

Science Debate Questionnaire – Local

Education:

Providing Baltimore City children with an excellent public-school education is a top priority for families. Yet, Baltimore City schools face an annual adequacy gap of \$342 million in funding, depriving Baltimore students the resources they need to succeed in STEM and other academic disciplines. In addition to the adequacy gap, many schools need renovations and improvements, including adequate heating and cooling. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, mandated school closures and hybrid classrooms require teachers and students to have access to reliable, high-speed internet; however, more than 40% of Baltimore City residents lack that access.

1. What will you propose to close the annual adequacy gap and improve our students' quality of education?
2. How do you propose to fund renovations and facilities improvements in Baltimore City schools?
3. How do you plan to ensure equitable access to technological services in Baltimore City?

Health:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a central issue in the minds of Baltimore voters this year. Minority communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, with African Americans being approximately three times as likely to contract the disease and twice as likely to die from it compared to the general United States population. Many Baltimore residents have experienced an unprecedented toll on their mental health due to the loss of loved ones, jobs, and social/recreational opportunities. There are still many unresolved public health issues besides COVID-19 in our community; despite ongoing mitigation efforts, lead poisoning remains a serious problem in Baltimore City.

1. What are your plans to protect our most vulnerable communities from the disparate effects of the pandemic?
2. What will you do to expand and improve the accessibility of mental health care in Baltimore?
3. How do you propose to reduce lead exposure and provide support for children who are suffering neurological damage from lead exposure?

Environment:

Securing a greener future is important to many Baltimoreans. Green infrastructure and sustainable development could offer solutions to many environmental problems while also creating jobs and economic opportunities. The Wheelabrator/BRESCO trash incinerator is Baltimore City's biggest source of industrial air pollution and has been shown to negatively impact the health of residents living nearby. Despite efforts by citizen and environmental groups to close the incinerator, talks have been held that could lead to a contract renewal. Another important issue faced by the city is the sewage system upgrade mandated by the Federal Consent Decree. Recently, sewage backflow into residential homes has increased, producing significant health, environmental, and financial concerns for Baltimore City residents.

1. What green infrastructure initiatives, if any, do you plan to support while in office?
2. What is your position on the incinerator and how do you propose to sustainably manage waste in Baltimore City?
3. How do you plan to alleviate residential sewage backflow issues while continuing to abide by the Consent Decree?

Economy:

Many Baltimoreans are struggling financially; it is estimated that greater than 20% of Baltimore City residents live in poverty. For many people, access to reliable public transportation could provide better job opportunities. However, efforts to expand the Baltimore transit system have been stymied due to the cancellation of the Red Line and recent MTA budget cuts. Even for Baltimoreans who are more well-off, the COVID-19 pandemic has shuttered numerous businesses and left many unemployed. The Inner Harbor and other business districts important to our city have suffered as a result of these losses.

1. How will you address the affordable housing and homelessness crisis in our city?
2. Do you have plans to upgrade Baltimore City's transit system? If so, what are your ideas for improving and expanding access to public transportation in our city?
3. What are your ideas for facilitating business and job growth in the Inner Harbor and other districts? Do you plan on encouraging sustainable development?