

Questions from PATH

Answers Submitted by Deb Jung

a. Do you support the development of affordable housing in Downtown Columbia and throughout Howard County? If so, how would you ensure the current, already approved plan for the renovation of Downtown Columbia (including the addition of 150 units of affordable housing in the Banneker Fire Station and the Central Library renovation projects) remains on track to be completed within the current timeline?

I support affordable housing in Downtown Columbia and throughout Howard County but have been concerned that current efforts in the downtown core will result in an overconcentration of poverty in five schools – which could have negative educational and socio-economic impacts for those students. Affordable housing efforts need to be addressed Countywide and should include a focus on entry-level homeownership and developing intergenerational wealth. A supplemental rental assistance program should also be considered. Progress on the Banneker Fire Station and the Central Library is dependent on additional funding and bonding capacity. As of a few weeks ago, the County Executive still had not entered into a contract for the NCC. During budget deliberations, the Council learned about skyrocketing construction costs for the NCC, including an additional \$15 Million for the housing component and \$6 million for Toby's Dinner Theatre. We were also advised by an independent consultant that additional tax increment financing is not currently available to support these projects on their original timeline.

b. In previous forums, you have publicly stated your support for protecting the Liberty Act. Can you describe what specific steps you will take to guarantee the rights and protections of immigrant families in the County if the voters do not uphold the Act?

I voted to support the Liberty Act, which codified operating procedures of County agencies and law enforcements' interactions with the immigrant communities. Prior to the Liberty Act, the County's law enforcement officers followed procedures enacted under County Executive Kittleman and continued under County Executive Ball. During Council deliberations on the Liberty Act, the County agencies informed the Council that many of the components of the bill were already in practice. If the voters do not support the Liberty Act, it is critical that immigrant families trust law enforcement and other governmental agencies and not be fearful that interactions will affect their immigration status. I would hope that the next

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County Executive would re-issue the immigrant-friendly procedures to the departments that he oversees.

c. What specific steps do you plan to advance health equity throughout the county and decrease inequities in access to things like healthy food, public transportation, and affordable health care? Are you in support of expanding the SNAP program among other farmer's markets in addition to the one that exists?

I have voted for every proposed appropriation to support health equity, including in the areas of mental health, maternal health, supplemental health services during the pandemic, and hospital facilities. The Howard County Council cannot add to the budget or even move money around between County departments to reflect its priorities.

With respect to public transportation, many riders are underappreciated "essential workers". When making major service changes, the RTA should consider disparate impacts or disproportionate burdens on minorities and persons with disabilities. I do not know to what extent local legislation is necessary but would support or introduce legislation if it is.

As to SNAP, this program is administered by the State Dept. of Social Services. I would vote to support an additional County appropriation for SNAP usage during the summer at farmers markets to address food insecurity, increase the availability of healthy foods, and benefit local producers.

d. Will you commit to meeting with PATH and attending another action like this if you make it past the primary, and commit to meeting with us quarterly if you become a Councilmember?

Yes, and I will commit to meeting with you quarterly.