

## **Rushern Baker**

### **1. Are there any comprehensive immigration reform legislative or policy proposals which you support that would strengthen the opportunities and rights of Caribbean immigrants in Maryland, absent any action by the Federal Government?**

Our immigrant communities are under attack by the dangerous policies of the Trump Administration. I will make sure that all Marylanders, regardless of immigration status, have the right to access state services with a sense of security and peace of mind. I know that community engagement remains critical to ensure our residents do not live in fear.

We need new approaches to teach immigrant students who are struggling to succeed as they adjust to life in the United States. We've got to make sure that access to health care, access to counseling, and the resources from the state, local and federal government go into making sure that the children that are in our care get a quality education and a quality preparation for life.

I will strengthen relations with community-based organizations that serve our immigrant and refugee communities to address matters of concern. As county executive, I'm proud to have joined the Cities for Action initiative. The Cities for Action mission is to create stronger and safer cities and counties by driving the national debate, embracing new immigrants, and engaging with stakeholders to win on immigration policies.

I was proud to sign resolutions to combat anti-immigrant activity, racial bias and discrimination, hate crimes, and harassment as well as protect Syrian refugees in the county. As governor, I will advocate to for the same resolutions across the state.

I will create a New Americans Task Force, similar to the one I created in the county, which will be a volunteer task force that focused on assessing immigrant inclusion in state government. To incorporate recommendations into our government to better reflect its multiculturalism and serve our diverse population.

### **2. What is your position regarding the DACA situation?**

I fully support the dreamers and have publicly advocated for relief for those who have had their legal status revoked. As Governor, I would work with the Maryland delegation to pass the DREAM Act and provide federal protection and a pathway to citizenship for the dreamers.

### **3. The State of Maryland is now more diverse than it was in the past. What will be your policies to ensure that first responders i.e.—the police, mobile crisis team, EMS and firefighters - are culturally competent to interact with this diverse population?**

Strengthening the relationship between law enforcement and the community is critical to improving safety, accountability and transparency in Maryland.

In the county, we took steps to reform the police department, including implementing mandatory sensitivity and implicit bias training for law enforcement. I would make sure that, as Governor, we do the same statewide.

We also need to increase diversity among our police offices. In the County, we implemented policies and recruitment efforts to focus on increasing diversity among law enforcement that led to a majority minority law enforcement in the county for the first time ever.

My Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative dedicated government resources in areas of the county that were facing health, economic, public safety and educational challenges in an effort to reduce the disparity between communities. This made community safer and improved the relations between residents and law enforcement.

**4. The Caribbean is a strong trading partner of the U.S., and there are opportunities to create economic benefits for both the State of Maryland and Caribbean residents. Will you support strengthening business, social and cultural relations and exchanges between Maryland residents and the Caribbean, and if so how?**

I was recently a part of a trade delegation to Cuba and was struck by the potential for trade and cultural exchange with Caribbean countries, particularly the opportunities in agricultural trade with Maryland. Many of Maryland's top industries are agricultural. As Governor, I would make Maryland a national leader in trade with the Caribbean by utilizing our ports to create jobs, strengthen industries in the Caribbean and promote cultural exchange.

**5. How will you improve and maintain regular outreach and communication with your Caribbean constituents throughout your term?**

I have made "A Maryland For All of Us" the motto of my campaign. As Governor, I will hold true to this promise and engage with Marylanders from all communities across the state. As County Executive, I have seen firsthand how the current administration has been MIA in our local communities. I will make sure that as Governor, I am engaged with local communities across the state to make sure that we are addressing the needs and concerns of everyone. That means meeting with local elected officials and community leaders frequently and maintaining an open line of communication.

**6. The Affordable Care Act is under attack by the Federal Government. What will your government do in light of this to provide healthcare to Maryland's most vulnerable Residents?**

Maryland made significant strides under the Affordable Care Act. In Prince George's County, we reduced the number of uninsured and underinsured residents by over 50%. However many Marylanders are still facing exorbitant healthcare prices and many are still going uninsured.

In order to ensure the broadest possible access to affordable health care, we need to improve access, reliability and affordability. We need to make sure that every Marylander has access to high quality hospitals and healthcare facilities. That's why in the county, I fought for the new Prince George's Regional Medical Center.

We also need to improve reliability by stabilizing the health insurance market against the attempts made by the Trump Administration to undermine the Affordable Care Act. I support implementing a healthcare downpayment program to replace the federal individual mandate, which will ensure more long-term stability in the market so Marylanders are not facing crippling healthcare premium cost increases each year.

Lastly, we need to improve affordability. Prescription drug prices make up a significant portion of healthcare costs each year. Let's end prescription drug price gouging in Maryland by 1) increasing transparency at the pharmacy about drug prices and lower cost options, 2) establishing a Drug Cost Commission that ensures reasonable costs for lifesaving drugs.

**7. Gun violence has long been a concern for Americans, wherever they are. If you become governor, what will your government do to minimize to prospects of gun violence in Maryland?**

As County Executive, I worked hard with Maryland's former Governor Martin O'Malley and the General Assembly to pass some of the nation's strictest gun-licensing laws, including requiring fingerprinting for gun buyers, new limits on firearm purchases by the mentally ill, and bans on assault weapons and on magazines that hold more than 10 bullets.

This past November, I called for a nationwide ban on assault weapons. We owe it to the victims and the families of gun violence to create responsible gun policies.

We must 1) urge President Trump to reverse the decision to nullify background checks that would prevent those with severe mental health problems from purchasing guns; 2) call on Congress to reject the President's proposal to cut federal grants for school safety; 3) Call on Congress to reject President Trump's proposal to cut funding for mental health services.

Unlike Governor Hogan, I will join neighboring governors in their effort to keep illegal guns from being trafficked across state lines, support legislation to ban guns on college campuses and out of the hands of domestic abusers.

Over the course of the next few months, I will be introducing more policy proposals for a safer, more accessible, more prosperous Maryland for all of us.

**8. When located in urban or low income settings, schools can be a war zone. And with the ever increasing issue of school violence, what are your plans to ensure that schools remain a safe haven for our children?**

My Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative dedicated government resources in areas of the county that were facing health, economic, public safety and educational challenges in an effort to reduce the disparity between communities. This made communities safer and improved the relations between residents and law enforcement. During my time as County Executive, we reduced crime by 55 with these policies. These policies can work across the state -- as Governor, I will look to expand my Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative on a statewide level.

**9. Seasonal / migrant agricultural workers ---- migrant farm labor play a key role, chiefly in vegetable and fruit harvesting. Caribbean-origin migrant farm workers, principally Haitians and Jamaicans have diversified the seasonal agricultural workforce over the years. These workers have played a vital role in labor-intensive agriculture. There have been ongoing concerns over migrant children and healthcare for the migrant population as well as housing. What are your plans to address this issue?**

As governor, I will look to expand access to affordable healthcare for all Marylanders. We need to improve reliability by stabilizing the health insurance market against the attempts made by the Trump Administration to undermine the Affordable Care Act. I support implementing a healthcare downpayment program to replace the federal individual mandate, which will ensure more long-term stability in the market so Marylanders are not facing crippling healthcare premium cost increases each year. Trump's decision to make it more difficult to obtain H-1B visas has hurt many industries in Maryland like the crabbing industry. We need a Governor in Maryland who will stand up to these decisions and attacks from the Trump administration and looks out for our immigrant communities and industries.

**10. Marcus Mosiah Garvey, a Jamaican, was unjustly imprisoned by the American Government in .....There Caribbean community is seeking a posthumous pardon from the President of the United States on behalf of his family, and the wider community itself. As governor, will you be prepared to support this effort, and if so, how?**

Unfortunately, under the current administration, it is unlikely that this posthumous pardon would be considered. However, if elected, I would do what I can to support this cause.

**11. Caribbean persons have contributed greatly to the fabric of America. Are you in favor of including a Caribbean based lesson plan in Maryland's social studies curriculum?**

Yes I would support this type of program in Maryland's school curriculum. In Prince George's County, we made improving our school curriculum and introducing new school programs a priority. We would do the same at a state level.

**12. In your political career, what accomplishment are you most proud of, and why?**

As County Executive, I have consistently fought for increases in school funding for higher teacher salaries; dual-enrollment programs; expanded universal pre-k and full-day kindergarten. Over the past five years, our school systems saw a reduction in dropout rates, increased enrollment, access to pre-k more than tripled; teacher retention increased and scholarship recipients increased.

For me, education is personal. I know that education can change lives because it changed mine. As a kid, I struggled with reading, got into fights often, and was kicked out of many schools. If it weren't for my loving parents and dedicated teachers, I would not have had the opportunity to be the first in my family to graduate college.

I know that fully funding schools is the first step to ensuring that every student in our state has the same opportunities I had. I will prioritize fully funding our schools in order to increase teacher salaries; create more dual-enrollment programs; expand universal pre-k and full-day kindergarten. Our public schools are the heart of our communities.

A good school is the sign of a healthy community, providing students with a lifetime of opportunity and a signal to families and businesses that this is somewhere they should move to and invest.