

The People's Voice™



Ethics Ballot™

By authority of The People's Voice, Lisa Markovitz, Treasurer

March 10, 2020

The People's Voice

3600 Saint Johns Lane, Suite D

Ellicott City MD 21042

Re: 2020 Ethics Ballot Endorsements

DEADLINE for response Midnight, Wed. March 18, 2020

Dear Candidates for the Howard County Board of Education 2020 election:

The People's Voice is a civic and political organization that sponsors The Ethics Ballot in Howard and Montgomery Counties.

Below please find the Ethics Ballot Questionnaire for the 2020 Howard County Board of Education election. The People's Voice participated in the Common Questionnaire this year, and since you chose to participate and responded to that, you have been given a shorter Ethics Ballot Questionnaire. Please feel free to supplement any of your Common Questionnaire answers, if you so desire, along with your Ethics Ballot Questionnaire response submission. We will be publicizing a combined questionnaire of both the Common Q and ours, on our website, with referred links on social media, and membership emails.

The People's Voice Board of Directors and many Members work hard for our endorsed candidates. Our motto is community interests over special interests, and we pride ourselves on the outreach we can do for you, versus funding. We have a postal mailing list of over 8000 countywide, and email lists of over 5000, with 3700 members at present in Howard County. We provide third-party usage of our lists, through our printer sources, to reach our membership for endorsed candidates. We provide Ethics Ballot emails, signage placement, and poll workers, and look forward to working with our endorsed candidates. Good luck to all in what we hope will be an informed, productive election season.

Our questionnaire is in PDF format. To avoid any conflicting software versions and varying editing software, please return your answers in PDF format as well. You may need to cut and paste from our PDF version into your own editing software. There is no use of forms to restrict your input, just please pay attention to the requested answer limit lengths, which include spaces in character counts.

Please return your questionnaire via email to EthicsBallot@gmail.com, along with any updates from the CommonQ you wish to make, and any questions or technical issues you may have. We look forward to your responses in seeking our endorsement. If you have not already had an interview with a Board Member, we will be contacting you soon, as we are planning on interviewing all the candidates prior to the primary. We will be making primary election endorsement decisions for the Board of Education, shortly after the submission deadline.



Individual Information (supplementing CommonQ)

Gene Ryan, District 5

List who has been compensated to provide services to your campaign. List your campaign managers. Note current cash on hand in your campaign account, and your donations received and spent. You only need to note figures that are not included yet on campaign finance filings.

Many years ago, when I was first elected to my local Board of Education (BOE) in NJ, I didn't have any consultants, strategists, or campaign managers, and I won my election by a considerable margin. The Board of Education, regardless of the school district, was and still is a non-partisan entity.

The people I represented understood the value of having an authentic candidate who did not need to be rehearsed or surrounded by strategic social media campaigns, fancy videos, or edited photography. I was then, just like I am now, an everyday person who understood the value of a dollar and cared deeply about the future of our community. I spoke from my heart to the needs of the people, and I acted by implementing innovative solutions and delivering a school system the community wanted.

Serving our community and families is a privilege for those who are qualified to do so, and that is why I was elected. I believe that those fundamental rules still apply, and therefore my campaign has not hired nor paid any "consultants" or "strategists." I am both the candidate and the campaign manager, although arguably, my wife is my partner and my rock in this undertaking. I am concerned that the farther a candidate wades into using political manipulation tools, the more the candidate stops representing the children and families and starts becoming a politician.

My candidate committee finance filing is not yet complete; however, as soon as the accounting is finished, I will share the information directly with your organization. In the interim, I have accepted no financial or in-kind donations from any organization, special interest group, political action committee, or other similar entity. I have also not received any single donation over \$200.

List organizations/groups/committees (both education-related and not) of which you are an official member.

National/Regional:

- International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 36, Washington, DC
- American Academy of Pediatrics PEPP Education Steering Committee
- American College of Emergency Physicians Pre-Hospital Care Workgroup
- National Burn Society Curriculum Advisory Committee
- Federal Emergency Management Urban Search and Rescue Task Force



- US Police Canine Association
- International Homicide Investigators Association
- International Fire Service Accreditation Congress
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Public Safety Committee
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Education Committee
- National Academy of Public Administration

State:

- Decoding Dyslexia Maryland
- Parent Encouragement Project

County/Local:

- Howard County Public School PTAs (several)
- Howard County Special Education Citizen Advisory Committee
- HCPSS Superintendent's Advisory Committee (group dissolved 2019)
- Atholton High School Athletic Boosters
- Atholton High School JROTC Boosters
- Howard County Public School System Dyslexia Workgroup
- Howard County Dyslexia Support Group
- Teelin Irish Dance Boosters (Founding members)
- KC Waves Community Swim Team Parent Committee
- Howard County Board of Appeals

Community Interest / Position Questions

1. In what areas of public education do you refuse to compromise, due to strong beliefs? How would you make changes in these areas? Give examples of how you collaborated and compromised with colleagues who disagreed with you. (Character limit please 1200)

During my time as a Board of Education member in New Jersey, I found great success in providing public school administration oversight by relying on a few guiding principles to most all situations.

- I. All children and families deserve the opportunity to achieve.
- II. Public school system leaders choose one of two pathways for problem-solving. The first pathway involves fixing the problem right in front of us, meeting the needs of the outspoken few, and then moving on with other things. The second pathway offers a more systemic and comprehensive solution. Pathway two means doing difficult work and finding solutions that benefit everyone, regardless of influence. I am proud to say that I have worked hard to make sure all families have a



voice and that no concerns are marginalized.

- III. **Howard County families deserve the best, and the best doesn't necessarily mean the most expensive. Fully funding education is the right call but being fiscally conservative and ensuring money is spent efficiently must come first. Public education is a taxpayer-funded business, and being financially responsible is a requirement, not an option.**
- IV. **Our public-school system is much like any other living thing. The system either grows or dies, but it never stays the same. Doing things the same way they have always been done will result in inefficiency, wastefulness, and ultimately failure. We have seen this firsthand when some BOE members, past and current, have failed to question information and then go along with half-baked plans based on the false premise that there is no other way to achieve a solution.**

Principled leadership has allowed me to deliver on the shared community vision for public schools. I have fulfilled my promises by identifying obstacles before they materialize and by overcoming unspoken objections. Identifying and mitigating unspoken objections is how I have successfully managed to create group consensus.

Today our world faces a global pandemic that will kill thousands of people. In my public safety career, I began preparing for today's challenges decades ago through formal education and real-world experience. If meaningful solutions could simply be found in a textbook, then we wouldn't have any real problems. I have applied that same lifelong preparedness approach to my work with our public-school system.

The truth is that real solutions, the ones that make a difference and improve lives, come from experience, innovation, and unconventional thinking. Being prepared to meet our community's public-school expectations is a minimum requirement for any responsible BOE member. The knowledge, skill, and ability to understand many concepts and functions across vast areas of school administration requires real experience to deliver positive outcomes. I have the proven experience and expertise to hold leaders accountable and deliver on the promises I make.

- 2. Give examples, in your personal or professional life, that demonstrate your willingness to hold people accountable and include transparency for the community. (Character limit 1200)

In 2010 I was hired to oversee emergency medical services for the District of Columbia. With a multibillion-dollar budget and nearly 1.5 million residents and visitors, this was no small task. Almost immediately, I uncovered some alarming truths. People were dying needlessly, highly potent narcotic medications were disappearing, and millions of dollars in reimbursable expenses were nonexistent.

I immediately conducted a host of root causation analyses to determine the underlying issues, and once completed, I submitted a series of executive briefs outlining the findings. To my total surprise, the reports were largely ignored, even as problems persisted and despite my continued reporting. I didn't just complain about the issues; I proposed workable solutions, which would have cost very little money to implement. The solutions I created were based on national best practice gold standards and simply demanded accountability.



Despite my unrelenting best efforts, my reports and proposed solutions were ignored. The message was clear that I was to be quiet, stop reporting issues and solutions, and simply collect a salary for showing up. Government leaders decided to marginalize the problems and the lives of the people who were suffering as a result.

Doing nothing was not an option for me, so I persisted. Shortly after that, I was demoted, despite a spotless performance record. I went from a near \$175,000-year salary to a \$41,000 salary as a firefighter—the cost of speaking up nearly bankrupt my family. Despite the tremendous hardship, I did not run away under pressure; instead, I turned the volume up. I testified before various governmental bodies about what was happening, and I ultimately filed a whistleblower lawsuit. The experience was horrible, and it was the best thing that I never want to do again. I was proud of my actions on behalf of people who didn't even know they deserved better.

The experience was devastating and cost me dearly. I didn't have any big organizations backing me, and I didn't have any expensive attorneys to set the record straight. I was personally dragged through the mud for years because I believed in accountability and transparency. I was attacked from every angle imaginable. I was told I didn't know what I was talking about. I was told I was exaggerating or lying about what I had found. Ultimately, after many years of ugliness, I prevailed. The fire chief, the medical director, and the deputy mayor for public safety resigned, and the mayor lost reelection. DC residents and visitors finally received the services they deserved.

I put the wellbeing and security of my family on the line for total strangers. We each have a responsibility to leave our community better than we found it. I have chosen public service as my way to fulfill that responsibility. Fighting bullies and stopping waste, fraud, and mismanagement by delivering real solutions is what I do. I prefer to foster agreement and provide responsible solutions by working from within. During times when that fails, it is not enough to simply complain and throw your hands in the air. Real leaders, which is what HCPSS desperately needs, must stand up and take meaningful action to create the change our community deserves. I have that ability, and I look forward to being a part of the solution we all seek.



3. For incumbents, what do you feel is your legacy you have left so far on the HCPSS? For other candidates, what would you want your legacy to be and why are you the best choice to create it? (Character limit 1200).

At the risk of being repetitive, please see my prior answers.