

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 by midnight Tuesday March 26. Please note that all questionnaires are published on the website, 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: Julie Kaplan, District 4

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Educational & Employment History

A product of Montgomery County Public Schools, I furthered my academic foundation with a BA in Economics and an MBA from the University of Maryland. professional journey has seen her emerge as an executive leader known for her ability to drive tangible results.

I have built a distinguished career in marketing, showcasing my leadership and strategic vision across various industries. As the Senior Vice President of Marketing and Revenue Operations at CareMetx since February 2021, I led the transformation of the marketing department, generating significant growth and establishing a

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key revenue operations function. Prior to this, I served as the Vice President of Marketing at Versant Health from March 2018 to February 2021, where I spearheaded a brand transformation and unified the marketing department, significantly contributing to the company's growth and brand awareness. My role at Aetna as Marketing Director for Accountable Care between May 2014 and February 2018 highlighted my ability to elevate brand presence and execute innovative marketing strategies, proving my capability to drive success and lead transformative initiatives within any organization.

Relevant Experience (including fiscal and budget management)

My expertise in fiscal and budget management is evidenced by my strategic leadership and operational excellence across pivotal roles. At CareMetx, I spearheaded the creation of the Marketing and Revenue Operations Departments from scratch, demonstrating remarkable fiscal acumen by driving an incremental pipeline with a meticulously managed budget, all under tight budgetary constraints. During my time at Versant Health, I transformed legacy marketing teams into a streamlined, high-performing department that supported \$1.2 billion in annual sales, showcasing my capacity to optimize resources effectively even when budgets were tight. Recognized by CMO Huddles in [2023 as a top marketer](#), notably for my superpower of maximizing a start-up budget, my proficiency in financial stewardship and budget optimization has been central to my success. These experiences have taught me the value of efficiency and innovation, enabling me to drive significant growth and innovation within the organizations I've been part of, without the luxury of asking for more resources.

Causes financially supported, fund raising work promoted

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 the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Board of Education because I am deeply committed to ensuring our education system meets the needs of every student while navigating the complex challenges of strained budgets, the search for a new superintendent, and the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. My background as a strategic marketing executive with a strong track record in fiscal and budget management equips me with the unique skills necessary to address these issues head-on. My experience in leading organizations through transformative change, managing multi-million-dollar budgets efficiently, and driving growth under tight budgetary constraints has prepared me to contribute effectively to the Board. I believe in maximizing resources to enhance educational outcomes and ensuring that every decision is made with rigor and with the students' best interests at heart.

My campaign is grounded in a vision of fiscal responsibility, transparency, and inclusivity for HCPSS. As an independent candidate with no political aspirations beyond serving our school system, I am not

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beholden to any political party or hidden agenda. My sole commitment is to the well-being and education of our children. This independence allows me to make unbiased decisions that truly reflect the best interests of our students, teachers, and the community at large. I aim to leverage my professional expertise to guide HCPSS through its current challenges, ensuring we adhere to and excel under the Blueprint for Maryland, and to support the selection of a superintendent who aligns with our community's values and educational goals. My dedication to these principles forms the foundation of a viable campaign that seeks to bring about positive, lasting change to HCPSS.

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.)

My experience with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) is deeply personal and rooted in my family's journey through the school system. Both of my children have successfully graduated from HCPSS, attending Fulton Elementary School, Lime Kiln Middle School, and Reservoir High School. This firsthand experience has given me valuable insight into the strengths and areas for improvement within our schools at various educational stages. Additionally, my connection to HCPSS continues through my two nieces and a nephew who are currently navigating their education within the system, and another niece who will soon begin her journey in our public schools. This ongoing engagement with HCPSS has kept me closely informed about the evolving challenges and achievements within our schools.

Although I have not had the opportunity to testify before the Board of Education, my involvement and interest in the well-being of HCPSS have been constant. My positions on educational matters are informed by my children's and relatives' experiences, as well as my commitment to ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education that prepares them for the future. My advocacy for our schools is focused on promoting educational excellence, ensuring fiscal responsibility, and supporting the mental and physical well-being of all students. I am deeply invested in contributing to a school system that not only meets the current needs of its students and staff but also anticipates and adapts to future challenges, ensuring the success of every child within HCPSS.

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?

Funding shortfalls in the HCPSS budget must be addressed through a combination of strategic planning, responsible budgeting, and prioritization of essential needs. While the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

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program mandates additional funding, it's imperative to explore efficiencies within the existing budget and seek alternative revenue sources where feasible. One-time Covid funds repurposed for recurring costs highlight the need for sustainable funding solutions.

In identifying areas for potential budget cuts, it's crucial to prioritize student outcomes and well-being. Administrative overhead, redundant programs, and non-essential services should be carefully evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness. However, any cuts should be made with caution, ensuring minimal impact on classroom instruction and student support services.

Certain areas should be considered last for funding cuts to safeguard the quality of education and student experiences. Investments in high-quality instructional programs, educator support and development, and enhanced safety measures are essential pillars of a thriving school system. Protecting resources allocated to these areas ensures equitable access to education and supports student success.

Ultimately, addressing funding shortfalls requires collaboration among stakeholders, transparent communication, and a commitment to making informed decisions that prioritize the needs of students and the long-term sustainability of the school system.

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 prioritize addressing critical safety needs such as mold remediation and infrastructure repair to ensure all schools meet the same standard of safety, security, and accessibility. This includes ensuring barrier-free access to facilities for all students, staff, and visitors. To expedite construction where it's most needed, we must streamline processes and utilize a fair and transparent bidding process, leveraging public-private partnerships where appropriate.

Balancing maintenance needs with new construction requires strategic planning and resource allocation. Prioritizing preventive maintenance and adopting sustainable building practices can help reduce future maintenance costs and extend the lifespan of school facilities. By prioritizing safety updates for existing schools and strategically planning new construction based on population growth and community needs, we can ensure equitable access to modern, safe learning environments for all students.

In addressing construction priorities, transparency and accountability are paramount. Implementing a fair and transparent bidding process ensures that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently and effectively. Additionally, ensuring barrier-free access to facilities promotes inclusivity and ensures that all students have equal opportunities to thrive in their educational environment.

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?

Addressing overcapacity school concerns requires a multi-faceted approach that includes proactive planning, transparent communication, and flexibility in enrollment projection methods. While the Projection Accuracy Report dated 1/29/23 suggests the current model is sufficient, it's essential to regularly review and update enrollment projections to ensure accuracy and responsiveness to changing demographics. Incorporating feedback from stakeholders and utilizing advanced data analytics can enhance the reliability of enrollment projections and inform decision-making.

When enrollment ends up significantly higher than projected estimates, swift action is necessary to mitigate the impact on affected schools. This may involve implementing temporary measures such as portable classrooms, adjusting attendance boundaries, or exploring alternative school scheduling options. Additionally, long-term solutions such as expanding existing facilities or constructing new ones where enrollment is persistently high be warranted to accommodate growing student populations.

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 short answer to whether we should adjust our Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) concerning school capacity in Howard County is, "it's complicated." Generally, a blanket change to the APFO isn't advisable without careful consideration of the broader implications. The core of the issue lies in achieving a delicate balance to ensure that our planning processes are robust enough to support growth sustainably. This balancing act is crucial because while growth brings in revenue that can benefit the county and, by extension, fund our schools, it also puts pressure on our school infrastructure in terms of capacity and resource allocation. Furthermore, the revenue historically has been insufficient to support the growth experienced in our county.

To navigate this complexity, there needs to be an ongoing, collaborative conversation between the County Council, the Board of Education (BoE), the County Executive, and the State Delegation. It's essential that the school board is keenly aware of planned growth initiatives in the county, as these directly impact school infrastructure. In addition, it's important to actively seek input from the community.

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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.

Positions Taken and Advocacy Efforts:

While I haven't formally testified or held official positions within the HCPSS board, I have been deeply involved in advocating for my children's educational needs. In one instance I championed my child's cause involved a situation where I questioned my perception as a parent when my child's teacher suggested he was remedial and disengaged during reading sessions. This prompted me to take proactive measures to address the issue. I initiated a comprehensive evaluation to rule out conditions like ADD or ADHD, despite facing challenges such as navigating insurance coverage and taking time off work for appointments.

Regrets and Reflection:

Reflecting on my advocacy efforts, I acknowledge that while necessary for my child's well-being, not all parents have the resources, time, or knowledge to undertake similar actions. This realization has led me to recognize the systemic disparities that exist within our educational system. It's regrettable that the process of rectifying an inaccurate assessment required significant time, resources, and energy, resources that not all parents are privileged to possess. There needs to be a better process in place that doesn't require parents to navigate or maneuver to ensure their child receives accurate academic assessments and necessary support.

Commitment to Fairness:

Moving forward, I am committed to advocating for policies and initiatives that address these systemic issues within the HCPSS. I believe that every child deserves an equal opportunity to succeed, and it is imperative that our educational system ensures accessibility and fairness for all students, without placing undue burdens on parents. I am dedicated to promoting fairness and accessibility within the system, ensuring that every child receives the support they need to thrive academically.

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

Ensuring the safety and well-being of our students is a top priority at HCPSS. We are committed to fostering a safe and supportive learning environment where every student can thrive. In addressing altercations within our schools, we recognize the importance of both leveraging existing policies and implementing new initiatives to meet the evolving needs of our students and community.

Preventive Measures:

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Leveraging the existing comprehensive anti-bullying and conflict resolution programs, we continuously evaluate and update them to ensure their effectiveness and relevance, incorporating feedback from students, parents, and staff.

Response Protocols:

Continuing with clear and consistent protocols for addressing altercations, we enhance training for staff on implementing restorative justice practices, providing them with the skills and resources needed to facilitate meaningful dialogue and resolution between students involved.

Staffing Changes:

Building on our current staffing policy of employing counselors, social workers, and mental health professionals to provide support, we consider increasing the number of mental health professionals to meet the growing demand for support services, particularly in schools with higher rates of altercations or student behavioral issues.

Community Involvement:

Continuing our active engagement with parents, guardians, and community members, we strengthen partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, mental health providers, and community organizations to enhance support services and interventions for students involved in altercations, ensuring a coordinated and holistic approach to addressing their needs.

Legal and Disciplinary Action:

In cases where a student harms a teacher or vice versa, appropriate legal and disciplinary actions are taken in accordance with HCPSS policies and procedures. This may involve collaboration with law enforcement authorities and adherence to due process to ensure accountability and justice.

Through a combination of leveraging existing policies and implementing new initiatives, we aim to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where all students can succeed academically and personally.

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.

It's imperative that HCPSS takes proactive measures to address issues faced by marginalized groups and create a safe and inclusive environment for **all** students. It's not the policies that are problematic, it's the implementation of them. As a member of a marginalized group, I share the concerns of many in my community regarding the rise of antisemitism in schools and the need for more consistent and effective enforcement of existing policies.

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Regarding the achievement gaps, the focus should not solely be on reducing the gap but rather on helping every student reach their fullest potential. This involves identifying proven strategies and programs that have been effective in supporting student achievement.

Rather than implementing sweeping county wide changes I suggest piloting programs and initiatives and iterating them until you can be confident they achieve the goal. By leveraging better tools and resources, we can tap into the gold mine of talent that exists within our student population and ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed academically and personally.

In summary, while policy changes may not be necessary, it's crucial that HCPSS prioritizes the consistent and effective enforcement of existing policies, addresses issues of discrimination of any kind, and focuses on supporting the holistic development of every student to reach their fullest potential.

10. What criteria should be prioritized in redistricting?

In redistricting, several criteria should be prioritized to ensure a fair and effective process. Here are key considerations:

Balancing School Capacity and Enrollment:

Redistricting should consider the capacity of schools and balance student enrollment across schools to prevent overcrowding or underutilization of resources. This may involve adjusting school boundaries to redistribute students more evenly based on projected enrollment trends and available facilities.

Preserving Title I Status for Schools:

Title I status is crucial for schools to qualify for federal and state funding aimed at reducing class sizes and providing extra support resources for students from low-income families. Redistricting should aim to preserve Title I status for schools serving economically disadvantaged communities to ensure that they continue to receive the necessary funding and resources to support student success.

Minimizing Distance Traveled for Bused Students:

Redistricting should aim to minimize the distance that students, particularly those who rely on school bus transportation, need to travel to reach their assigned schools. This helps reduce transportation costs and ensures that students spend less time commuting, allowing for more time for learning and extracurricular activities.

Minimizing Disruption to Students and Families:

Redistricting can be a disruptive process for students and families, so efforts should be made to minimize disruption as much as possible.

Preserving Neighborhood Cohesion:

Keeping neighborhoods together, to the extent practical, helps maintain community cohesion and stability. Students are more likely to feel connected to their school and have a sense of belonging when they attend school with peers from their local area. Additionally, preserving neighborhood cohesion can foster stronger relationships between schools and their surrounding communities.

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By prioritizing these criteria in the redistricting process, school districts can strive to create balanced, equitable, and supportive learning environments that meet the needs of all students and communities.

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?

Addressing the gap between increased special education funding and the stagnation or lack of improvement in student outcomes requires a multifaceted approach, focusing on legal compliance, effective utilization of resources, and innovative strategies tailored to meet individual student needs. The evolution in the nature of special needs, with more complex conditions being identified and addressed, as highlighted in the "2023 DEI/SES Census Publication" from the Maryland State Department of Education, necessitates re-evaluating how funds are allocated and services are delivered to ensure they effectively meet these changing needs. Here are steps to ensure legal requirements for students with disabilities are met while aiming for positive outcomes, supported by insights from the document:

Strategic Utilization of Resources

Given budget constraints, it's crucial to prioritize the strategic allocation of special education funding to areas with the highest impact on student outcomes. This might involve reallocating resources based on

data-driven assessments of program effectiveness, ensuring that funds are directed toward interventions and supports that offer the most significant benefit to students.

Addressing the Shortage of Special Education Teachers

The shortage of qualified special education teachers is a pressing challenge that directly affects the quality of education and support provided to students with disabilities. Strategies to address this issue include:

Grow-Your-Own Programs: Develop initiatives in partnership with local colleges and universities, such as Howard Community College, to encourage education majors to specialize in special education. Offering tuition reimbursement, scholarships, or guaranteed job placement upon graduation could incentivize more candidates to enter the field.

Credit and Experience Exchange: Establish partnerships with nursing programs and other relevant departments to provide practical experience and course credit for students who work as paraprofessionals or support staff in special education settings. This approach could attract a pipeline of future educators and support personnel from related fields.

Innovative Staffing Models

Team Teaching and Co-Teaching: Continue to implement and expand team teaching or co-teaching models where general education teachers collaborate with special education teachers or specialists. This can enhance instructional support within inclusive classrooms, maximizing the expertise of available staff.

Utilizing Paraprofessionals and Assistants: Train paraprofessionals and teaching assistants to provide targeted support under the supervision of certified special education teachers. This can help address immediate staffing needs while maintaining quality support for students.

Leveraging Technology and Online Resources

Assistive Technology: Invest in assistive technologies that can help students access the curriculum more effectively. This includes software and devices designed to support learning disabilities, communication disorders, and physical impairments.

Online Learning Platforms: Utilize online platforms and resources to supplement instruction, especially in areas where there may be a lack of specialized staff. This can include adaptive learning software that personalizes instruction based on student needs.

Community and Interagency Partnerships

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Work with higher education institutions and professional organizations to provide ongoing professional development for special education staff. This can include workshops, certification programs, and collaborative research projects focused on innovative practices in special education.

Facing budget constraints and staffing shortages requires creativity, collaboration, and a commitment to finding solutions that leverage community resources and technology to meet the needs of students with disabilities. By adopting these strategies, schools and districts can navigate these challenges and work toward ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

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.

Based on the detailed analysis and findings in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Transportation Action Report for the 2023-24 school year, here are the essential research, contract accountability, and financial data requirements before supporting a procurement contract, along with recommendations to avoid service failures like those experienced with the bus system recently:

General Guidelines for Vendor Selection

1. **Vendor Performance Evaluation:** Evaluate vendors' past performance, focusing on reliability, schedule adherence, and challenge management capabilities.
2. **Financial Stability Review:** Assess the financial health of vendors to ensure they can maintain quality services over the contract term.
3. **Staffing and Training Adequacy:** Examine vendors' staffing strategies, recruitment, retention, and especially their training programs related to safety and regulatory compliance.
4. **Technology and Integration Capabilities:** Investigate vendors' technological capabilities for service delivery efficiency, including routing and tracking, and their ability to integrate with existing systems.
5. **Regulatory Compliance:** Confirm that vendors comply with all relevant legal and regulatory standards, including safety and employment laws.

Specific Contract Requirements

1. **Clear Service Levels and Penalties:** Define explicit service levels, expectations, and penalties for non-compliance within the contract to ensure accountability.
2. **Performance Monitoring and Feedback:** Establish continuous performance monitoring mechanisms and feedback loops to ensure contract compliance and facilitate improvements.

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3. **Comprehensive Communication Plan:** Detail communication strategies in the contract for ensuring transparency and timely updates between the vendor, the organization, and stakeholders.
4. **Contractual Flexibility:** Ensure the contract provisions allow for adjustments in scheduling, routing, or service changes to accommodate unforeseen circumstances.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement Provisions:** Include requirements for regular stakeholder engagement in the contract to ensure the service aligns with organizational needs and expectations.

Additional Recommendations for Successful Vendor Implementation

- **Detailed Implementation Plan Requirement:** Mandate a comprehensive plan from vendors outlining transition strategies, integration with existing operations, and timelines for achieving full service capacity.
- **Establishment of a Go-No Go Date:** Set a definitive date by which all vendor prerequisites must be fulfilled for contract to be approved by the Board.
- **Emergency and Contingency Planning:** Demand that vendors provide detailed plans for managing emergencies and contingencies, ensuring minimal disruption to service delivery.

These guidelines and requirements aim to streamline the vendor selection process and ensure that the contracts are comprehensive, enforceable, and equipped to manage the intricacies of service delivery effectively.

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