

# The People's Voice, LLC

## Ethics Ballot™

3600 Saint Johns Lane, Suite D, Ellicott City, MD21042

### ETHICS BALLOT QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Howard County Board of Education Primary 2024

Congratulations on your decision to run for the Howard County Board of Education. The People's Voice is a civic/political organization in Howard and Montgomery Counties. We have over 4,800 members in Howard County and sponsor the non-partisan Ethics Ballot. If you would like to seek endorsement to The Ethics Ballot please return this Questionnaire to [EthicsBallot@Gmail.com](mailto:EthicsBallot@Gmail.com) by midnight Tuesday March 26. Please note that all questionnaires are published on the website, [www.EthicsBallot.com](http://www.EthicsBallot.com). We will be in touch regarding endorsement dates soon after getting the questionnaires back. We pride ourselves in working hard for our endorsed candidates, and look forward to hearing your positions on important County issues. THANK YOU so very much for your time!

**Be sure to address all aspects of each question. Feel free to add additional pages with question numbers noted to provide more information on each question as needed, or fill in more space herein. Be sure to return via email in Word or text format.**

Name/District: HiruyHadgu/District 4

Campaign Address/Phone/Email/Social Media/Website (if not on MD Board of Elections site)

[joinus@hiruyhadgu.com](mailto:joinus@hiruyhadgu.com)

[www.hiruyhadgu.com](http://www.hiruyhadgu.com)

*social\_media/@hiruy4boe*

Campaign manager:

*Jake Burdett and Connor Gephart*

Educational & Employment History:

*I have a Bachelors and Masters in Nuclear Engineering and Radiological Sciences from the University of Michigan.*

*MBA from the University of Maryland*

*Worked as a Nuclear Analyst at ORANO, Energy Industry Analyst at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and a Reactor Systems Engineer at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.*

By Authority: The People's Voice, Lisa Markovitz Treasurer

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Relevant Experience (including fiscal and budget management):

*I have testified on numerous zoning and land use decisions, influencing policy with informed critiques. Serving on the Spending Affordability Advisory Committee, I have rigorously examined public expenditures and revenue forecasts to ensure sustainable county growth. I continually challenge the prevalent assertion that residential development is self-financing, bringing to light the true economic impacts. My commitment to transparency and accountability is further evidenced by my independent analysis of the fiscal impact of 'HoCo by Design', for which I developed a comprehensive fiscal model to assess long-term financial implications.*

Causes financially supported, fund raising work promoted:

*My work has focused on backing zoning and land-use reforms, and supporting county council candidates committed to these crucial issues.*

1. Why are you running for this office? What qualifications do you uniquely bring to hold this office? Describe why you feel you have a viable campaign.

*I am running for this office because Howard County deserves a leader with a demonstrated commitment to equity, justice, and community engagement. My unique qualifications stem from years of hands-on advocacy and effective activism within our community. As a resident of Fulton, a father, and a community leader, I understand the concerns and aspirations of our families and am determined to ensure a thriving future for every resident. My viable campaign is built on a foundation of proven leadership. I co-founded Indivisible Howard County, where I spearheaded environmental and economic equity initiatives. As a member of the Howard County NAACP, I have amplified the calls for racial equality. My 2018 county council campaign illuminated the pressing issue of developer influence on zoning, which directly impacts school quality and community wellbeing.*

*I am not just an advocate but a doer. My actions include challenging the Spending Affordability Advisory Committee to rethink the true costs of development, and my successful petition to raise school surcharge fees showcased my ability to enact legislative change. In response to a national outcry for police reform, I co-founded the Police Accountability Task Force, leading to significant local reforms. My leadership extends to the Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice and advocacy for Howard County for a Free Palestine. I have taken on roles that range from PTA delegate to VP of Operations at the PTACHC, influencing decisions that affect our children's education and futures.*

*My educational background, with master's degrees in Nuclear Engineering and Business Administration, equips me with a rare combination of technical and strategic know-how. This background underpins my strategic approach to problem-solving and policy-making. As a candidate for the Board of Education, I bring this extensive experience and a deep commitment to our children's education. I am ready to advocate with boldness*

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*and persistence for policies that ensure every child in Howard County receives the quality education and opportunities they rightfully deserve.*

2. What experience do you have with the HCPSS? Have you ever testified before the Board of Education? What positions did you take? (Those with vast experience, pick most important to you.)

*I have not only engaged in advocacy but also taken the steps to ensure my voice, and the concerns of fellow parents and community members, are heard by testifying before the Board. My recent testimony focused on Policy 5200, which concerned school transportation and its effects on nearly 2,500 children in our county. I challenged this policy's suspension of bus services, highlighting the lack of public input and the absence of an equity assessment. In my remarks, I emphasized the unforeseen negative outcomes, such as increased traffic congestion, safety risks for children, and disruptions to students' sleep patterns due to earlier start times.*

*I argued that the policy changes were a byproduct of a deeper financial issue within the school system — the discrepancy between the stated 'fully funded' budget and the actual fiscal needs. My advocacy aimed at more than just pointing out problems; it demanded a reevaluation of the policy and called for the restoration of bus services to ensure the safety and equitable treatment of all students.*

*Additionally, I have penned an op-ed on the same issue, which was published in 'The Baltimore Banner'. In the piece, I provided a detailed critique of the Howard County school buses' failures and budget, further cementing my position and contributing to the public discourse on this critical matter.*

*My track record of engaging with the HCPSS and my direct approach to policy advocacy through both testimony and published commentary demonstrate my deep commitment to our schools and the well-being of our students. I possess the necessary experience, understanding, and determination to address the multifaceted issues facing our education system. My campaign represents a clear voice for responsible, equitable, and child-centered education policy.*

3. Funding all the needs of the HCPSS community is harder than ever, given added mandated funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future program, and the past use of one-time Covid funds for recurring costs. How do you believe funding shortfalls should be addressed? What areas of the HCPSS budget do you believe are the best areas to cut in order to meet funding needs? Are there areas that you believe should be the last to ever have funding cut?

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*Addressing funding shortfalls within the HCPSS*

*requires strategic financial management, not one-time fiscal patches for recurring expenses. The root cause of our predicament lies in the county's budget mismanagement. As a Board of Education member, my role would not be to generate new revenue, but to advocate for full funding and prudent resource allocation at the county level.*

*For instance, the Board should take a stand on major expenditures like the new library project, ensuring they do not overshadow our schools' needs. Additionally, the Board must tighten its oversight of HCPSS decisions to prevent costly errors, such as those experienced with the Zum bus contract. While cuts may be necessary, they should be away from the classroom, preserving direct support for student learning and teacher resources. Essential areas like special education, mental health services, and classroom resources should be safeguarded against any budget reductions.*

4. Where do you think school construction should be prioritized? How would you address getting schools built faster where they are most needed? Include your thoughts about how to juggle maintenance needs as well.

*School construction should be prioritized in Elkridge, where the need for new facilities is evident. While High School 13 was completed in under four years, indicating that project speed can be achieved, the real constraints are financial resources and land availability. Given the challenges seen with the Zum contract, where oversight was insufficient, it's clear that the school system must be cautious with complex arrangements like Public-Private Partnerships (P3s), which I believe could compound our problems.*

*My stance is to advocate for the use of school bonds. This traditional financing method is straightforward and has a proven track record. Bonds can provide the necessary capital for construction while allowing for better public oversight and long-term financial planning. This approach would also enable us to balance new construction with the ongoing maintenance needs of our existing school facilities.*

5. How do you think overcapacity school concerns should be addressed? Do you believe current enrollment projection methods need to be changed? If so, how? What, if anything, should be done, when enrollment ends up significantly higher than projected project estimates?

*Overcapacity in schools is the result of years of inadequate planning. To address this, we need a more accurate and ongoing method of tracking enrollment, especially concerning new construction. The current system's failure to continue counting children from new constructions after the first year leads to a misrepresentation of actual enrollment numbers and future projections.*

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*The use of school trailers as a response to overcapacity must be discontinued; they often represent a health hazard and are not conducive to an optimal learning environment. Instead, we need to adopt a proactive approach in planning for capacity, considering long-term demographic trends and development patterns. When enrollment significantly exceeds projections, immediate reevaluation of enrollment methods is necessary, along with swift action to increase capacity, whether through accelerated construction of new facilities or expansion and repurposing of existing spaces. This requires collaboration with county planners, developers, and the community to create sustainable solutions.*

6. Do you believe the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) should be strengthened, weakened or left the same regarding school capacity? Why? Note any desired changes. Note how you feel the Board of Education can or should be involved in APFO.

*The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) is a critical tool in ensuring that our schools and infrastructure keep pace with development. I firmly believe the APFO should be strengthened. It must mandate that school capacity is capped at 100% across all levels. Exceeding this threshold compromises the quality of education and students' ability to learn effectively. Moreover, the ordinance should enforce stricter road test standards, which are essential for safety and accessibility.*

*In addition to schools and roads, the APFO should consider other public infrastructure elements such as public transit and hospitals, which are integral to the overall well-being and growth of our community. The Board of Education must take an active role in advocating for changes to the APFO. By speaking out on proposed amendments, the Board can ensure that changes are beneficial and do not adversely affect the quality of education or access to school facilities. It is our responsibility to ensure that the educational environment is conducive to learning and that our students have access to safe and reliable school facilities.*

7. Describe positions you have taken, votes you have made, or testimony you have given that you feel is the most important regarding HCPSS issues. Describe how you championed causes, include at least one example of any of your positions or votes that you regret, or about which you feel differently.

*My advocacy for higher school impact fees stands out as a significant contribution to HCPSS issues. By increasing these fees, we ensure developers contribute their fair share to the infrastructure required for quality education. My preparation of testimonies on various zoning and land-use bills has kept the focus on how these decisions affect our schools.*

*In tracking and publishing voting records for the county council and county executive, I have identified legislators whose votes negatively impact our schools, holding them accountable.*

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8. How do you feel altercations should be handled in schools? Include any staffing changes you believe should occur.

*Altercations in schools should be managed with a focus on restorative justice practices, which emphasize repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than punitive measures alone. This approach fosters a more supportive and understanding school environment. To support this, I advocate for reducing class sizes, allowing for more individual attention and fewer instances of conflict. Expanding the number of counselors and enhancing mental health programs are also vital steps, as these services directly contribute to addressing the underlying issues that may lead to altercations.*

*Funding is essential to implement these changes effectively. It is imperative that the county prioritizes its budget to support the necessary staffing and program expansions within our schools. By investing in these areas, we can create a safer and more conducive atmosphere for learning and growth.*

9. What HCPSS policies do you believe should be changed regarding protections of marginalized groups? Include in your answer your views on how to address achievement gaps.

*HCPSS policies should be revisited to ensure they provide comprehensive protections for marginalized groups. This includes revising anti-discrimination policies, making them more robust, and ensuring they are fully inclusive of all students' identities and needs. Equally important is the implementation of curricula and programs that reflect the diversity of the student body and encourage understanding and respect for all cultures and backgrounds.*

*Addressing achievement gaps requires targeted interventions. This includes investing in early childhood education, ensuring access to advanced coursework for underrepresented students, and providing additional resources and support for schools serving a high number of students from marginalized groups.*

*To ensure these policies are effective and address the root causes of disparities, the Board must be committed to ongoing evaluation and adjustment of strategies. Continuous community engagement and feedback from marginalized groups are essential to crafting policies that truly meet their needs.*

10. What criteria should be prioritized in redistricting?

*In redistricting, the paramount criterion should be the welfare of the students. Historically, redistricting in our district has been influenced by the needs to accommodate development, which has not always aligned with the best interests of our students and educational outcomes. Going forward, the focus must shift to a student-centered approach.*

*Redistricting decisions should consider the impact on students' travel time, community cohesion, and the maintenance of a supportive educational environment. The process should be transparent, involving community input to ensure that the unique needs of each school and its students are addressed. It is essential that we balance enrollment across schools*

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*while minimizing disruptions to learning and community ties. Redistricting should be a tool for enhancing the quality of education, not for facilitating external interests.*

11. Special education funding has increased over the last several years, but special education student outcomes have not improved. How would you address the legal requirements for students with disabilities to ensure positive outcomes?

*To improve outcomes in special education despite increased funding, a more strategic approach is needed. I support the legislative initiative that shifts the burden of proof in due process proceedings to the schools, which would encourage better compliance with legal requirements and a more proactive stance on meeting individual student needs.*

*Additionally, it's essential that special education providers are not only well-funded but also have access to the resources they need to address the diverse requirements of their students effectively. This could involve specialized training, technology, or support materials tailored to a variety of learning disabilities.*

*Increasing staffing levels is also a key factor. By hiring more specialized educators and support staff, we can reduce caseloads, allowing for more individualized attention and support for students with disabilities. With more personnel, we can better tailor educational plans to each student, track progress more accurately, and adjust strategies in real-time to ensure positive outcomes.*

12. What research, contract accountability and financial data would you require before supporting a procurement contract? Include in your answer what changes you would recommend to avoid service failures like we experienced recently with the bus system.

*Before supporting a procurement contract, I would require comprehensive research into the vendor's history of service delivery, transparent financial data indicating cost-effectiveness, and clear accountability measures within the contract. Due diligence must include an analysis of the vendor's ability to meet our specific needs, their financial stability, and a track record of reliability and quality.*

*To avoid service failures like those with the bus system, I recommend implementing performance-based contracts with stipulations for service delivery standards, regular audit clauses, and penalties for non-compliance. Additionally, the procurement process should involve input from multiple stakeholders, including frontline users and technical experts, to ensure the practicality and sustainability of services contracted. We need to establish a clear and strategic framework for vendor evaluation, selection, and continuous performance monitoring to safeguard the interests of HCPSS and its stakeholders.*