

2022 Baltimore Jewish Council Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE NAME: Mark Edelson

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)

My parents sacrificed everything to bring my sister and me to America in search of a better future, based on the promise of a world class American education. For far too many of our young people, that promise no longer exists. My passion for service and commitment to inclusive policies that strengthen our collective spirit and success is rooted in my formative experiences as a foreign-born immigrant to the U.S. The resilience, grit, and fortitude modeled to me by my family – intent on providing every opportunity to succeed despite the struggle and sacrifice this often required on their part, ingrained in me a great sense of purpose, duty, and responsibility. I am running to ensure all Baltimoreans have the same opportunities I had to succeed.

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)

As President of the Canton Community Association for five years, Vice Chair of the D46 State Central Committee since 2018, and having knocked on nearly 30,000 doors, I have been in every corner of the district multiple times. The overwhelming concern for residents is public safety. And this is the primary issue that must be addressed by our electeds and public safety professionals in order to move the district forward. There is, however, geographic nuance. For example, in neighborhoods south of the Hanover Street Bridge, lack of after-school programming, affordable housing, healthy foods, and environmental concerns are a major focus. Whereas, the Peninsula and southeast are more impacted by package theft and property crimes.

In addition, Baltimore is home to numerous transit systems, yet our existing transit assets are largely disconnected from one another. Baltimore transit riders are negatively impacted when systems are inconvenient and unreliable. We must rethink how we build, utilize and link traditional transit with micro-transit, bicycle, and pedestrian options. And, we must prioritize solutions to overcome the first/last mile gap that discourages transit use. For example, in Cherry Hill, the potential for a true multi-modal transit system is achievable if we are creative with our current assets. I also believe we should revive our focus on a true east/west connection

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running through downtown, a Marc station in the proximity of Johns Hopkins Bayview, and the Baltimore Greenway Trail Network. These assets must all connect to one another, be accessible with an app and a single payment method and run frequently and on time.

*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 think we need our elected officials to take the lead on organizing and coordinating services offered by the government, the private sector, and the non-profit arena. We have so many incredible organizations that want to do the right thing but if we do not coordinate our efforts with a meaningful focus on the end user then we end up with a lot of good intentions and not much to show for it. The simple answer is leadership and organization. We need to get both of these right.

*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.)*

If elected, I would be only the 4th foreign born immigrant serving us in the House of Delegates and the only Jewish member of the District 46 Delegation. This kind of representation matters. I would use my platform to highlight and bring these issues to light as well as to secure funding for education improvements such as modifying the curriculum to require holocaust education. I would also look to secure more funding for security enhancements for religious schools and institutions.

*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 absolutely. This is critical and must not only continue but be increased.

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.

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<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 absolutely. BDS is antisemitism and should be treated as such.

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.)

Yes I do.

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

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

I believe we must focus not only on net zero goals and clean energy sources, but also how we reduce waste and improve Baltimore’s air quality. The immense waste we produce in Baltimore, coupled with some of the lowest recycling rates in the state, force thousands of tons of waste to be processed at The BRESCO incinerator, with what remains going to the Quarantine Road landfill, which is almost full. This has forced south Baltimoreans to bear a disproportionate share of our trash burden, resulting in poor air quality and adverse public health impacts. If elected, I would immediately support legislation to end “clean energy” subsidies for trash incinerators support programs that encourage more clean energy production, workforce training and investment programs for displaced workers and work to attain a net-zero goal for Maryland by 2045.

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