

The People's



Ethics Ballot™

By authority

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 CommonQ 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)

Kirsten Coombs/District 4

Compensated – None

Non-Compensated – Becki Vivrette, Luke Coombs

Cash on Hand – \$11,069.06; Donations Rec'd since past report - \$175

Expenditures - \$1,023 – Yard Signs; \$500 – Voter List; \$501.91 – T-shirts; Website - \$255; Facebook - \$20; Literature - \$373; Office Supplies - \$32

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

Wilde Lake PTSA



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)

There are several key challenges facing our school system that I will continue fighting for: managing chronic overcrowding, fully funding our education budget with fiscal responsibility, and providing enhanced classroom supports to our educators and staff. At the heart of each of these issues is ensuring local control for our school system and advocating to our local and state officials. As Chair of the legislative committee, I have a strong track record of compromise and collaboration, but without exception, I am unwilling to bow to partisan and special interest influence in education. My voting record across multiple issues demonstrates that I vote independently according to what I believe is best for our students and school system. For example, I tried to work with our state delegation on the Redistricting Reporting bill HoCo 1-20 to understand its goals, communicate my concerns about its infringement on local control, and identify compromises. While I ultimately could not support the bill, the conversations I had with delegation members were productive and enhanced collaboration and working relationships. For us to heal as a community and move forward effectively, the next Board will need to lead through unity, not divisiveness, and I believe I bring this unique quality to my Board service.

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)

Under the previous administration, I had significant concerns about accountability and transparency and pushed hard to improve these areas by asking questions and enhancing public access to information. For example, I successfully advocated for movement of our MPIA process to a public, searchable database to enhance transparency, which is a major asset to our community. Another example was my push for accountability regarding the Teachers for America program. The Board had many questions about funding for this program and the processes that the previous superintendent used to implement it. Through detailed questioning in the face of significant administrative resistance, the Board determined that the MOU for the program had not been publicly voted on and had placed HCPSS in a precarious legal position. Ultimately, we met with the McDaniel College Administrators and decided to end the partnership with as little financial risk as possible for HCPSS. The HCPSS community had been told that the program was implemented to increase hiring of minority educators, and we publicized the fact this was not true. Although we still supported students enrolled in the program, we asked that the Budget reflect its actual costs in a stand-alone department rather than being buried in another unrelated area. This is just one of many examples during my term.



of The People's Voice,

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).

My legacy is one of change that made demonstrable impacts on the educators, students, and community of Howard County. Under tremendous pressure, the Board members elected in 2016 were instrumental in ushering in a new administration for HCPSS, following years of community concerns about transparency, accountability, and fiscal mismanagement. Although we still have more to accomplish and improve, the changes in morale among our educators and staff since the change in administration cannot be overstated. Three years ago, I do not believe we would have witnessed the bravery of special educators coming to testify before the Board, vulnerably sharing their stories and imploring us to do something to help. They shared emotional, authentic accounts of their daily struggles, needs, and experiences with us. This had a tremendous impact on me, and I voted to fully fund our special education request to the County Executive, again, under pressure and scrutiny from my colleagues. I requested follow-up visits to special education classrooms in my cluster schools, and I continued to be impressed by our educators' bravery and willingness to share their truths with me. I know this also means we have a lot more work to do to improve our education system, but I am proud of my contribution to changing the landscape of our school system for the betterment of our entire community.