

2022 Baltimore Jewish Council Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE NAME: Clarence Lam

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 running for reelection to the State Senate in order to continue addressing the priorities of our constituents and tackling the challenges facing our state in an equitable, fair, and forward-looking manner. Over the past four years, I've worked hard to improve our schools, develop job opportunities, foster economic development, ensure fair wages and protections for working families, expand access to healthcare, safeguard our environment, enact criminal justice reform, bolster mass transit and transportation projects, and reduce discrimination and injustices against minority or marginalized populations. But while we've made significant progress on these issues, much work remains, and I am seeking to return to the legislature in order to advance these ongoing efforts even further. As the only physician in the Senate, I have used my experience and voice to improve our state's COVID response and will continue to work tirelessly until we safely emerge from the pandemic.

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)

Maryland has always been known to have a strong public school system, but our education system stands at an important crossroad. Our local school systems face the twin challenges of aging physical infrastructure and state academic programs that don't prepare all students for the modern economy. Many of our schools are overcapacity due to new students from growing communities and others are significantly out-of-date and in need of substantial renovation. Because Maryland has slipped in national rankings over the past decade, the legislature undertook an effort—known as the Kirwan Commission—to comprehensively review our academic programs and provide recommendations that led to the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland Future, which will invest in our educators, expand early childhood education, and support other key programs. I also supported the passage of the Build to Learn Act, which appropriated billions of additional dollars for new schools and critical renovations.

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*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 have served on many Boards of Directors of non-profit organizations, and I recognize the value that they bring to the State of Maryland and our local communities. I have supported legislation that will create interest-free micro-bridge loans for non-profits, requiring that non-profits and other small businesses be paid promptly by the state, and the creation of a renewable energy loan program for non-profits—all legislation which passed the Senate of Maryland.

*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 an Asian American, I have seen the rise of hate against our community during the pandemic, and I recognize the analogous concerns with rising violence and antisemitism against the Jewish community. I would support legislation to stem the rising tide of antisemitism, discrimination, and bias against the Jewish community via bills that strengthen our hate crime statute, promoting Holocaust education, and to use my platform as an elected official to publicly condemn antisemitic incidents.

*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, I voted in favor of these initiatives over the past few years to protect these institutions from hate crimes, and I would support continuing them if I am reelected.

*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/>*

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*Do you support maintaining and enforcing this executive order?
(Please limit your answer to no more than 100 words.)*

I believe executive orders should be left to the executive branch and would defer to the next governor on this determination.

*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.)*

I have reservations about spending public dollars for non-public schools, but I am open to hearing and discussing the benefits of the BOOST program.

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

I think reducing greenhouse gases and transitioning to renewable sources of energy are our biggest priorities to help protect the environment. That's why I supported the enactment of the Climate Solutions Now Act which calls for Maryland to reduce greenhouse gases by 60% by 2021 and for the state to attain net-zero emissions by 2045. Along with provisions to increase electrification of new buildings, improve energy efficiency of existing buildings, and encourage the reduction in emissions from schools, this law was one of the most ambitious climate change bills passed by any state in the nation.

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