



## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

### CITY COUNCIL 4<sup>th</sup> DISTRICT CANDIDATE: BILL HENRY, DEMOCRAT

<http://www.billhenry.com>

Bill Henry City Council, 4th District April 3, 2016

***1. Please articulate your overall vision for how young people will be supported from cradle to career in Baltimore City? What will be the priority strategies within your first four years in implementing this vision?***

During every City campaign, candidates get asked about many of the same issues. Crime. Drugs. Schools. Jobs. Thirty years of studying urban policy both in the classroom and as it's applied on our streets has shown me clearly how they're all interconnected. The middle-aged man with a felony conviction from years ago, who can't get a job, so he hangs on the corner. The tween who got promoted up to middle school, but still can't read and has started to drop out of mainstream society littering and other petty crimes are just the early signs. We've learned the hard way that while more arrests may make us feel like we're addressing the problem, they make a real, long-term solution even harder...and that long term solution starts with our kids.

Frederick Douglass said "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." We need to give our kids a good start, one where they attend school consistently and get a good education in well built, properly maintained schools. They need to be provided with PreK and meaningful, enrichment opportunities both afterschool and during the summer so that they will have a much better chance to finish school and get a job. Kids who grow up and get a job are more likely to be able to afford a house, which creates more demand for renovating our vacants and fills the demand that many of our new tech companies have for a workforce with 21st Century job skills...and it all starts with putting more resources into youth development.

***2. The Mayor and City Council do not currently have oversight authority over Baltimore City Public Schools. Would you advocate changing the current city/state partnership? What changes would you recommend to the overall administration/approach of public education in Baltimore City?***

Our children deserve more funding from both state and local government, to provide our children with the resources they need to learn; they also deserve a central administration which distributes that funding wisely and fairly, actively supporting each school's efforts to educate our children. To achieve these goals, we need a school governance structure that doesn't diffuse accountability, but rather one which connects the ultimate authority for our children's education with the local elected officials who are directly responsible to us, the parents and citizens of Baltimore City. At a minimum, school board members should be vetted by the City Council, including a public confirmation hearing, where council members and members of the public can question potential board nominees, as well as those being renominated. Any group of people responsible for the administration of over a billion dollars of taxpayer money should be individually accountable to the taxpayers.

***3. Eighty percent of a young person's life is spent outside of school, yet just 15% of Baltimore's school aged young people have access to afterschool programs. City leaders from around the country have begun to identify the importance of afterschool and summer programs as a critical support and have invested in citywide systems. Participation in out of school time opportunities boosts academics,***



## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

***attendances, school promotion and completion and it helps connects young people to caring adults. If elected, what would your approach be to addressing opportunities for youth beyond the school day and school year?***

According to the Harvard Family Research Project, afterschool programs are a powerful influence in the lives of young people; they offer safe spaces where youth receive personal attention, find academic support, form friendships, discover their passions, and develop new talents. In many studies, these activities have been shown to increase academic performance; preliminary data from the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC) suggests that local community schools and out of school time programs are effective in reducing chronic absenteeism and suspension rates, and contribute to a more positive and effective learning environment for students. At every opportunity, I have fought to get the City to increase funding for these valuable opportunities and I will continue to fight that fight every year.

***4. In the 70's and 80's Baltimore operated around 130 recreation centers. That decreased by nearly half by the early 90's. Currently, Recreation & Parks operates just 40 recreation centers. There are ongoing questions about the available resources of the Department based on the lack of audits. Some of the recreation centers require major upgrades in both physical plant and programming. While a few new, modern recreation centers and being built, it is clear that many neighborhoods lack quality recreational opportunities. How would you change the trajectory of Recreation and Parks? How will you address the challenges of programming and physical plants?***

A common theme throughout my answers is very simple I support investing more in our kids. Last summer, Recreation & Parks announced a \$136 million capital plan, which would've included eleven fitness and wellness centers at existing or new sites, adding a total of more than 299,000 square feet of new recreation space, spread fairly equally throughout the City. Later in the fall, they rolled out an updated plan, whose total cost of implementation exceeds \$185 million, which also calls for building two new recreation centers, tripling the number of indoor pools from three to nine, and increasing staffing and operating hours at many centers. Both times, they made it clear that the key factor in moving forward would require selling a package of city owned garages. I support selling the garages and I support putting that money to good use by making more and better recreation facilities available to more kids, throughout my district and around the City.

***5. Young people want jobs and they are natural entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, youth unemployment is at an all time high and young people are denied the experiences and skills they need to be prepared to enter the workforce. If elected, what will be your approach to youth employment and entrepreneurship? How will you partner with Higher Education and Industry?***

I've long been a supporter of the Algebra Project model if you pay older kids to help younger kids, you get twice the bang for your buck. A framework already exists, with both higher education and industry, in the form of the Youth Works program, but it needs to be taken seriously by the City and not rely so heavily on the generosity of industry and other private donors. We should commit to the program be fully funded (there should be a slot for every kid you applies), it should be expanded both for more of the summer and to include afterschool jobs during the school year, and a greater effort should be made to include a training component for older participants to prepare them to be coaches, tutors, and supervisors for the younger kids.



## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

***6. The resilient young people of Baltimore City experience trauma every day. They are both witness to and victims of violence. They have very real reasons to feel stressed and afraid. A growing body of research recognizes the importance of understanding and implementing trauma informed care within schools, community services, social services, and law enforcement. What approaches will you take, if elected, to implement trauma informed care and/or restorative practices in the public sectors?***

My understanding is that Baltimore City is already committed to training all frontline workers to be fully trauma informed, starting with those Health Department employees who work at STD clinics, on the Needle Exchange Program vans, at senior centers, and in home visiting programs for pregnant women and children. Under the current Administration, the will is there to spread this throughout the agencies; it will take a lasting commitment by the next Administration to complete this goal. The City Council should be helping to spread awareness of trauma informed care, both in a retail fashion, in our respective communities, as well as promoting citywide conversations, through public hearings and other events.

***7. In 2014, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings Blake, with the support of City Council, established one of the strictest youth curfew laws in the nation and advocated for year round curfew centers. Proponents of the curfew centers thought they were a good strategy to keep kids safe and to connect young people and their families to services. Opponents feared the curfew enforcement would further strain police community relations and disproportionately target young people of color. Questions remain about the actual utilization of the curfew centers and whether or not the "Youth Connection Centers" serve their intended purpose. If you are elected, what would your position on Curfew and Curfew Centers be? How would you build more positive interactions between youth and law enforcement?***

I supported the Curfew and the Curfew Centers because I believe we should be working towards a goal of expecting interactions between youth and law enforcement to be positive. That being said, we all know that there is work that still needs to be done we need to improve relations between the police and all age groups in the communities they're sworn to serve and protect. The police cannot do their jobs without our trust and support, but both of those things need to be earned through transparency, accountability, constant communication, and more direct community engagement.

Since structural changes to the Police Department must be made by the General Assembly, the City Council has passed two of my resolutions asking for changes in state law to address this: one would create a Police Commission volunteer citizens, nominated by the Mayor, confirmed by the Council after a public hearing which would hire, fire, and supervise a Chief of Police and set policy for the department, while the other would strengthen the Civilian Review Board. I think the addition of a youth representative on either or both would be a great idea.

***8. The parents and families of young people are often left out of the equation when we are seeking solutions. Family and community engagement requires long term, sustained efforts to build trust and offer authentic opportunities for families to have a voice and feel supported. The Community School strategy has been shown to increase family and community engagement and improve school climate and culture. The city funded community school strategy is currently operating in 50 schools out of 180. Do you think every school should be a community school? How would you expand the strategy?***

I have always strongly supported the community schools model, fighting each year for more resources to be devoted to the community schools program. All communities should be able to benefit from being



## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

centered on a well maintained, well funded public school, which provides library, health, and recreation services to both its students and the surrounding neighborhood. As such, steadily expanding the total number of community schools evenly, throughout the City would always be a priority for me in the City budget, until we reach the goal of all schools being community schools.

***9. The Baltimore City Health Department provides chilling statistics in its 2014 Health Disparities Report . Factors of race, gender, economics, and zip code can all be determining factors for a short and painful life, and the trajectories begin even before birth. Given what we know now about what works, how will you approach making sure every child has the opportunity to grow up to become a healthy adult?***

Along with a disturbing set of results, I think that the report also makes it clear how this information can inform our efforts moving forward. By using these reports to identify the demographic groups most affected, we can target our various youth development policies, education programs, and outreach endeavors; if properly focused, they will accelerate achievement, not only in a measurably improved health status for the target population, but also in increased opportunity for all Baltimore City residents.

***10. The bright green footprints painted on Baltimore City sidewalks are supposed to denote safe walking passageways for children to get to school. However well intentioned, the reality is that in many neighborhoods there are no safe passageways, and green footprints cut through active drug and gang territory. With schools of choice, some older students are traveling more than 2 hours both morning and evening on unreliable and sometime unsafe public transportation. What will you do when elected to make sure young people can make it to school every day safely?***

Well, one option would be to have a better public transit system here in Baltimore City. We need a system in which multimodal mass transit is inexpensive, convenient, and reliable. I would love to see a system that was organized and run on a regional basis; not by a statewide agency, responsible to legislators representing outlying areas which don't use it, or don't use it the same way that we do in an urban setting. As I envision it, such a system would consist mainly of an expanded Circulator service a network of radial lines along major arteries, converging on hubs which would permit transfers to other Circulator routes, MARC, Light Rail, Metro, and express buses to park and ride centers in the surrounding suburbs. It's especially grating to me that Hogan's proposed CityLink claims to be doing all of these things, but doesn't. Sadly, without the cooperation and funding of State government, along with a willingness on their part to have mass transit run regionally, it will be a difficult vision to implement.

Absent that, the next possibility would be for the school system to run its own bus service again; I know they're looking at it, and I'm pretty sure that they'd like to do it, but the expense is so high and their funds are already so strapped. Is there a middle ground? Perhaps. There might be a compromise, where the City could help provide a transit opportunity that would support students and other riders.

The third possibility I'll suggest is that by strengthening schools throughout the system, the desire to spend two hours a day commuting is lessened; if the school near you is a school of choice, you'll choose it. I had a great conversation just yesterday with an Ingenuity Project board member about the need to expand the program not just by adding more slots at Roland Park or Mt. Royal or Hamilton, but by adding additional middle schools in other parts of the City.