pass a comprehensive Green New Deal for Maryland that mandates achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035; an ambitious but necessary goal.

We must act immediately to implement bold policies that mobilize every aspect of society to transition to 100% clean and renewable energy, repair the generational harms to marginalized communities, and guarantee living-wage jobs to everyone in need of economic security — all in the next 10 years.

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