

### ETHICS BALLOT QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Howard County Executive – 2026 primary

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Educational History:

**Atholton High School, 93"**

**The College of William and Mary, 97'**

**The Villanova University School of Law, 00'**

Languages Spoken/Other Skills/Relevant Experience:

- 1. Describe why your campaign is viable and what makes you uniquely qualified to serve as our next County Executive.***

I have represented District 13 in the Maryland House of Delegates for 11 years. I am an attorney who was born and raised in this county and who is raising my three children here and I hope to continue my record of service by leading this county as its next executive. As Delegate, I spent my career fighting for Maryland families, making record investments in our public schools, passing landmark legislation on police reform and gun control, and fought back against the Trump Administration's attack on marginalized communities. I kept Howard County at the top of my mind no matter what issue I was working on, and that allowed me to stay in touch with local needs/concerns.

Throughout my career, I have worked hard to build coalitions and the political support necessary to enact the policies I've championed. As County Executive, I will continue to build relationships across communities, stakeholders, and local leaders to bring people together to deliver practical, results-driven policies that move the county forward.

**2. Are you participating in the Citizens Election Fund (CEF) public financing? Why or why not?**

My campaign is using traditional financing. I gave serious consideration to using the CEF but ultimately decided against it. As a state delegate, I did not have the option to publicly finance those races, and as a result, I entered the county executive race with a campaign finance account that was already carrying a balance. I am proud that my first Campaign Finance Report reflects contributions and support made from across the county.

**3. What do you believe are the three most important issues currently facing Howard County? What are your plans to address these?**

1) Growing our local economy so that we can provide **more funding to our schools** without sacrificing other county services.

a) Funding our public schools

i) Increasing the percentage of the county's general fund allocated to education is my top priority. I am committed to finding and creating new revenue streams for the county, and will use my experience in Annapolis to advocate for more state funds. We must grow our local economy to ensure we continue to provide excellent public education without sacrificing other county services.

ii) I am committed to having a strong and collaborative relationship with the Board of Education, and I will encourage them to always request the amount of school funds they need in order to provide every student with the high-quality public education they deserve.

2) Public Health and Public Safety

a) Capacity constraints at the Emergency Room

i) Investments must be made to expand emergency room capacity, open up more urgent care facilities nearby and provide residents with preventative health care options.

b) Mental Health Support

i) Mobile crisis units should be responding to people in need of assistance with mental and emotional health challenges. Involving law enforcement can

unnecessarily escalate situations. Proper training by law enforcement is necessary to ensure this doesn't occur and alternative approaches should be explored.

- ii) I will continue to support community groups like Grassroots that provide essential mental health resources at low or no cost.

c) Community Safety

- i) Last year, Howard County lost several young men to gun violence, leaving families and communities grieving and searching for solutions. Those closest to the victims have been clear: our youth need safe, welcoming spaces to gather—at little or no cost. We have a responsibility to ensure that every young person in our county has access to recreational opportunities, regardless of a family's ability to afford private camps or fee-based programs. At the same time, we must invest in proven mentorship initiatives, such as STAND, which provide critical guidance, support, and stability for youth who are most at risk.

3) Fighting back against the Trump Administration and protecting the civil and human rights of Howard County residents.

- a) The Trump Administration is endangering the lives and rights of every Howard County resident, and we need leaders who are prepared to stand up and fight back. I am proud of Howard County residents for voting overwhelmingly in favor of the Liberty Act in 2022 and as County Executive I will continue to enforce it. I will also stand firmly against the Trump Administration's cruel policies enforced by masked and unidentified ICE agents who terrorize our communities and our neighbors. As a state delegate, I sponsored and fought for legislation to keep ICE out of our schools, hospitals, libraries and other gathering places.
- b) I will also stand with our federal workers who have been impacted by layoffs and mass-firings at the hands of Trump and Elon Musk. Maryland has seen more federal job losses than any other state in the nation, and Howard County is feeling that impact deeply. That is why I was proud to vote for state legislation to protect impacted federal workers, and as County Executive, I will ensure our county supports Howard County federal workers.
- c) As County Executive, I will continue my record of standing up against Trump and MAGA Republicans. In Annapolis, I have taken on the NRA and Moms for Liberty, passing landmark legislation to protect every Marylander. As Donald Trump continues to pursue his dangerous and harmful agenda, I will not comply with any of his racist, homophobic, or transphobic orders - nor will I permit medical misinformation to permeate our local health

department and related agencies.

**4. What do you believe are the best ways to get more affordable housing units in Howard County? Please describe how your ideas can be implemented and result in more units affordable to low or moderate-income.**

Howard County needs a housing strategy that prioritizes the production of homes that are truly affordable—not simply an increase in overall housing units. Several targeted reforms offer the most effective path forward.

- We must strengthen affordable housing requirements and encourage development in more areas of the county, not just where affordable housing already exists. One of the most effective tools is reforming “fee-in-lieu” policies so they are directly aligned with community needs. As a state delegate representing Howard County, I introduced legislation that aimed to increase fees and curtail the practice of concentrating affordable housing in the same areas. It is imperative that any fees assessed be substantial enough to meaningfully offset the infrastructure costs associated with new development.
- The county must expand requirements for low-income housing units, not just moderate-income units. Current LIHU requirements are minimal, and incentives must be tied directly to the actual delivery of units. This ensures that policies result in housing that is genuinely priced within reach of county residents, rather than promises that go unmet.
- Howard County must revise permitting and zoning processes that create unnecessary barriers to housing production. Lengthy timelines, duplicative reviews, and outdated zoning restrictions add cost and uncertainty, which ultimately reduce the number of affordable units that get built. Streamlining approvals—while maintaining appropriate community input—can lower costs and accelerate the delivery of housing without sacrificing standards.
- Any density bonuses or flexibility under the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance should be contingent on meaningful affordable housing commitments. For example, if transit-oriented development rules are adjusted to reduce barriers to construction, the county should require a greater number of affordable units in return—and enforce clawbacks when those units are not delivered. Past experience has shown that accountability is essential to ensuring promised housing becomes a reality.

**5. What is your position on County-funded housing trusts? Should fund usage be public, private, or both and why?**

- Any County housing trust should focus on the production of affordable housing, and it must include strong stipulations geared towards doing that. The County should fund only projects that yield real units at low/moderate income levels, especially LIHU, in areas where poverty is not already heavily concentrated.
- Funding should be allowed for both public and private partners, but only if it is conditional in exchange for affordable housing units. We must look at every option in order to expand the number of affordable and moderate-income units across the county, and I believe housing trusts are one of the possible options. Accountability is critical to a successful housing trust program.

**6. *What are your positions on the most substantive recommendations by the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance Review Committee, posted in August of 2025?***

- Growth is important to Howard County's long-term vitality, but it must be managed responsibly. The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance exists to ensure that growth is balanced with the capacity of our public infrastructure—particularly our schools. While I appreciate the work of the APFO Review Committee, I do not support shifting away from school capacity standards toward a surcharge-based model. Revenue alone cannot prevent overcrowding, and the proposed fees are insufficient to offset the real impact of new development on our schools.
- As County Executive, I will strengthen APFO's capacity protections so growth enhances our county without overwhelming classrooms or diminishing educational quality. At the same time, we must modernize APFO to reflect the full range of infrastructure demands created by growth, including hospital capacity, emergency services, transportation, and other critical public systems.
- Managing growth effectively requires collaboration. The county government must work in partnership with residents, developers, subject-matter experts, and other stakeholders to create a transparent, data-driven APFO framework. Growth should move forward when it is planned thoughtfully, supported by infrastructure, and aligned with what best serves our communities.

**7. *How do you feel about large-scale commercial uses on Preserved Agricultural land, such as solar panels, mulching, alcohol production uses?***

Preserved Agricultural land is just that and should not be used for commercial purposes that are not agricultural. Solar farms that impede agricultural use of the land should not be permitted.

**8. *How would you, specifically, as County Executive, accelerate school construction and acquisition of school sites? Are you willing to budget more for high school maintenance needs and site acquisitions?***

- Howard County's growth patterns have too often placed residential development ahead of infrastructure upgrades, and that is the opposite of smart growth. Planning must include school and other public service impacts from the outset, particularly with major long-term projects.
- As County Executive, I would: require large development phasing plans to include school capacity and site planning at the onset. I would direct the County government to focus on identifying and acquiring school sites early, when land decisions can still shape development outcomes. Fully fund our infrastructure needs while making school deferred maintenance and capital projects core pieces of our annual budget priorities. Too many of these projects have been deferred for too long, and the longer we wait, the more expensive they will become.
- We must be creative in how we build our schools. Other jurisdictions have been successful using the P3 model (public-private partnership) and that is something this county should explore.

**9. Do you believe our current storm water management regulations and forest conservation requirements are adequate? What would you change, if anything?**

- Stormwater management and forest conservation are deeply connected to the pace and pattern of growth in Howard County. When infrastructure is overburdened, communities become more vulnerable to flooding, public safety hazards, and the harmful effects of excessive impervious surface coverage. While our current regulations provide an important foundation, they must continue to evolve to meet the realities of climate change and continued development.
- We need to more fully leverage green infrastructure—such as tree canopy preservation, stream restoration, and permeable surfaces—to reduce runoff and better protect neighborhoods that have already experienced repeated flooding. This is especially critical for historic areas like Old Ellicott City, where severe flooding has repeatedly devastated families and small businesses.
- Forest conservation requirements should also be strengthened. When trees are removed, they must be replaced at meaningful ratios and, whenever possible, replanted within the same watershed or community to preserve environmental and public safety benefits. Protecting our natural resources is not optional—it is essential to safeguarding our residents, our history, and the long-term resilience of Howard County.

**10. As the Howard County senior population continues to increase, how would you address their service and financial needs?**

- Howard County's population is aging, with nearly 23% of residents over the age of 60. As County Executive, I will ensure that our policies proactively address the needs of older adults while maintaining Howard County as a community that works for families at every stage of life.
- My administration will integrate senior needs into core County planning decisions, including housing, transportation, public safety, and healthcare. I will prioritize expanding accessible and affordable housing options that support aging in place, while also encouraging the development of a wider range of senior living communities so residents can downsize or relocate within the County without losing access to family, services, or social supports.
- I will work to reduce senior isolation by expanding reliable, senior-friendly transportation options that promote independence and connection to essential services. Public safety planning will incorporate a senior-impact framework, ensuring fire and EMS staffing models, station placement, and response strategies reflect the needs of an aging population.
- Finally, I will support the expansion of mobile and satellite healthcare services to improve access to care, reduce preventable emergency calls, and allow seniors to remain healthy and safely housed in their communities.

### ***11. How do you propose to improve public transportation?***

- Transit-oriented development (TOD) must be implemented in a way that delivers clear community benefits. Transit access should be intentionally aligned with land-use decisions, with policy safeguards to ensure that TOD includes meaningful affordability, appropriate infrastructure investment, and careful consideration of school capacity and community impacts.
- Howard County's public bus system is significantly underutilized, in large part because the County has historically been designed around personal vehicle use. Service design also fails to reflect how residents actually travel—routes are often indirect, travel times are long, and hours of operation do not accommodate nontraditional shift workers—making transit an impractical option for many residents.
- Improving public transportation requires a coordinated approach that better aligns development patterns with reliable, efficient transit service, expands service frequency and operating hours, and ensures that infrastructure can support increased ridership. Affordability requirements tied to TOD must be concrete and enforceable, so that transit-oriented growth produces real, measurable benefits for residents rather than theoretical ones.

**12. What do you believe are the top financial priorities in the budget, given so many competing needs for resources?**

- My top budget priority as County Executive will be fully funding Howard County's public school system. Every child deserves a world-class education, and the County must dedicate the resources necessary to support students, educators, and school facilities. While Howard County remains one of the strongest school systems in Maryland, our budget must do more to eliminate the longstanding backlog of deferred maintenance and invest meaningfully in classrooms, educators, and student supports so our schools meet the high standards our children deserve. This will require a commitment to increasing the % of the general fund that is dedicated to education.
- For more than a decade, I have fought to secure funding to address deferred maintenance in our schools, because students and educators deserve safe, modern, and well-maintained facilities—not buildings reliant on temporary fixes. The latter includes securing 35 million in state funds for Howard County schools' deferred maintenance priorities and other school funding priorities. As County Executive, ending deferred maintenance will be a core budget priority.
- At the state level, I sponsored and advanced legislation that helped establish universal prekindergarten in Maryland. As both a mother and a legislator, I understand the critical importance of early childhood education and the real-world challenges involved in implementing Pre-K programs effectively. I understand the intent of the legislation and will work at the county level to advance its implementation so that every child enters school ready to learn, regardless of their zip code.
- I have also consistently advocated for strong public education funding, accountable leadership, and policies that put students, educators, and families first. As Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, I played a central role in shaping the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and understand both its goals and the practical challenges of local implementation. That experience uniquely positions me to ensure Howard County meets its Blueprint obligations responsibly and effectively.
- In addition to education, I will prioritize fully funding the County workforce and essential services. Investing in the staff and programs residents rely on is critical to maintaining a responsive, effective, and accountable County government that can meet the needs of our community today and in the future.

**13. Howard County is not immune from the religious and ethnic division that has become a main concern across the country. Provide specifics for what you have done to bring people together.**

I have always worked to bring people together—both on the campaign trail and throughout my service as a Delegate. As Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, and previously as Vice Chair of the Judiciary Committee, I worked across differences to address some of the most complex and challenging issues facing our state. We did not always agree, but we approached our work from a place of mutual respect, civility, and good faith, and we held one another to that standard.

That same commitment to inclusive leadership has guided my campaign. I have made it a priority to engage directly with the diverse communities that call Howard County home, hosting listening sessions with Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Chinese community members, as well as roundtables across the County. I believe effective leadership requires not only outreach, but active listening and a willingness to understand the lived experiences of others.

I intend to continue this work as County Executive, because building a stronger, more united community depends on ongoing dialogue and trust. At a time when national rhetoric and policies are marginalizing and targeting many of our neighbors, local leadership must be clear, vocal, and unwavering in standing against hate and discrimination. Howard County should continue to be a place where all residents feel seen, heard, and protected.

**14. Give three examples of legislation you have sponsored of which you are the most proud. For non-legislative serving candidates, note three supported examples.**

Over the years in Annapolis, especially in my time as Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, I have been able to work on a number of landmark pieces of legislation. I am most proud of those bills that focused on uplifting Maryland's children and families. In many cases, I was faced with tremendous pressure from the opposition to back down. For example, when I sought to mandate a more gender inclusive public education curriculum, it took three sessions before it finally passed, and over those three years, I received hate mail and my social media comments were bombed by anti-LGBTQ activists. I am proud to have earned a reputation as someone who stands her ground and fights for what is right.

**1. Strengthening Protections Against Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Abuse.**

Over the course of my legislative career, I sponsored and passed more than a dozen bills strengthening Maryland's domestic violence, sexual assault, and abuse laws. This work included closing critical gaps in firearm safety by requiring background checks for rifles and shotguns and ensuring that individuals convicted of domestic violence are required to surrender their firearms. These reforms were designed to protect survivors, prevent future violence, and strengthen accountability within our justice system.

### **2. Ending Child Marriage in Maryland.**

I led the 7-year effort to end child marriage in Maryland by sponsoring legislation that prohibited 15-, 16-, and 17-year-olds from marrying. After years of advocating, fighting for change, working with advocates and stakeholders, this long-overdue reform was signed into law, closing a dangerous loophole and strengthening protections for children statewide.

### **3. Creating Universal Pre-Kindergarten in Maryland & Defending the Blueprint For Maryland's Future**

I sponsored and advanced legislation that established publicly funded Pre-K for all in Maryland, dramatically expanding access to high-quality early childhood education for families across the state, including in Howard County. This legislation removed financial barriers that left too many children behind and ensured that school readiness is not determined by income or zip code. As both a mother and a legislator, I understand the importance of early learning and the challenges of implementation, and I am proud to have helped lay the foundation for a stronger, more equitable education system.

One of the most important bills that I worked on through the years was the historic education legislation, the Blueprint For Maryland's Future. This bill led to record state funding to schools all across our state, including right here in Howard County. Its continued implementation will not just raise funding levels but will also greatly improve the quality of education every child receives. And that is why for years, I have been proud to defend the Blueprint from cuts throughout the tough budget decisions. We cannot compromise the investments we are making in our students, and as County Executive, I will increase local funding to our schools so that we can fulfill all the benefits of the Blueprint.