

**Questions for the Candidates for Maryland's Governor
Gubernatorial Forum on Community Development in Maryland
May 12, 2014**

Question 1: Poverty

Many Maryland residents enjoy some of the nation's highest incomes, best public schools, and most well-resourced communities. However, many of our residents living in rural, urban, and suburban communities are victims of poverty and are having a difficult time trying to make ends meet on a daily basis. Some have to work two and three jobs just to keep up with the pace of the rising cost of living in Maryland in order to meet the basic needs of their families.

The rate at which Marylanders experience poverty has risen from 7.8% to 10.3% since 2006 and the unemployment rate has increased from a low in 2007 of 3.5% to 6.6% in 2013. The number of homeless school-aged children in Maryland has increased 242.5% since the 2008-2009 academic year.

While Maryland, through its various departments, has programs that attempt to meet the needs of families in poverty, the resources are not infinite and in many cases, are insufficient to pay for housing and other basic necessities. In addition, many nonprofit organizations work hard to meet the needs, and yet find that the needs are too great for the services they offer.

What would your administration do to meet the needs of those with very low incomes, and also what economic and community development initiatives would you encourage/facilitate/support to lift families out of poverty in Maryland?

Question 2: Affordable Housing

Recent trends show that in Maryland, the availability of housing for low income families has decreased significantly. Moreover, the availability of affordable housing in areas of opportunity is also lacking. For instance, in a recent study conducted by the Urban Institute, in Baltimore City in 2012, there were 43 affordable units available per 100 extremely low-income households, down from 58 in 2000. The numbers are similar across the state, for instance in Howard County, the number dropped to 16 in 2012 from 38 a dozen years earlier. Typically, housing is considered "affordable" when a family of any income spends up to 30% of their income toward housing. In Maryland, 25% of all renter households pay 50% or more for toward housing.

While there are various efforts around the state to encourage and provide affordable housing, there is still much to do.

Maryland, through the Department of Housing and Community Development, facilitates the development of new affordable units for a range of incomes through various incentives and programs, and some local jurisdictions encourage more mixed income developments, but are not required by the state to do so (unlike in education, where the state requires jurisdictions to contribute to their education systems). There has also been legislation to stop the practice of denying housing to people with lawful sources of income, which has not yet passed, while other legislation that eliminates barriers to developing low- and mixed income multifamily projects was successful.

What would your administration plan to do, administratively and through and/or supporting legislation, to ensure all Marylanders are able to have stable, affordable housing throughout the state?

Question 3: Neighborhood Revitalization

Maryland includes a variety of diverse neighborhoods and communities- including rural towns, declining inner ring suburbs and core urban areas- in need of revitalization. Common issues include large concentrations of vacant and abandoned properties, underutilized commercial districts, declining housing stock, and a high number of foreclosures. These issues are frequently accompanied by increasing crime, declining infrastructure, growing poverty, and lack of access to adequate goods and services, such as healthy food options and transportation.

Community development organizations, nonprofit, for profit and public agencies, all work hard to address these issues and revitalize communities across the state. There are several examples of innovative strategies used at the neighborhood level and the commercial corridor level to improve and enhance these areas, including the use of receivership in Baltimore City, "mainstreet" commercial corridor redevelopment, and investment in businesses to alleviate food deserts.

Maryland makes funding available for community organizations to use for many initiatives, including addressing vacant and dilapidated properties. These sources include Community Legacy, Strategic Demolition and Smart Growth Impact Fund and Neighborhood Business Works.

What are your strategies for addressing the various revitalization needs of Maryland communities so that every Maryland neighborhood can thrive? How would you address lack of goods and services in declining neighborhoods, such as food deserts and lack of transportation?

Question 4: Organizational Capacity

Maryland's nonprofit community development organizations work tirelessly to revitalize neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for all families. It is clear that without this important industry, Maryland would not be able to achieve its community development goals and serve the most in need. In addition, these organizations have a significant economic and social impact in Maryland.

In a study completed by the Community Development Network of Maryland, formerly the ABCD Network in 2011, the community development organizations who answered the survey (76 of them throughout the state, including community development corporations, community development organizations, community action agencies, and others, constituting only about 1/3 of the entire nonprofit side of this industry) invested over \$86 million for local community development projects, hired over 2,000 full time employees and 500 part time employees, created over 5,200 housing units in the previous five years, served over 4,000 children, and had other important economic and social impacts.

Yet, many of these community development organizations struggle each day to fulfill their missions and make sure they are meeting the needs of those whom they serve. Although several of them receive federal, state, local and private (foundation and donation) funding, many of these funding sources are aimed at direct programs, and leave little room to ensure the operating dollars of these organizations are there to continue their work. Operating dollars are the hardest dollars to come by for nonprofits in Maryland.

Maryland's Department of Housing and Community Development used to have programs that assisted with operating dollars for such organizations, with only one fund remaining, the Technical Assistance Grants.

What would your administration do to strengthen and enhance this important industry in Maryland?