



# GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

## GBC's 2020 Baltimore City Election Coverage Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

### **CANDIDATE: MARY MILLER (D)**

The Greater Baltimore Committee has identified key policy priorities to drive discussion in the 2020 Citywide Elections. The priorities are:

1. Prioritize enhanced coordination across criminal justice agencies and support evidence-based crime reduction strategies to improve public safety.
2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.
3. Exert solid, steady leadership to stabilize Baltimore City government and create a culture of integrity, transparency, and efficiency.
4. Support education and workforce development programs that prepare Baltimore residents for family-supporting jobs in high-growth industries and create programs or initiatives to attract talent to Baltimore City.
5. Utilize policy, funding, and intergovernmental coordination strategies to enhance Baltimore City's transportation and mobility infrastructure and operations.

*Disclaimer: As a 501(c)4 organization, the Greater Baltimore Committee does not endorse candidates for public office. The information contained on this page and all engagement activities surrounding the election are for educational purposes only.*

1. Prioritize enhanced coordination across criminal justice agencies and support evidence-based crime reduction strategies to improve public safety.
  - What are three actions that you would take in your first year to improve public safety?

*First, I'm going to give the Police Commissioner the support and resources he needs to put proven crime reduction strategies in place. This will involve getting every relevant party and agency to the table to agree on the plan and support it. It also involves removing any barriers to recruitment and training, including offering more incentives for police officers to live and work in the City. In the first year, we're going to put more officers on patrol by moving sworn officers out of administrative roles.*

*Second, I would set a timetable for meeting the Consent Decree requirements. Restoring trust in community and police relations, sooner rather than later, is critical.*

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*Third, I would bring in the necessary resources to modernize our data technology and analytical tools to support evidence-based policing. If necessary, I would ask the private sector for help to get this done quickly.*

- As Mayor, what steps would you take to improve coordination across federal, state, and local criminal justice agencies and with the Judiciary?

*Baltimore can't reduce the present level of violent crime on its own. We should welcome both personnel and funding support from state and federal law enforcement agencies. As Mayor I would create a task force including the U.S. Attorney, the State's Attorney, the Police Commissioner, Parole and Probation and relevant city agencies like the Health Department and Social Services to get everyone on the same page with crime reduction plans. Strategies like focused deterrence require a high level of coordination that the Mayor is uniquely positioned to convene.*

*Throughout my time in the private sector and in President Obama's administration, I frequently had to balance competing interests, personalities, and philosophies and create common objectives to get things done. I would take the same approach in Baltimore and hold everyone accountable.*

- What are your plans to address "squeegee kids" and panhandlers in City intersections?

*No child should have to wash car windows at stoplights to survive in Baltimore. Nor should anyone have to choose panhandling. These are symptoms of the lack of opportunity in Baltimore. We need to offer a path towards legitimate work, taking into account all the social and economic incentives at work here. We know who the squeegee kids are and the intersections where they work. My administration will engage with each individual to end this dangerous practice by offering workforce training, short term financial assistance and education. The larger goal is to create more opportunity so that squeegee activity doesn't begin in the first place. We have some successful examples of strategies that we should replicate using organizations like Turnaround Tuesday or Civic Works, or a business creation like the Korner Boyz.*

### 2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.

- What strategies or programs would you put into place to encourage businesses and residents to move to Baltimore City?

*We will not be successful in attracting new businesses and residents to move to Baltimore if we don't solve the crime problem. That has to be top of list. However, as Mayor I would concurrently develop a strong economic development plan that includes industry sector workforce development, maintaining a ready inventory of properties and sites available for occupancy or development, creating a more robust Small Business Resource Center to offer comprehensive services to start ups, and leveraging public dollars for more significant private sector investment. These ideas are part of a bigger plan I will unveil called "Inclusive Growth". As Mayor I would never miss the chance to welcome a new employer to our city.*

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- What strategies or programs would you put into place to encourage existing businesses and residents to stay and expand in Baltimore City?

*As Mayor, I would reach out to existing employers and residents with regular updates on our progress reducing crime and ask them what the City can do better to serve their needs and remove barriers to growth. The economic development plan described above should also address existing businesses and residents, with a particular focus on reaching underinvested areas of the city and residents who have not prospered. As Mayor I would focus on equitable and efficient delivery of city services to improve the quality of life in the City. We need to make our city government much more hospitable to growth.*

- Do you have ideas or suggestions to reform the property tax structure in the City?

*Baltimore is overly reliant on property taxes in a city where one third of our land area is tax-exempt. As a consequence, our property tax rate is elevated and uncompetitive with surrounding counties. In response we have a confusing array of property tax credits and payments in lieu of taxes that don't seem to have any common standard. As Mayor I would undertake a comprehensive review of our tax structure to develop a responsible plan for making the city more competitive. Our goal should be a fairer tax system that allows the city to grow its way into a lower property tax rate. At the same time, we should strive to rebalance our tax revenue towards income taxes by raising income levels in the city with living wage jobs. Proposals for cutting our property tax rate dramatically to stimulate growth are appealing, but need to be developed with a clear understanding of the fiscal consequences and a safety net for transition.*

- What are your top three priorities or programs to grow Baltimore's tax base?

*Since it is unlikely that we will attract large outside investment at this time, we should focus on organic growth that supports the tax base that we have and builds on areas of strength. We know the key and emerging industries in Baltimore that can attract more investment. As Mayor I would ask the private sector for help in building a much more robust Small Business Resource Center that serves both startup companies and existing employers with every service needed to succeed - business plan development, licensing and permitting, legal and accounting services, and importantly, access to capital. I would also provide higher and more consistent funding for the Vacants to Value program to bring more residential properties back on the tax rolls. Finally, we need to create a "Live and Work in Baltimore" campaign that highlights all the benefits of being in the city to turn the tide of population loss and grow our tax base.*

### 3. Exert solid, steady leadership to stabilize Baltimore City government and create a culture of integrity, transparency, and efficiency.

- Baltimore City is at a crossroads and in need of strong, ethical leadership. Why are you the best candidate to lead the City into a new decade and chapter?

*I'm not a career politician and am not beholden to anyone. After President Obama nominated me to the U.S. Treasury department. I went through two rigorous U.S. Senate confirmation hearings – and I was confirmed unanimously by both political parties each time. I was also vetted by U.S. intelligence agencies and received the highest level of security clearance. As a candidate I have no higher ambition*

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*than to get Baltimore back on track and make everyone proud to live in this city. I know how to manage large complex organizations, build strong management teams, and solve problems. I think I'm the best candidate to address Baltimore's problems right now.*

- What are three actions that you would take to improve transparency and efficiency in City government?

*I would advocate for more financial disclosure from elected officials and stronger ethics rules to protect against corruption in public office. We can't afford another scandal in Baltimore City government. I would restructure the Mayor's office for more authority and accountability for delivery of city services to improve efficiency (see below). I would build a more robust risk management function in city government to be more prepared for disruptive events like cyber-attacks and Harbor Place receivership that can take the city off course.*

- Several charter amendments have been proposed and are pending legislative review and approval.
  - What is your position on the composition and function of the Board of Estimates?

*I'm open to reviewing proposals for changing the composition and function of the Board of Estimates but lean towards a model of increasing its size rather than reducing the membership. I also support complete transparency in the awarding of city contracts.*

- Do you think that the Baltimore City Charter should require a Chief Administrative Officer? Please explain your answer.

*Proposals for creating a city manager or chief administrative officer are a reaction to poor leadership of our city and inequitable delivery of city services. We certainly need less politics and stronger management in service delivery. I would appoint a strong Deputy Mayor for Operations with clear authority and accountability. With the right leadership I don't think we need this City Charter change at this time.*

- How would you structure your Administration (ie, CAO, Deputy Mayors, Chief of Staff, etc.) to provide the most efficient delivery of City services?

*I would implement a strong Deputy Mayor model, including at least four positions: Deputy Mayors for Operations, Economic Development, Equity and Inclusion, and Intergovernmental and External Relations. We urgently need better service delivery, an inclusive growth plan for Baltimore, and much better relations with our state and federal partners. A Deputy Mayor for Equity and Inclusion would make sure that our operations and economic development actions are reaching all residents and underinvested areas of the city. Finally, we need to build strong bridges with the private sector, non-profits and philanthropy to restore confidence in Baltimore city government and its leaders. We need to design the Mayor's office to make Baltimore a laboratory for positive change.*

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4. Support education and workforce development programs that prepare Baltimore residents for family-supporting jobs in high-growth industries and create programs or initiatives to attract talent to Baltimore City.
  - Under the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission, Baltimore City stands to receive an additional \$500 million annually in State education aid by Fiscal 2030. In order to receive this additional funding, Baltimore City must increase its investment as well, by \$330 million annually by Fiscal 2030. According to Maryland Department of Legislative Services figures, Baltimore City currently spends less than 15% of its budget on education compared to a statewide average of 36%. What is your plan to meet the increased obligation of Baltimore City? Please be specific in identifying areas or agencies that will see reduced appropriations as well as revenues that may be increased.

*I believe that educating our children well is a non-negotiable obligation of our city government. I will find the revenues to support the Kirwan Commission proposals and increase the City's contribution to public education. We need to drive a strong economic development plan that will increase city revenues - particularly income tax revenues from higher wage jobs to help pay for Kirwan reforms. In the best of all worlds, growth could pay for this, but that can't be our day one plan. I would undertake a top to bottom review of the city's budget to look for efficiencies and savings. I would make sure that we are collecting every dollar of revenue we are due. As we reduce our crime levels in Baltimore I expect that we can reduce the share of city spending on public safety. I do not support across the board cuts to city agencies, as I think we want to position ourselves for a growth agenda not managed decline.*

- Currently, 0.2% of the City's budget is dedicated to workforce development. What is your position for funding workforce training and adult education programs to reduce unemployment and adequately prepare City residents for jobs in high-demand industries?

*As Mayor, I would increase funding for the Office of Employment Development and forge stronger relationships with over 30 workforce training organizations in the non-profit sector. A 2019 report from the Abell Foundation said that an additional \$5 million in spending could create 1000 more work ready individuals through these channels. Our workforce training needs to operate on two levels: preparing students in high schools who do not plan to attend college for jobs when they graduate, and working with unemployed adults to provide education support and work force training. These are two different populations with different needs. Our history of fits and starts in government and philanthropy supported programs has not resulted in a coherent approach. The Mayor is uniquely positioned to coordinate these efforts, and more importantly to help scale the ones that we see are effective. We should absolutely be meeting the employment demands of industry with well-prepared Baltimore residents.*

- What role should the City play in attracting and retaining top talent to fill in-demand jobs in high-growth industry sectors?

*While the city does not directly hire these individuals, it can showcase the city through the Baltimore Development Corporation. The BDC should have a ready understanding of these sectors' needs and be*

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*a clearinghouse for information, connecting people and employment. My economic development plan will pay attention to high growth sectors in its work force development and will regularly convene these companies' leaders to see how the city can be helpful. A strong relationship with the Greater Baltimore Committee will also be important in building a City that is more hospitable for growth.*

5. Utilize policy, funding, and intergovernmental coordination strategies to enhance Baltimore City's transportation and mobility infrastructure and operations.

- What are three things you would do to improve transportation and mobility in the City?

*Although the state's MTA operates our transit system, there are several levers that Baltimore has to improve transit. First, I will direct the Department of Transportation to create more bus lanes and explore how to improve east-west transit in the city, including with bus-only streets. Second, I would explore every barrier to mobility to work and schools in the city, including bus fares, schedules and routes. Third, I will make safe pedestrian, bicycling and scooter usage a priority, by creating safe lanes and sidewalks to connect neighborhoods to each other and reduce our reliance on automobiles.*

- Do you support enhanced investment in transportation infrastructure, including that for pedestrians, bicycles, and scooters?

*Absolutely. Our city needs a network of safe and connected infrastructure for pedestrians and bicycle and scooter riders. It's essential that a thriving and livable city be safe and walkable for residents. Studies have shown that walkability improves a city's economic growth.*

- What is your position on the creation of a regional transit authority to oversee the transit network?

*We should absolutely explore this option to give Baltimore and its surrounding counties more control over vital transportation decisions that affect our population and economy. Poor transit mobility in Baltimore is a significant contributor to entrenched poverty. I support exploring the creation of a regional transit authority to address these inequities and make better decisions for our city's transportation needs*