

### ETHICS BALLOT QUESTIONNAIRE

#### County Council Primary 2026

Name/District: Kevin Chin

District 1 County Council

Campaign Address/Phone/Email

[Kevin@KevinChinforHowardCounty.com](mailto:Kevin@KevinChinforHowardCounty.com)

410-870-9383

#### Educational History

University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Miami, FL  
Doctor of Medicine, (2014)

University of Maryland, College Park, College Park, MD  
Bachelor of Science, Neurobiology and Physiology (2009)

Bachelor of Science, Psychology (2009)

#### Languages Spoken/Other Skills/Relevant Experience

- Board Certified in Emergency Medicine
- Assistant Professor of Clinical Emergency Medicine Georgetown University
- Board Member of Patapsco Heritage Greenway
- Steering Committee Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition

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- Operation Budget Review Committee for Howard County Public School System
- PlanHoward Academy graduate

1. Why are you running for this office? Non-Incumbents, please describe how your campaign is viable.

I became a doctor to make the world a better place. I'm running for county council because I want to do that on a bigger level. As an ER doctor, I work as the social safety net of society. I want to help solve the root causes of why someone ends up under my care. I believe that change can happen on a governmental level.

My family moved to Howard County for the schools. Unfortunately, there have been cuts to programs and teachers laid off because we don't have the necessary funds. Before I know it, my son will be entering the public school system, and I want to ensure he and his peers continue to benefit from our world-class schools.

Beyond schools, I'm focused on three other key priorities: public safety, environmental preservation, and housing affordability. Maryland is ranked 43rd in the nation in housing affordability. Over half of our teachers live outside the county. Our teachers, our police, our first responders, and our other essential workers should be able to live where they work. We are Democrats, we believe in inclusion. But we cannot be an inclusive community if we are an unaffordable one.

**Campaign Viability:** I am one of the hardest working people you will meet. I have already knocked on over 4,000 doors and personally spoken to over 1000 voters. I have qualified for and received certification for public financing from the Board of Elections. I am endorsed by the educators' union, Howard County Education Association (HCEA). I am also endorsed by State Senator Clarence Lam, State Delegate Chao Wu, and Howard County Register of Wills Byron MacFarlane.

2. Non-Incumbents: What qualifications do you uniquely bring to hold this office? What experience do you have with the County Council? Have you ever testified before the County Council? What positions did you take?

As an ER doctor, I bring a solutions-focused, outcome-oriented approach. In the ER, we're known as the jack of all trades. We need to know a little bit of everything, and that translates directly to the county council. You cannot be an expert in every issue, but you need to know enough about every field to make the best decisions for the county and the district.

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I think very scientifically and objectively. I've read countless research papers both in the medical field and in public policy and economic fields. I've performed research and have a couple of papers published as well. I think having that scientific literacy is extremely important to being a good council member.

### County Experience:

- **Operating Budget Review Committee (OBRC):** Last year I served on the OBRC for Howard County Public Schools.
- **Board Member, Patapsco Heritage Greenway:** I've helped clean and monitor our waterways and am dedicated to preserving our history in Old Ellicott City.
- **Steering Committee, Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition:** I've done the work advocating for affordable housing policies.

County Council Testimony: I have testified in support of Councilmember's Walsh bill banning hourly room rentals in the county and was actually featured on CBS Baltimore for that testimony. I testified before the County Council regarding the general plan HoCoByDesign. I spoke about the need for a politics of abundance versus the politics of scarcity. I argued that it is in the county's best interest to grow our tax base by welcoming new residents. We are a nation and a county of immigrants with 21% of our county having been born outside the United States.

Change is going to happen one way or another to this county, and there's one of two routes to follow. We are either going to try to crystallize ourselves in amber and cling to the way things used to be which will make housing more and more expensive and less inclusive or we can respond to this affordability crisis by building a community where as Jim Rouse said "a CEO and a janitor can live in the same neighborhood."

### 3. Are you using the Citizens Election Fund (CEF)? Why or why not?

Yes, I am using public financing through the Citizens Election Fund. I have met the qualifications and received certification by the Board of Elections and have already gotten disbursements of funds from the CEF.

I am only accepting small dollar donations from individuals and none from corporations or PACs. I believe in the power of individuals over special interest groups. Public financing allows me to be accountable to constituents, not corporate interests.

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As I said in a newsletter to my mailing list:

“Government is about creating systems whereby the greatest good for the greatest number of people can be achieved. The systems we create either incentivize or disincentive good or bad behavior.

Under typical campaign laws, a candidate is trying to get the big financial whale, the person writing the \$6,000 check. It doesn't matter if they live in Howard County, Maryland, or any other state in the union. This system creates bad incentives. It means the candidate is spending their precious time not talking to Howard County residents, but instead talking to some Democratic megadonor maybe in California who couldn't place Howard County on a map, all because that person might write that fat check.

I do not think someone is corrupt if they don't do public financing. However, systems of governance matter. The behaviors we promote or disincentivize matter. Everyday working in the ER, I see where the systems break down. I'm running for county council because I'm trying to do my part to fix those systems”

4. If you are elected, what are your top priorities for 2026? Discuss at least three areas in need of change, under the purview of the County Council, and how you would address them.

First, addressing our school infrastructure crisis. We have a \$1 billion deficit in school infrastructure repairs. We had a huge buildout of schools in the '80s and '90s, but many are nearing their life expectancy. By expanding our tax base through smart growth, we can generate the revenue needed to address deferred maintenance without raising tax rates. I reviewed the county budget myself and created a spreadsheet showing that our funding to schools has been decreasing percentage-wise. I am fully in support of committing our Education budget to what we historically funded it at. As President Biden said, "Don't tell me what you value, show me your budget and I'll tell you what you value."

Second, expanding housing affordability and diversity. We are a high opportunity area and we should be a welcoming community to people of all income levels. As our Comptroller Brooke Lierman wrote in her Housing and the Economy Report released in October 2025, we have a shortage of homes about 100,000. This has led to only 50% of Marylanders able to afford the median priced home. In the early 2000s that number was 75%. I'll work to create more housing options. This includes supporting HoCoByDesign's Activity Centers approach for more different types of housing for people at all stages of life.

Third, enhancing public safety through community-oriented approaches. While we are blessed to be in a safe, low-crime community, there has been an increase in crime since COVID, especially in vulnerable communities along Route 1. I spoke with both Rich Gibson our State's Attorney and Marcus Harris our County Sheriff about tackling root causes of crime. We should be expanding Community Oriented Policing (COP) programs that get police officers out of cruisers and into community meetings, building personal relationships with residents.

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Safety isn't just about policing, it's about creating communities where people can walk safely to schools, parks, and local businesses. I'll champion investments in sidewalks and bicycle paths that make our neighborhoods more connected, reduce our carbon footprint, and improve safety for all residents. In fact, one of my first acts of local activism was writing to DPW advocating for a sidewalk to safely connect my neighborhood to Centennial Park.

5. What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the current County Council? How have you demonstrated your ability to work with people who have diverse positions?

I currently have cordial working relationships with nearly all members of the state delegation, county council, board of education, and many members of HCPSS. In the ER, I'm used to dealing with uncomfortable conversations with upset patients or family members who've been in the waiting room for hours or consults with specialists at 2am asking them to come in to take care of a patient. I am the type of leader who can have conversations with all types of people of all different backgrounds. I'm a firm believer in the ability to reach compromise face to face. Particularly in one on one conversations, it's hard to hate up close. We all have different values, and politics is how we express those values.

There's an impulse by many which I find very troublesome: that people are not worth arguing against because they are so far gone. Instead of making the argument, they try to dismiss them. I believe we need to actually engage with arguments and fight on the moral ground. If we refuse to engage and fight back on a debating level, I think we all lose.

6. What are your funding priorities for the County? What changes do you believe should be made compared to past budget decisions?

Howard County Public Schools historically received approximately 57% of county revenues after the 2008 recession, but in FY2026 that proportion dropped to 49%. I am fully in support of restoring the proportion of county revenues dedicated to schools to their pre-pandemic levels. We need more funding to our schools, and the fact that school funding has been decreasing percentage-wise reflects a lack of commitment to education. I also believe we need to prioritize county dollars on projects that release matching state or federal dollars to maximize our investment.

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The County is required to have a balanced budget, money in (county revenue) minus money out (county expenditures). I believe in a politics of abundance. A growing, prosperous economy means robust revenue, which is primarily income tax and property tax. When I've door knocked in District 1, especially in less affluent areas, one of the biggest concerns I hear about is the high tax burden. We need to grow our economic pie instead of simply redistributing the present. A growing and thriving local economy is a boon to our county budget, and the greatest benefactor is our school system.

7. Do you feel the amount of planned residential growth in the County should be increased or decreased? Include details, such as, overall versus regional goals. Explain your reasons for your positions, and include any changes you believe should occur to APFO. Be sure to include your opinions about the major areas of recommendations by the 2025 APFO Review Committee.

### **Residential growth should be increased strategically.**

I support HoCoByDesign, the general plan that gathered thousands of hours and months of committees and testimony from Howard Countians. As the Spending Affordability Advisory Committee said in their report, if we implement what we all as a county decided along with a 5-0 vote by the county council at the time, we can ensure strong economic growth. I want to promote growth in designated areas outlined in the general plan, called Activity Centers. This includes areas along US 40 as well as aging village centers with empty storefronts. Many areas in Howard County, particularly Columbia, are in desperate need of revitalization.

### **Smart Growth and School Capacity**

I think it's a false dichotomy to pit housing and schools against one another. The wellbeing of our schools is dependent on housing and vice versa. Over half of our teachers live outside of the county due to the high cost of

housing. When we build housing, we are building housing for our first responders, our police, and importantly our educators.

Almost 90% of our county's revenue comes from property tax and income tax, and the biggest expenditure in the county budget is on educating students. We know from the "Pupil Yield Analysis" that apartments generate significantly fewer students (.305) than Single Family Homes (.539). High rise apartments produce even less

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(.175 students/unit). Buildings such as The Metropolitan (.010 students/unit) which is predominantly studio and 1BR apartments (62%) generate substantial revenue with minimal school impact.

Healthy economic growth and increased attainable housing go hand in hand as long as we are smart about the type of housing that we are building and where we are building it.

### APFO Changes

APFO should not be used as a blanket tool to stop all home building. Instead, it should be a mechanism to ensure adequate public facilities while we strategically grow our tax base to fund the very facilities APFO seeks to protect. We need to align APFO with HoCoByDesign's Activity Centers approach. APFO was started in the early 1990s when we had constant increasing growth of students. This continued until the covid pandemic. Since then the student population has been essentially flat and some years decreasing. APFO is a tool to slow housing growth such that we can have time to build out enough infrastructure, specifically schools and roads. It is not meant as a tool to stop home growth all together. Currently, homebuilding is at a fraction (about 20% the level) it was in the 1990s. We as a county need to recognize that we are not in the same era of rapidly increasing student population anymore. We are also in an era of worsening housing affordability that prevents young people of my generation from taking part in the American Dream and building the lives and the families they desire.

8. What is your position on locations for new multiplexes and/or ADU's? Include issues of owner occupancy and by right versus conditional use.

I support the recommendations we all as a county agreed upon in the general plan HoCoByDesign. Growth should be concentrated in Activity Centers such as in Downtown Columbia, aging village centers, certain segments of Route 1 and Route 40. ADUs should be able to be built by right in any residential area so long as the ADU does not violate any current environmental, flood mitigation, or bulk/height laws. I've doorknocked over 4000 doors in the district. I've encountered quite a few ADUs, both attached and detached. The majority of these are grandfathered in from a prior era of modern zoning and land use. I think they add and do not subtract from neighborhood character. There's a lot of fear that the community will be overrun by ADUs but the truth is no one is forcing anybody to build an ADU on your property. This simply allows property owners the freedom to do so if they want to and expands people's options for their family or expands their financial options if they need/want support in the home or with paying the bills.

We know from nearby Montgomery County which passed an ADU law that relatively few ADUs end up getting built less than a 100 a year. Furthermore, ADUs are built by small time contractors and homebuilders, there is little financial incentive for corporate landlords to take hold given each property is unique and subject to the current property owners desire for one.

### **ADUs should be allowed by right throughout residential areas.**

We as a county and a country have come a long way to end racially exclusionary housing. Today, anybody of any race can buy in any neighborhood they wish. However, we have substituted exclusionary laws by race with exclusionary laws by class with our zoning. ADUs are a small step in the right direction in desegregating areas of poverty and areas of wealth.

Missing middle includes housing such as duplexes, quadplexes, cottage courtyards, or stacked townhomes. These types of housing are intrinsically cheaper than single family homes because they use less land and are smaller in size. In line with our county's general plan, these different and cheaper forms of housing should be centered in Activity Centers.

### **By Right vs. Conditional Use**

Making these housing types conditional use rather than by right creates significant barriers and uncertainty that increases costs and delays. The county's conditional use process is lengthy, expensive, and subject to the whims of neighbors. This effectively maintains exclusionary zoning under a different name.

ADUs should be allowed by right in residential areas, with reasonable design standards to ensure they fit the character of neighborhoods. This is what "legalizing housing" means. Making it legal to build the diverse housing types that were common in our not so recent past.

### **Owner Occupancy**

I'm open to owner occupancy requirements for ADUs as a compromise to address neighbor concerns.. About 20% of our county are renters, and they are no less important to the fabric of our county than homeowners. For multiplexes, owner occupancy requirements don't make practical sense and would be counterproductive.

9. How do you think the County can best increase the supply of more affordable housing units?

### **The County can increase affordable housing supply through multiple strategies:**

#### **1. End Exclusionary Zoning and Legalize Missing Middle Housing**

As I testified before the County Council, exclusionary zoning is the fundamental policy choice creating unaffordable housing. We need to legalize missing middle housing duplexes, quadplexes, cottage courtyards,



stacked townhomes at least in accordance with our general plan HoCoByDesign. These housing types are intrinsically cheaper than single family homes because they use less land and are smaller in size.

Jim Rouse hoped to build a community where "a CEO and a janitor could live in the same neighborhood" and he did, but as the Baltimore-Washington area has become more in demand, prices have risen because we have refused to end our exclusionary zoned neighborhoods and allow more affordable types of housing to be built.

## **2. Reduce Regulatory Barriers**

We have onerous regulations that are not based on data. One example is the capricious and arbitrary parking mandates. Businesses and the banks lending them money know how much parking they do or do not need. The county's mandates restrict needed flexibility and worsen our environment with increased impervious surfaces. Baltimore City recently passed a law ending these mandates and Governor Moore is supporting legislation allowing for housing without government mandated parking in certain zones.

We need consistent, predictable, and reasonable regulations that balance being supportive of housing development with other interests. There needs to be a balance, but we need to be more obsessed about outcomes, creating affordable housing, as opposed to process and procedure.

## **3. Strategic Growth in Activity Centers**

Support HoCoByDesign's approach of concentrating growth in Activity Centers along US 40, aging village centers with empty storefronts, and downtown Columbia. Our Class B and Class C commercial real estate has

high vacancy rates around 50%. Some of this land needs flexibility to be switched to mixed-use property including residential.

## **4. Support Diverse Housing Types**

High rise apartments, especially studio and 1BR units, generate substantial tax revenue (.010 students/unit at The Metropolitan) with minimal school impact. We should encourage these where appropriate, along with other housing types that serve different needs; seniors downsizing, young professionals, teachers and first responders.

## **5. Innovative Programs**

Miller's Court in Baltimore is housing dedicated to teachers. It's an innovative way to attract and retain teachers while ensuring affordable housing. We should explore similar public-private partnerships.

## **6. Support Housing Opportunities Trust Fund**

I'm on the steering committee of the Housing Affordability Coalition. For years we have been pushing for regular funding of the Housing Opportunity Trust Funds, something our neighboring Montgomery County has.

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This fund allows for needed flexibility for affordable housing builders, like Enterprise, to access to fill the funding gap left over from federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

10. What positions do you hold regarding the current levels of low and moderate income housing in the County? What changes to specific policies, that the Council can control, would you sponsor or support to implement your positions?

We have insufficient low and moderate income housing, and this is a moral and economic crisis. There's a really stark statistic: there is a 10-year life expectancy gap between a young African American child born in Baltimore City versus born and raised in Howard County. This is an equity issue about where people have the chance to move up the economic ladder, where the high-opportunity areas are, and whether we decide to pull up the ladder behind ourselves and make ourselves an unwelcoming community.

There is not enough housing for people making 80% Area Median Income (MIHU). There is not enough housing for people making 60% Area Median Income either (LIHU). Our area median income is about 140k for a family of four. Someone can qualify for MIHU if they make over 100k. That is a market failure. For people on the lowest income ladder there will need to be subsidies or income restricted homes, but for someone making over 6 figures it is unconscionable that we as a county and a state have made it so expensive and restrictive to build homes at these income levels. Comptroller Brooke Lierman in her *Housing and the Economy* report stated that in the early 2000s 75% of Marylanders could afford the median priced home. Today that number is about 50%.

### **Zoning Changes for Affordability**

The fundamental issue is exclusionary zoning. We put up signs saying "love is love, no human is illegal, healthcare is a human right," but in the very same breath with our laws, we say you can't be a part of the neighborhood because you can't afford a million dollar home here.

Legalizing missing middle housing at least in Activity Centers would create naturally occurring affordable housing, smaller homes on less land that are intrinsically more affordable. This is not about high-density development everywhere, but about allowing housing diversity that fits the needs of all generations.

For LIHU, there needs to be a diversity of funding such as through the Housing Opportunities Trust Fund. Talking to homebuilders at Enterprise, the successor to Jim Rouse, zoning issues on where they can build is a road block as well. Talking to faith leaders, there is work on faith based housing, allowing religious institutions to become affordable housing providers on their property as well.

We cannot be an inclusive county if we're an unaffordable one.

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

I support County-funded housing trusts. Fund usage should be both public and private. The more funds there are the better to ensure we have housing for all income levels.

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

From an environmental perspective, solar energy is critical to addressing climate change. I'm an active member of Citizens Climate Lobby and have lobbied for green energy initiatives. We need an all of the above strategy regarding green energy. No one is forcing owners of agricultural land to place solar panels, but if they want to do their part in combatting climate change, I support it. Farmers have spent generations harvesting the sun's electrons to grow crops (crops like corn of which 50% is used to make ethanol for gasoline). Now, they're harvesting electrons to power our homes, our schools, and our electric cars.

I think it would have to be a case by case basis regarding large-scale commercial operations on preserved agricultural land.

13. What is your position on using PayGo funds for deferred HCPSS maintenance? What percentage would you choose to use for that purpose this year? Are there other budget areas you would prefer to see that money fund, or be added to the priority list?

I strongly support using PayGo funds for deferred HCPSS maintenance. We have a \$1 billion capital budget funding deficit for schools. One of my good friends had to leave Wilde Lake High School because the mold

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problem was so bad and she has severe asthma. I can tell you as an ER doctor that can be an emergency and life-threatening. We had a huge buildout of schools in the '80s and '90s, but many are nearing their life expectancy. We need to be making these repairs.

Talking with parents and educators, there is a need to find permanent fixes for our aging school infrastructure. Talk to any PTA group in Howard County and you will see how they're advocating for needed repairs for each of their schools.

Yes, we need to spend more money on our schools. We are also entering unprecedented times with significant uncertainty in the federal government. Our state and county are particularly exposed to the capriciousness of the current federal administration, so we need to maintain fiscal security to keep all county services stable. We rightfully earned the AAA bond rating because of our robust reserves.

I would consider using a significant portion of PayGo reserves for school capital funding, potentially 50%, in consultation with county financial experts. However, a complete depletion of reserves could lead to loss of our AAA bond rating, leading to increased cost of borrowing and higher interest payments which would hurt all aspects of county finances including our school system.

14. What is your position on the Engineering News Record cap on the Council's ability to increase building excise taxes and moderate income housing unit fee-in-lieu rates?

I support increasing the dollar cap to allow the Council greater flexibility in raising revenue. The cap could also be indexed with inflation reflecting rising construction costs.

We need more affordable housing. Building excise taxes and fee-in-lieu payments can be ways to pay for the infrastructure improvements and housing needs.

That said, we need to be thoughtful. Fees that are too high can discourage needed growth entirely, which worsens our housing shortage and hurts our tax base. The fees should be high enough to meaningfully contribute to infrastructure and affordable housing but low enough to not make development infeasible. They should also be predictable, so homebuilders and commercial real estate can plan accordingly.

15. Do you believe that County volunteer boards should have legal/regulatory training? What is your opinion of the current procedures of the Board of Appeals?

County volunteer boards should have appropriate training for their roles. For boards making quasi-judicial decisions or interpreting complex regulations like the Board of Appeals, Planning Board, or Historic Preservation Commission, members should receive legal and regulatory training. This ensures consistent, fair application of rules, understanding of due process and legal standards, ability to make decisions that can withstand legal challenge, and protection of both applicants' and residents' rights.

Board of Appeals are community members who have sacrificed a significant portion of their time for very little compensation (\$4,500 a year). Yes they should have appropriate training and once appointed, they should have independence to be able to make decisions based on their interpretation of the law. We need consistent, predictable, and reasonable regulations and processes. Residents are frustrated when they see some businesses go through loopholes or get exceptions not given to others. BOA should also be transparent. Decisions should be well-reasoned, documented, and based on clear standards. This protects everyone applicants, neighbors, and the county from arbitrary decisions