



Maryland Democratic Party Platform

Recommendations for 2020 DNC Platform

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Table of Contents

Preamble - a time for renewal	1
Values	1
Mission.....	1
Objectives.....	2
Framework.....	2
Rights and Equity	4
Racial Justice	4
Rights of Gender minorities	4
Women’s Rights	5
Conscience Rule	5
Disability Rights	5
Immigrant Rights.....	6
Police Reform	6
Training	6
Departmental Oversight	7
Recruitment and Professionalism.....	7
Environment and the Climate Crisis	8
Maryland’s Environmental Concerns and Solutions	9
Health Care.....	12
Health Inequities.....	12
Health Issues	13
Prescription Drugs	13
Rural Communities	13
Women’s Health	13
Seniors and People with Disabilities	13
Public Health	14
Pandemic Preparedness	14
Gun Violence:	14
Opioid and Other Substance Addictions	14
Health Coverage	15
Education	16
Economy.....	19
Small Business.....	19
Protecting Maryland from Predatory Lending.....	20
Employment	21
Housing	24
Equity and Inequality	24
Affordable Housing	24
Economic Opportunity.....	24

Protect Tenants	25
Planning and Development.....	25
Sustainability and Environment	25
Rural and Agricultural Resources	26
Rural Maryland	26
Agriculture	27
Sustainable Agriculture and Local Food	27
Governance and Voting.....	29
Clean and Fair Elections	29
Campaign Financing	29
Good Government	29
Voter Protection	30
Infrastructure	32
Transportation Infrastructure	32
Communications Infrastructure	33
Broadband Internet Access	33
Electric Infrastructure	34
Public School Infrastructure.....	34
Public Service Infrastructure.....	34
Recycling and Sanitation.....	34
Manufacturing Infrastructure.....	35
Information Infrastructure	35
United States Postal Service (USPS)	35
Libraries.....	35
Lens Framework of the 2020 Maryland Democratic Party Platform	37
Introduction	37
Infrastructure Lens.....	37
Climate Change Lens	37
Equity Lens.....	38
Conclusion.....	38
Attachment: Resource Document for Agriculture and Rural Section	39
Background Reason for this Platform Provision	39
Broader Plan.....	40
Revitalization Impact.....	41

Preamble - a time for renewal

This is a pivotal time in the lives of the people of Maryland. We have witnessed the consequences of negligence and of willful destruction of the fabric of our nation. We have also seen the resilience and courage of our people as we meet each crisis and reject all forms of injustice. The Maryland Democratic Party expresses the aspirations, values, and commitments of all Democratic voters in this, the 2020 Maryland Democratic Party Platform.

The COVID19 Pandemic has further exposed the injustices in our society, compelling us to reevaluate who we are, why we are, and our genuine love for family, community, and Country. There is no better time to redeclare our values as Democrats and to demonstrate our leadership and determination to help heal and build a more just Maryland.

Donald Trump's presidency is founded in hate, from the moment he stepped off that escalator to disparage immigrants from Latin America. Since then, his policies and rhetoric have fomented hate against all immigrants, Black people, Latinx people, gender minorities, women, people with disabilities, Muslims, and Asian-Americans. The Maryland Democratic Party rejects hate and discrimination in all its forms. We unequivocally declare the Maryland Democratic Party represents a vibrant multiracial, multicultural coalition. We stand for the rights of all people in the U.S.A. to participate without discrimination in all aspects of our country.

We know hate, discrimination, and inequity did not begin with Trump, and that we must purge these from our society, so we may finally, fully, and truly fulfill the words of our Constitution, "We, the people."

Values

The Maryland Democratic Party is the voice of a multicultural constituency. Our sole responsibility is to enhance and improve the quality of life for those who trust and elect us and to advocate on their behalf.

The Maryland Democratic Party believes in

- The free participation of the individual as the foundation of democracy
- The right of all to education, health and safety
- The need for a clean and sustainable environment
- The balance of social and economic concerns
- The importance of diversity and full inclusion as strengths, upholding fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and working to eliminate structural inequities that limit opportunity
- The role of government as the instrument to achieve what we cannot accomplish as individuals

Mission

The mission of the Maryland Democratic Party is to elect and appoint Democrats who represent our Democratic Party values to public office, represent the ideas and issues important to Maryland's Democrats, and communicate the will of Maryland's Democrats to the elected officials of Maryland.

Objectives

Maryland Democrats work to accomplish:

- Strong, healthy communities, families, and individuals
- Universal health care
- Elimination of racial and economic inequities
- Respectful and respected judicial and law enforcement systems
- Infrastructure that supports all residents and economic growth across Maryland
- Affordable, equitable, and accessible housing for all
- World-class public schools that prepare students for colleges or careers
- A strong presence in rural areas, supporting voters and Democratic candidates with policies and programs meeting these areas' unique and often-overlooked needs.
- Fair elections, free from foreign interference, in which every citizen may vote. Every vote counts.
- All workers having the right to form and participate in a labor union
- An environment free from the threat of global warming
- Clean, sustainable, affordable, carbon-neutral energy used throughout Maryland
- Strong consumer protection laws
- Every person's freedom to love and marry whomever they choose
- A culture that works for everyone, with no one excluded

We are committed to creating a responsible, accountable government that works to assure every person has a fair shot at achieving success and is treated with respect and dignity, without regard for ethnicity, race, sex or gender identity, age, place of birth, or wealth, and has the opportunity to live a happy, healthy, and whole life.

Framework

This 2020 Maryland Democratic Party Platform addresses issues and areas critically important to our state's and nation's future: How we use the power we ask voters to grant us affects the relationship between government and every person, business, and acre of land in the country.

Three viewpoints or lenses, infrastructure, the changing climate, and equity are central to our challenge to stake out our positions on issues addressed in this platform.

The network of communications and transportation has impact beyond any single platform issue. The foods that nourish us, the roads we travel on, the medicines that treat us are all interconnected. Teachers communicate with students in buildings that serve communities in many ways. The stresses that the COVID-19 pandemic induced highlight inequities in access to the electronic highway we call the Internet. We must consider the impact our society's communications backbone has on every aspect of our lives.

Climate change is an urgent threat and a defining challenge of our time, affecting the survival of all life on earth. Quite literally, the impact of climate change touches all we do in our lives, from the food we grow and the ground in which we grow it, to the way we build houses and health services. We must include this pervasive issue in all policy decisions.

The Maryland Democratic Party's most fundamental value is fairness – "equity." We recognize inequality in any form rends the fabric of society. Discrimination in any form against any person damages every person. The minimum wage worker whose salary forces a cruel choice of paying for medicine or rent is often trapped in a cycle of poverty, inadequate housing, and substandard health coverage. Addressing these problems is an investment that will lead to a better society for all. Systemic deprivation of equal opportunity and access will

be the headwind that impedes our state and nation from achieving our shared goal of “liberty and justice for all.”

It is our will to address the issues in this Platform with a view toward supporting equity and ending inequities.

Rights and Equity

"In a real sense all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... This is the interrelated structure of reality."

-- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The Maryland Democratic Party supports equal rights and justice for all Marylanders. Every individual has the right to be treated with fairness, justice, and dignity. We must uphold civil and human rights at all times. To do any less diminishes our State and nation.

Equity is the principle that no systemic bars to equal opportunity exist in public policy and that all are able to achieve all they are willing to strive toward and capable of accomplishing. People of color have historically been denied that right.

Equality promotes fairness in our society, but equality is often denied to many – economically challenged, disabled, elderly, or minorities. We must consider intersectionality when crafting policies. When individuals belong to more than one protected class, impacts are often multiplied, and policies may have unintended consequences.

The Maryland Democratic Party is committed to promoting the principles of equity and equality to all those who live and work in this state.

Racial Justice

The Maryland Democratic Party acknowledges that over 400 years of racism and racist policies, including but not limited to slavery, Jim Crow, racially-motivated violence and redlining, have created the unequal and unjust environment that many Black people experience today.

- We must close the racial wealth gap and address inequities in income, housing, education, and healthcare to achieve true equity.
- We must raise the minimum wage statewide to address these inequities, because Black and Latinx people are disproportionately employed in minimum wage jobs.
- We must direct more education funds to schools in lower-income, predominantly Black and Brown communities, to close the education gap.
- We support fair treatment and equitable funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- We must end police brutality against African Americans.
- We support Implicit bias training in all occupations and industries.
- We support strengthen fair housing laws and their enforcement.
- We support eliminating predatory lending and holding lending institutions that engage in predatory practices accountable.

Rights of Gender minorities

- We call for legislation to stop discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, and everywhere discrimination exists.

- We must guarantee protections for transgender public school students and create safe schools for all.
- We call for providing access to gender-affirming health care for all.
- We support updating all forms and practices to acknowledge gender-diverse residents, continuing the work that has been done to update sex identities recognized on driver's licenses.
- We must continue to recognize diverse relationships and parental/family structures and residents' rights to form families.
- We must reform the criminal justice system, rectifying practices that endanger and disproportionately criminalize LGBTQ people.
- We must provide programs and services that prevent and address homelessness and its causes, which disproportionately impact LGBTQ youth and adults.
- We support updating or eliminating outdated statutes that regulate private/intimate acts.
- We affirm that couples in same sex marriages have the same privileges and rights to benefits, insurance, and healthcare as heterosexual couples.

Women's Rights

- We unequivocally reaffirm our support for inclusion of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; should it become necessary; we support any additional ratification steps.
- We call for policies to achieve pay equity, including preventing employers from inquiring about past wages and requiring employers to disclose the pay range to applicants. Black, Brown, native, transgender, and disabled women experience a greater gender pay gap, so any pay equity policies need to address that intersectionality.
- Women are most often the primary caregivers for children and the elderly. Women's work must be valued, both in the home and in the workplace. We must ensure that affordable, accessible childcare is available to women and families.
- We support extending Maryland's Parental Leave Act to provide paid leave for families with newborn or ill children.

Conscience Rule

The Maryland Democratic Party strenuously objects to enterprises doing business in the private sector denying service to any person or persons, based on the religious beliefs of employees of that enterprise or its owners.

Disability Rights

Disability includes a broad set of physical, mental and emotional issues. Not all disabilities are visible, but all of them are impactful. We are committed to upholding disabled persons' rights by ending implicit bias and systemic issues and ensuring that people with disabilities have the support they need to participate as full members of society.

- The Maryland Democratic Party affirms the right of people with disabilities to life, liberty, safety, and the pursuit of happiness.
- We affirm that people with disabilities have a right to self-determination about all aspects of their own life, all of whom must have the right of dignity of person and property, regardless of mental competency.
- We call for increased representation from people with disabilities on public boards and commissions.

Immigrant Rights

America has always been a dynamic nation, shaped by both immigration and forced displacement. Throughout history, our nation has experienced waves of immigration and has prospered from the cultural and economic energy waves of immigrants have added to our society. Our nation's strength derives from our capacity to benefit from the cultures and contributions they have and continue to make. We reject the Trump Administration's anti-immigration rhetoric and policies as inimical to America's core beliefs and damaging to our standing in the world.

- We call on Maryland and local governments to increase availability of translation services in government programs and publication of government information to Spanish and other languages with significant numbers of residents within the jurisdiction.
- Hospitals, courts, and government agencies must be safe spaces for undocumented immigrants, and we call for policies protecting undocumented immigrants within these places to the fullest extent possible.
- We call on state and local governments to require a judicial warrant as a prerequisite to any cooperation with federal immigration authorities.
- State and federal government must provide assistance to make up for the impact of the pandemic, which has fallen disproportionately on the immigrant community. Many immigrants, even those with resident status, are barred from benefits from programs to which they are entitled, such as unemployment insurance and stimulus payments.

Police Reform

The Democratic Party is committed to state and local governments fostering a trusting, respectful and effective working relationship between police officers and the public. Communities should feel protected by those who have sworn to keep them safe, and the men and women who serve them should deserve and receive respect and trust based on communicating shared values of peaceful, safe neighborhoods.

We support a community policing model which encourages the officers to develop relationships with the community and to view their job as one of support for the community rather than strictly enforcement. Whenever possible, officers patrolling a community should come from the community they serve.

We also support the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which was recently passed by the U.S. House of representatives. This federal bill would enact the following items: 1) ban chokeholds; 2) end racial and religious profiling; 3) eliminate qualified immunity for law enforcement; 4) establish national standard for the operation of police departments; 5) mandate data collection on police encounters; 6) reprogram existing funds to invest in transformative community-based policing programs; and 7) streamline federal law to prosecute excessive force and establish independent prosecutors for police investigations.

Training

Police officers frequently serve culturally and racially diverse communities. As part of their training, police officers should receive instruction on institutional racism, diverse cultural norms, racial profiling, and nonviolent conflict resolution.

Departmental Oversight

Oversight is an essential part of good government. The close and frequently stressful interactions between police and civilians, along with the possibility of internal corruption require clear standards of conduct for police officers and departments, along with the ability to monitor compliance to those standards.

- Except when they must be sealed under court order, the results of internal departmental investigations must be made public promptly upon their completion.
- All complaints received by police departments, incidents and investigations shall be reported to local civilian oversight boards. All communications between the police force and the oversight board shall be public, except as noted.

Recruitment and Professionalism

- We support raising standards for education or prior experience for persons entering police careers.
- We encourage local police departments to maintain racial balance with the communities they serve by hiring qualified Black and Brown individuals in proportion to the communities' population.
- We call on police departments to perform rigorous background checks on applicants to eliminate candidates with records of excessive force or ties to racist or white supremacist organizations.
- We support requiring continuing education for police officers, to assure that police departments maintain high standards of professionalism and incorporate best standards for community service. Police officer salaries should reflect their education and the level of danger they face in their chosen profession. Investing in a police department returns long term benefits to communities.

Environment and the Climate Crisis

We face a crisis of environmental sustainability that threatens every aspect of our lives. The threat is urgent. We cannot delay responding to it. The Democratic Party goal of equal opportunity through inclusive and sustainable development must promote policies to protect our environment and natural resources. A stable climate and healthy environment provide the natural capital that our economy depends on. Environmental policy must be a central element of economic and social policies, including those related to agriculture, education, energy, public health, housing, labor, social welfare, tax reform, transportation, and regional planning.

The climate crisis and environmental degradation threaten everyone, while exacerbating underlying inequalities. Workers in industries dominated by fossil fuels are threatened with job loss, even as clean energy technologies increasingly create more new jobs than coal, oil, and natural gas. Communities of color and poor communities disproportionately suffer the consequences of dirty air, dirty water and climate change. Actions to protect our air and water and combat climate change directly benefit those communities and have a direct and significant impact on improved health outcomes. Our efforts to combat poverty, economic inequality, systemic racism, and the destruction of our environment are connected.

We need to increase efforts to reduce pollution to air, soil, and water from fossil fuel power plants and mobile sources like cars and trucks. Likewise, we must reduce pollution going into waterways and reduce contaminants in our drinking water, such as lead, arsenic, and mercury PFAS.

A Green New Deal initiative can unite Democrats and the country around a bold agenda that integrates climate change into broader economic, social, and environmental objectives. These efforts must be coordinated with our brothers and sisters in labor, communities of color, and those disproportionately affected by environmental injustice.

The Democratic climate and environment agenda includes policies to encourage public and private investment in a healthier environment, improved public health, and reducing greenhouse gases. They will enable workers and communities to adapt to climate change and minimize its impact.

We must mobilize resources at a national scale with utmost urgency.

Existing policies that subsidize the fossil fuel industry can lock in carbon emissions for decades to come and hinder efforts to address the climate crisis. Investing in zero and low-carbon clean energy technologies and resilient infrastructure will create more, better-paying jobs and support economic growth. We must position Maryland and the United States as leaders in tackling the climate crisis.

Economic recovery and stimulus funding designed to help Americans recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be most effective in protecting public health, protecting existing and creating jobs, in the short and long-term when they incorporate policies that include climate and environment objectives. We must mobilize the public and private sectors to reduce emissions as rapidly as possible while maximizing the economic and social benefits of climate action by investing directly in clean energy jobs, zero and low-carbon technologies, adapting and strengthening community resilience to climate change impacts.

Carbon pricing is essential to drive down planet-warming emissions in a rapid, efficient, cost-effective manner. We support policies that put a price on carbon that is informed by the best available science, drives innovation in clean energy, and protects the most vulnerable among us.

The Maryland Democratic Party supports Joe Biden's Plan for a Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice, which is based on the following five pillars:

1. Ensure the U.S. achieves a 100% clean energy economy and net-zero emissions no later than 2050;
2. Build a stronger more, resilient nation;
3. Rally the rest of the world to address the grave climate threat;
4. Stand up to the abuse of power by polluters who disproportionately harm communities of color and low-income communities;
5. Fulfill our obligation to workers and communities who powered our industrial revolution and decades of economic growth.

Joe Biden believes the Green New Deal is a crucial framework for meeting the climate challenges we face. It powerfully captures two basic truths, which are at the core of his plan:

- (1) the United States urgently needs to embrace greater ambition on an epic scale to meet the scope of this challenge, and (2) our environment and our economy are completely and totally connected.

The MDP supports the guidelines adopted by the DNC Environment and Climate Crisis Council for the development of the DNC and Maryland platforms:

- Use the Green New Deal's vision and aspirations as a framework;
- Address the climate crisis with urgency, boldness and comprehensiveness;
- Focus on environmental justice, inequality and a just transition for all Americans in a clean energy economy; and
- Advocate for the use of legislative and executive actions regarding the climate crisis and make specific recommendations for those actions.

The MDP also supports the following principles from the Evergreen Action Plan, which we view as complementary to the Biden plan:

- Powering the Economy with 100% Clean Energy with targeted strategies for key sectors of the economy: electricity, transportation, buildings, industries, and agriculture.
- Investing in Good Jobs, Infrastructure, Industry & Innovation: Creating millions of good-paying jobs benefiting every community through major new investments in modernized infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture, conservation, and clean tech innovation, while supporting workers and protecting the right to organize.
- Building Greater Justice & Economic Inclusion: Confronting environmental racism and supporting the front-line, low-income, and indigenous communities and communities of color that are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, pollution, and economic disinvestment.
- Ending Fossil Fuel Giveaways: Ending billions in subsidies and handouts, and holding polluters accountable for their environmental harm. And intentionally transitioning away from fossil fuels while protecting workers, natural resources, and diversifying the local economies that depend on them today.
- Mobilizing Global Action: Committing American leadership in an ambitious global effort to confront the climate crisis, using every tool in foreign policy: diplomacy, finance, trade, aid and assistance.

Maryland's Environmental Concerns and Solutions

Marylanders experience the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation every day. The economic and health costs in every county throughout the state are enormous.

- Maryland's extensive coastal resources make this state one of the most vulnerable to climate change. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Chesapeake Bay is the third most vulnerable region in the country to sea level rise.
- Statewide, hospital visits for asthma are on the rise, particularly in urban communities. Rising temperatures contribute greatly to this surge. The economic and health impacts of the climate and environment crises hit communities of color, the working poor, the young and the elderly hardest.
- Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity and cause economic damage throughout the state.
 - 84.3 million gallons of sewage spilled in Maryland after Hurricane Sandy.
 - Ellicott City has experienced catastrophic 500-year floods twice in the past five years.
 - Annapolis and Baltimore face severe flooding that threatens critical regional infrastructure. Rising sea levels may force the U.S. Naval Academy to relocate by 2100. In Baltimore City, annualized damages due to coastal flooding are estimated at \$2.2 million.
- Maryland's crab and oyster industry, iconic elements of the state's culture and central elements of the economy, are in peril.
- In 2019, Maryland Democrats passed historic legislation that increased the State's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) from 25% by 2020 to 50% by 2030. We support efforts to make the RPS more aggressive and move toward 100% clean energy and net-zero emissions no later than 2050.
- Maryland should continue working with other states to provide a regional approach to shared environmental problems. This assures that we can move forward even if the federal government fails to provide adequate leadership.
- Maryland Democrats are committed to expanding and strengthening existing mechanisms such as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), to accelerate our shift from fossil fuels to clean energy. RGGI can be integrated into a national system that prices carbon and ultimately into an international carbon market.
- We believe that the RGGI model of regional cooperation on emissions can be applied to the transportation sector, now the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Public engagement and funding are needed to provide improved mass transit options throughout the state to cut down on travel times and reduce the high number of single occupant vehicles.
- Locating new development near mass transit and providing infrastructure and financial incentives to diversify the transportation system, particularly to support electric and hydrogen cell-powered vehicle charging stations, is critical. Dedicating more infrastructure to bicyclists and pedestrians improves mobility, public health and reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- We support continuing Maryland's cooperation with other states through the U.S. Climate Alliance.
- Sound public policy depends upon publicly accessible data that supports meaningful civic engagement and science-based decision making. Democrats support making information on the health of our environment publicly available, including air and water quality and environmental contamination.
- Measures that reduce greenhouse gas pollution often reduce local air pollution and have direct positive impacts upon public health, particularly land-use planning, transportation, and energy policy.
- Fossil fuel power plants and vehicles contribute to air, soil and water pollution and have a harmful effect on public health. They should be phased out in a transition to a 100% clean

energy economy. We must also prepare workers for good paying, unionized clean-energy jobs.

- Investing in non-polluting mass transit needs to be dramatically increased to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and carbon emissions. Investing in green infrastructure in Maryland has enormous local benefits for health and quality of life by reducing commuting times and increasing the use of non-polluting vehicles, public bus and rail service, and making communities more conducive to biking and walking.
- Maryland has been proactive in investing in local communities to improve drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities. For instance, a \$4-million Maryland grant allowed the Town of Easton to achieve its goal of a completely sustainable, integrated water and waste-water reuse facility. Maryland should continue and expand grant programs and other finance mechanisms to counties and municipalities, particularly as climate change impacts water and wastewater facilities.
- The Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's waterways are essential to Maryland's economic viability, as well as providing recreational activities for Marylanders. Their long-term decline has adversely impacted every Marylander. Water quality must be addressed in a more concerted and effective way – both in Maryland and across the United States, with a strong emphasis on strengthening resilience to climate change impacts.
- Biodiversity loss and species extinction is as urgent as the climate crisis. Climate change contributes heavily to it and to the rise in invasive species that threaten indigenous species and crops. Local efforts to protect natural habitat must be strengthened. This includes enhancing protection of public lands and planning that minimizes biodiversity loss caused by private development.
- The state Public Service Commission and other state and local agencies must consider climate impacts using the best available science in any permitting or approval decisions.

Health Care

Maryland's Democrats universally agree health care is a right for all, not a privilege for the few. We seek to ensure quality healthcare for every Marylander when and where they need it. Every person in Maryland has the right to appropriate health care as decided by that person and their medical professionals.

Health Inequities

We must act to eliminate inequities in healthcare. Identifiable groups such as African-Americans, women, LGBTQ, and Latinx experience differences in healthcare outcomes. For example, African-American people have higher rates of asthma, diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. We must work to eliminate the effects of chronic poverty, unemployment, systemic racism and implicit bias from our healthcare delivery systems, all of which cause unequal healthcare outcomes.

- We support the inclusion in Maryland of non-discrimination rules and laws to prevent medical providers and institutions from varying diagnoses and treatment based on race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or creed, citizenship, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, color, or national origin.
- Implicit racial bias among healthcare providers can cause people, to be treated differently in the same setting and with the same symptoms, regardless of economic status. This leads to poorer healthcare outcomes for minorities. We support requiring implicit bias education for healthcare workers.
- Systemic inequities cause a racial gap in income, wealth, and access to health insurance. These barriers adversely affect the level of care people of color receive. Addressing these inequities as outlined in other parts of this platform will also help to reduce healthcare disparities.
- Communities impacted by redlining and disinvestment must have access to medical resources in their neighborhoods.
- We must eliminate food deserts in communities where the lack of fresh foods contributes to higher incidences of diseases caused by poor diet, such as heart disease and diabetes.
- Historical trauma as a result of racism, violence or over policing adversely affects well-being, physical and mental health.
- We call for increased research and the inclusion of racially and ethnically disaggregated health data.
- We support policies that encourage including black and brown doctors and scientists in research projects to increase sensitivity to racial issues affecting research. We must remove barriers to people of color entering the medical professions, including discrimination, implicit bias, and systemic racism.
- We believe a person's language should not be a barrier to care. We support funding telehealth language resource centers for medical professionals and patients. We support cultural sensitivity training for medical professionals and staff.
- We call for strong protection for undocumented immigrants in medical settings, and outreach to the immigrant communities to inform them of the policies in place to protect their health. Undocumented immigrants may avoid or delay seeking care due to fear of being detained or deported.

Health Issues

Prescription Drugs

- We must stop price gouging of medications and hold pharmaceutical companies accountable.
- Essential, life-preserving medications must be available at affordable prices to all. We call for capping the prices of these prescriptions through negotiation or legislation. In 2019, the Maryland General Assembly voted to create the first in the nation Prescription Drug Affordability Board, charged with developing a plan to lower pharmaceutical drug prices. We must develop a funding source for the Board to ensure that its work continues. We must move forward to implement the Board's recommendations as they are developed, to make prescription drugs affordable.

Rural Communities

Rural areas are underserved in all areas of medical services, including medical professionals and facilities needed to serve rural populations. Rural residents often travel long distances to receive both normal and specialized medical care for health matters such as cancer treatment, dental services, or even pediatric visits. Systemic issues such as low population density, poverty and lack of health insurance make it unprofitable for medical professionals to practice and facilities to locate in those areas.

- We call for investing resources in rural communities to help struggling hospitals, build and maintain community health centers and attract medical professionals to rural communities.
- Universal healthcare will address the shortcomings of rural healthcare systems imposed by lack of medical insurance and low profitability for health service providers. Removing cost barriers to medical care enables rural residents to obtain timely care. This will improve medical outcomes, while also increasing the availability of health service providers.

Women's Health

- The Maryland Democratic Party supports women's right to make reproductive healthcare decisions.
- We oppose any effort to weaken reproductive rights through restrictive legislation that create barriers to access.
- The Maryland Democratic Party strenuously objects to any medical professional or facility withholding medical service to any person on the basis of religious beliefs. Specifically, a woman's right to control reproductive decisions may not be superseded by a medical provider's personal beliefs.
- We oppose gender discrimination in healthcare costs.

Seniors and People with Disabilities

- We believe that everyone has a right to care that respects their safety, health, and dignity, whether in an institutional, home, or community-based setting.
- We are committed to ending biases favoring institutional care over home- and community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities. On average, such home and community-based care costs less than institutional care, so there is no economic benefit to favoring it.

- We are committed to full public funding for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). These assist older adults and people with disabilities choosing to live in communities rather than assisted living facilities, while still receiving appropriate services and support. These programs must include funding non-traditional costs such as first month's rent, security deposit, home modification, startup household costs, and reliable, private, accessible communication. This is necessary because currently people must exhaust all their assets before receiving public assistance for institutional care, leaving them no assets to be able to leave the facility
- We recognize the right of people with disabilities to make their own choices regarding their care.
- We call for greater representation of people with disabilities on boards and commissions setting policies affecting their treatment and care.

Public Health

Current events have shown the critical importance of preparedness for public health emergencies. It has become typical over the last century or so for the debate around healthcare policy to be centered around individual care, how many, how much, who pays and how paid. The current pandemic has brought us back to a time of rampant, untreatable, infectious diseases such as cholera and diphtheria.

Pandemic Preparedness

- We support increased public health funding for planning, treatment and control of diseases that reaches epidemic or pandemic proportions within Maryland.
- We support seed funding for businesses that manufacture, distribute and stock essential medical equipment such as personal protection equipment.

Gun Violence:

- We support strengthening Maryland's gun laws in order to reduce injuries, hospitalizations, trauma, and deaths due to gun violence. In 2019, more than 26,000 violent crimes, excluding rape, occurred in Maryland, most of which involved firearms. The economic impact of gun violence in Maryland exceeds \$3.6 billion annually.
- We support tougher background checks and the tracking of ammunition
- We support closing loopholes that allow easy access to firearms.
- COVID-19 has increased the stress on families and communities and has created an environment that raises the incidents of domestic violence, suicides and homicides.
- We support research on the impact of gun violence on health.

Opioid and Other Substance Addictions

Opioid and other substance addictions cross racial, gender, economic and ethnic boundaries to kill thousands of Marylanders every year. It is estimated that the economic impact of opioid abuse nationwide is \$78 billion per year in healthcare, lost productivity, treatment, and criminal justice. The cost is measured in more than dollars, as addiction ruins lives. It is imperative that Maryland address this problem proactively.

The Maryland Democratic Party supports these actions to reduce the impact of opioid abuse:

- We support broad availability of Naloxone, requiring all pharmacies to maintain adequate stock levels of this life-saving drug, and for supplies to be available in all local and State government buildings.

- We support making addiction treatment programs freely available to every person in Maryland.
- We support funding for Overdose Prevention Sites across the state to provide both safe consumption and gateways for drug users to enter rehabilitative programs.

Health Coverage

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed essential weaknesses in our nation's health coverage structure. Employer-based health insurance fails to provide coverage for both the unemployed and many workers whose jobs do not offer it. Those insured through employer-provided group plans have little flexibility to decide the level of coverage right for them. Also, those plans are ill-equipped to respond to public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic strikes.

It is clear that we need to move toward a coherent, universal health coverage system. We support expanding the Affordable Care Act to serve as a bridge to the model best suited to meet dynamic healthcare needs, whether that model includes a public option or single-payer coverage that includes vision, dental, mental health, illness, injury, and pre-existing conditions.

Education

Maryland Democrats are committed to creating a state where our children receive a debt-free, world-class quality education that prepares them for the economy of the future.

We believe public education must provide every student an equal opportunity to reach their potential and deliver on the Maryland constitutional promise of a “thorough and efficient system of public schools” for all students, regardless of their zip code.

Developmentally appropriate early childhood education is the foundation for a lifetime of learning. Maryland needs to continue its role as a national leader in building an early childcare system to address the long-standing problems of child care deserts, the high cost of child care, and accessibility of childcare through an equity lens. MDP also understands that education begins early, and continued attention needs to be paid to the nexus between prenatal health and education.

Maryland students must have access to world-class pre-K through 12 public education to prepare them to live, work and thrive in a diverse and highly connected world and the economy of the future. Maryland must fully fund public education to correct years of insufficient and inequitable allocations and prepare our students for postsecondary education, career and technical education, and active citizenship throughout their lives.

The Maryland Democratic Party continues to support the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future from the 2020 General Assembly session. The Blueprint goes a long way toward mitigating Maryland’s historic socio-economic inequities. It includes specific funding to support students living in poverty and additional resources for schools with a concentration of poverty. It provides programs and support for English language learners. It ensures adequate funding and staffing to support special education programs and students with disabilities. It provides critical investments to increase pay for teachers to recruit and retain them in the profession, improve staffing to reduce class-sizes and individualized instruction, expand Pre-K to three- and four-year old’s, and grow career and technical pathways for all students.

Maryland Democrats support adequate and equitable funding for:

- Full implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future from the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission);
- Per-pupil funding formulas codified in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future;
- Capital investment to provide safe and modern buildings for students to learn and educators to work, including appropriate heating and cooling systems;
- Supplying all schools, classrooms, and teachers with both sufficient basic supplies and the latest technology to support educational needs;
- All of our schools, students, and staff have ready access to high speed and reliable Internet.

The Maryland Democratic Party believes public tax dollars must be used to support public education and not to subsidize private school voucher systems or for-profit charter schools.

Maryland Democrats support providing diverse and culturally responsive curricula

- We call for a whole child approach to education that encourages students to acquire general knowledge, becoming accomplished at respecting others, thinking critically, working collaboratively and creatively, and acting in ways that are fair and just.
- We support developing culturally responsive curricula, restorative practices, trauma-informed instruction, and applying critical race theory.

- A strong, continuing STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) education is vital for students to compete in the 21st century economy; also, civics, social sciences, life skills, financial literacy and the arts are essential to a well-rounded education and cannot be ignored. Students should be encouraged to pursue knowledge in all its forms, develop a well-balanced worldview, and an understanding of our social, civic, and cultural institutions.
- Maryland's curricula must ensure all graduating high school students are climate literate by including the scientific evidence for climate change and the harm climate change causes to our environment.
- Maryland's schoolchildren must have up-to-date textbooks, including history books that are inclusive and historically accurate, and science books that fully reflect the strong scientific consensus on issues of science.
- Maryland's schools must include a curriculum that promotes medically accurate and complete, age-appropriate, gender-inclusive sex education which also teaches principles of mutual consent.

Maryland Democrats support safe schools and the expansion of wraparound services to perform as community schools.

- Students perform better when they are healthy. Maryland Democrats support full funding for community schools and specific supports including nutrition programs for both breakfast and lunch, school and mental health counseling, school nurses, and school-based health centers
- We support expanded high-quality before- and after-school programs and learning opportunities to address students' remediation needs.
- We support life-long learning and the availability of adult and senior education.
- We call for strengthening anti-bullying policies and providing all students and educators with a safe and supportive learning environment.
- We call for Maryland schools to be sanctuaries for all children, irrespective of immigration status and documentation.
- We oppose zero-tolerance policies and punitive discipline policies that criminalize student behavior. We call for school discipline reforms that encourage counseling, education, and positive behavior.
- We call for School Resource Officers working with children and teenagers to receive adequate training on proper, up-to-date, non-violent crisis intervention techniques and principles.
- We oppose arming teachers and school staff. Bringing guns into schools make them less safe and put all students and staff at increased risk of becoming victims of gun violence. We oppose all weapons in schools.

Maryland Democrats support accessible and affordable pathways to careers or higher education.

- All students should be able to attend college or post-secondary training without the burden of excessive debt.
- Maryland Democrats support policies to address the student debt crisis.
- Every student should have opportunities to participate in apprenticeships, career and technical education, or college-preparatory programs.
- We support providing funding to continue or expand Maryland's College Promise scholarship program to expand post-secondary education opportunities for students.

- We support equitable funding of Maryland's Historically Black Colleges and Universities so they can expand staffing and deliver high-quality education to all students attending them.

Maryland Democrats support expanded collective bargaining rights for educators.

A world-class education needs world-class educators. Maryland Democrats support the right of teachers to participate in unions to promote their professional development and assure they have a voice in making Maryland's school systems world-class educational institutions.

We support:

- Recruitment and retention of a diverse pool of high-quality teachers, administrators and support staff;
- Access to relevant and quality professional development programs for educators;
- The right of educational professionals to freely and collectively negotiate instructional and educational issues that enhance opportunities for student learning as well as working conditions and employment stability;
- The right of full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, graduate assistants and support staff in public community colleges and universities to form and bargain collectively as part of a union.

Economy

Maryland's economy is a success story. The people of our state enjoy the benefits of a strong safety net, public resources, and a great education system. This state has the highest median income in the country. It is a great place for investors and small businesses to grow and thrive.

In spite of this, vast inequalities exist. Insufficient funding for education and transportation have harmed our economy and reduced opportunities for growth and economic expansion. At the start of 2020, 10% of Marylanders live below the Federal poverty line. A third of working Marylanders struggle to afford basic life necessities. The COVID-19 pandemic has put many Marylanders in financial peril.

Maryland invests in its people, communities, education, healthcare, and other elements of infrastructure, making our state more prosperous and livable. To continue on this path and to ensure the inclusion of those now left behind, Maryland must commit to inclusion and justice. Investing in economic growth in a way that reaches all will strengthen our long-term competitiveness and create increased jobs in coming years.

The Maryland Democratic Party envisions our state as a leader and model of success through investments in our people and infrastructure.

- We must reduce income inequality through increased wages and fair, progressive taxation that reduces the burden on the working poor and middle class while requiring the wealthy to pay their fair share of taxes.
- We support taking steps to end corporate concentration that unfairly limits competition and centralizes power and control over markets and workers.
- We support stronger competition and antitrust policies. We encourage state agencies to police anti-competitive practices within their areas of jurisdiction

The current pandemic, climate change and the need to rebuild the middle class require aggressive investment in Maryland's infrastructure. The pandemic damages the economy in ways from which the private sector cannot recover without active support from Maryland's government.

- We call for creating and implementing programs to put Marylander's to work updating, expanding and building roads, bridges, mass transit, airports, rail lines, harbors, broadband, schools, community center, health facilities, and other elements of our infrastructure.
- We must plan for climate resilience as we create and implement these programs.

These investments will create secure, good-paying, middle-class jobs today and substantially increase demand for Maryland products and services.

Small Business

Small business is essential to Maryland's economy. Small businesses account for the majority of jobs in the state and provide innovative services. Many small businesses have been decimated by the pandemic. Small business pandemic relief grants and loans have been insufficient and difficult to access. As we rebuild the economy post-pandemic, there will be opportunities for new businesses, even as some industries will be altered permanently. We must invest in small business to stimulate necessary economic growth and create jobs.

Many people who lost jobs during the pandemic will be out of work indefinitely, as some businesses and entire industries close permanently. Some of these newly unemployed will use the opportunity to start new businesses.

- We must expand loans and grants to small businesses impacted by the pandemic. We call on government of all levels to streamline application processes and make the funds more widely available to all.
- We must encourage innovation and creation of new businesses through loans, grants, and incentives for new and needed industries.
- We must distribute all business resources in an equitable way to encourage women- and minority-owned businesses.
- We must encourage entrepreneurship and extend pandemic unemployment benefits to give those who lost jobs during the pandemic a runway to achieve success.

Protecting Maryland from Predatory Lending

Payday loans, predatory lending and abusive collection practices bilk Marylanders out of millions of dollars. These practices target the elderly, low- and moderate-income individuals, and minorities, causing them great economic hardship and personal pain. Also, those caught in a cycle of repeated borrowing to repay those loans are unable to improve their economic situations, depriving them of the opportunity of attaining financial security.

- The Maryland Democratic Party supports laws requiring full and accurate disclosure of interest rates, balloon payments, hidden costs, and all other information consumers need to make informed borrowing choices.
- We support strengthening laws that give the Maryland Attorney General greater power to obtain compensation for all victims of predatory lending.

Employment

The Maryland Democratic Party believes in strengthening, protecting, and investing in Maryland's workforce. Our economy works best when policies ensure employers act responsibly toward their employees, the environment, and our communities. Over 3 million Maryland workers provide 70% of the revenues to Maryland's budget. Our state is experiencing a rapidly growing economic disparity between the working poor and our wealthiest individuals. When our policies support workers and their families, the entire state prospers.

Fair employment practices, minimum and living wages, economic safety nets, and a safe, clean, and healthy workplace fully support economic growth and Maryland's preparedness for the future. Changing demographics and evolutionary changes to work have enormous impacts on working families. Employment should enhance working people's ability to nurture healthy, stable families and communities, and enjoy the quality of life they have earned.

- We support workplaces free from discrimination. All workers have a right to a job regardless of sex, gender identity, ethnicity, age, race, religion, income, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, immigration or refugee status.
- We support a statewide, family-sustaining living wage indexed for inflation and regionally-adjusted for areas with a higher cost of living.
- We support full enforcement and enhancement of workplace health and safety laws to include regulations addressing workplace violence and a safe work environment free from harassment and bullying.
- We support pay equity, equal compensation for equivalent work, for all workers, including women, veterans, people of color, and people with disabilities.
- We support laws that acknowledge the challenges working families face, the need for consistent work schedules, no mandatory overtime, and paid sick, safe and family leave for both private and public employees on an accrual basis.
- We support paid family and medical leave that allows all employees to take job-protected paid leave to recover from a serious illness or injury, to care for an ill or injured family member or a new child. We support policies that prohibit employer retaliation against workers who take time off under these conditions.
- We support expanded and more effective whistleblower protection, with access to courts and protection from retaliation, for all workers at all levels on all public and private jobs.
- We support prevailing wages to protect the economic base of communities to ensure government does not lower the standard of living. We reject any attempt to repeal, reduce or limit prevailing wages.
- We support the use of project labor agreements to ensure workers on taxpayer funded projects receive a decent wage, healthcare and retirement benefits.
- We support workers having defined pensions, retirement plans and retirement health benefits and reject under-funding of pension liabilities by either the private or public sector.
- We support the protection of workers' retirement pensions and savings by preventing corporations from using mergers and bankruptcy courts to reduce, withhold or terminate workers' pensions.

- We support full rights for workers employed in subcontracted or temporary work. All rules and worker protections applying to contractors must apply in equal force to subcontractors and their employees.
- We support policies that strengthen existing protections against wage theft which misclassifies employees as independent contractors; we support policies that create meaningful consequences for employers who commit wage theft.
- We support protection against exploitation of seasonal, temporary, migrant and contract workers.
- We oppose all forms of coerced labor such as human trafficking.
- We oppose negotiations, agreements and contracts that outsource Maryland jobs to lower wage regions.
- We support protecting and expanding critical economic safety nets with additional unemployment benefits for workers when adverse economic conditions warrant.
- We support providing just compensation and adequate care for victims of occupational disease and work-related injuries.
- We support buying American, using American-made products in manufacturing and in construction, and buying consumer goods made in America.
- We support the broad availability of the affordable, high-quality childcare essential to workers' ability to enter, rejoin, or stay in the labor market. This is especially important now as we rebuild Maryland's economy.
- We support Maryland's increase in the value of child care scholarships for qualifying families to 60% of the market rate and believe in protecting this supplement for families and child care providers.
- We support benefits, medical leave, and higher wages to develop and support a high-quality child care workforce.
- We support education and professional development for family-based community childcare providers.

Maryland Democrats echo the Democratic National Committee in recognizing that organized labor is essential to the social, economic, and political health of our democracy. The decline of real wages over the past four decades was synchronized with powerful anti-union attacks that amplify the need for workers to have a strong collective voice.

Maryland Democrats support unions and recognize the value they add to workers and our state and local economies. Every worker has a right to organize, join and bargain collectively to determine working conditions, pay and benefits.

Labor unions led the fight to improve working conditions and labor standards for all workers. They helped build the largest middle class in history. Organized labor remains critical to ensuring that the wealth-generating labor of working people is justly rewarded. Workers enjoy the benefits of the 40-hour work week, minimum wage, health insurance, paid leave, pensions, workers compensation, unemployment insurance, Social Security and Medicare because working people in unions fought for those improvements in workplace conditions and the rights of all people.

- We support strong enforcement of laws guaranteeing all workers the right to organize and join a union, to enjoy due process, and to bargain collectively without any interference, intimidation, retaliation or threats from employers or government. We oppose union-busting proposals, such as so-called "right-to-work," laws and prohibitions on payroll deduction of union dues.
- We support enforceable organizing agreements that include employer neutrality, recognition of card check, binding arbitration, the right to strike, labor peace and respect for picket lines by not crossing them.

- We support protecting the collective bargaining rights of both public and private sector workers. We support binding arbitration for public employees and other workers not permitted to strike.
- We support the rights of educational professionals to freely and collectively negotiate instructional and educational issues that enhance opportunities for student learning as well as working conditions, wages, benefits, and employment stability.

Housing

The Maryland Democratic Party believes every individual has a right to accessible, affordable and safe housing. We recognize stable housing is a key factor contributing to the health and safety of individuals, families, and communities and the beneficial effects of stable housing impact the entire state.

We must protect renters and homeowners, ensure adequate availability of affordable housing near good jobs and schools, and end racial housing disparities. Racial and economic disparities have created and continue to fuel a housing crisis, leaving good housing out of reach for many and contributing to generational poverty and homelessness. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates existing housing disparities; without decisive action, the economic consequences of the pandemic will be felt for many years.

Equity and Inequality

Although the Fair Housing Act was enacted more than 50 years ago, segregation remains high for people of color across the entire spectrum of economic and education status. Exclusionary practices, racial avoidance, mortgage discrimination and modern-day redlining reinforce segregation and contribute to income inequality and the racial wealth gap. Segregation and racial discrimination affect home values even in high income communities.

- We must strengthen fair housing laws and ensure enforcement of those laws to end racial segregation and concentrated poverty.
- We must strengthen fair housing policy to improve educational outcomes for all students. It's said that "housing policy is school policy." Racial housing segregation contributes to educational disparities.
- We must end the practice of financial institutions engaging in predatory lending.
- We must increase the supply of affordable, accessible housing for people with disabilities. People of color with disabilities often experience additional disparities and discrimination.

Affordable Housing

There is great need for more affordable housing in Maryland. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there is a shortage of 127,861 rental homes affordable and available to extremely low income renters. 84% of renters in this category are cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing. 73% are severely cost burdened, spending more than 50% of their income on housing.

- We must close this deficit and insist on funding and building affordable housing throughout the state, particularly in high-opportunity communities where affordable housing is not already concentrated.
- We must set aside and build a portion of affordable housing as accessible to people with disabilities.
- We must develop affordable housing in mixed-income social housing communities that include low-income, mid-income, and market-rate housing, to avoid concentrated poverty.

Economic Opportunity

Housing affordability is tied to income. A worker would need an hourly wage of \$27.52 to afford a 2-bedroom apartment at fair market rent without cost burden. The current Maryland minimum wage of \$11 per hour puts affordable rent out of reach of many Marylanders. Pay equity will help more families afford rent without becoming burdened.

- We must increase the minimum wage so that a majority of Marylanders can afford housing for a typical family of four.
- Home ownership can provide a sense of pride and help increase family wealth. Housing and lending discrimination are contributors to the racial wealth gap. Expanding programs to assist first time homebuyers, and enforcement of fair housing laws and lending practices will help close the racial wealth gap and increase economic opportunities for all.
- We must ensure real property taxes are equitable and are not a barrier to homeownership.
- We call upon state and local governments to enforce the 2020 HOME Act, which prevents landlords from discriminating against any valid source of income, including federal Housing Choice Vouchers. The HOME Act will help to eliminate pockets of poverty by making more housing available to low-income families in high-opportunity areas near good jobs and schools.
- We support programs to transition homeless people into permanent housing in settings that include wraparound services such as mental health services and job placement assistance.

Protect Tenants

- We support placing reasonable limits on annual rent increases to prevent skyrocketing rental costs from driving low- and mid-income renters out of their homes.
- We support policies and effective enforcement to protect tenants from unsafe conditions and predatory landlords.
- We must require landlords to disclose billing practices to potential tenants, including whether they use a ratio billing system, which divides utility bills among tenants without being based on usage.
- We support a state income tax credit to renters. This compensates renters for property taxes they pay indirectly hidden in their rent.

Planning and Development

- We support planning and developing processes that ensure homes are located in healthy and safe environments, maintaining reasonable distance from sources of industrial or commercial contamination.
- We discourage further development in areas designated as floodplains by FEMA.
- We support development of communities that have ready access to fresh food, medical facilities, and adequate open space.

Sustainability and Environment

- We encourage housing development as part of walkable, mixed use communities, close to mass transit, where people can live, work, shop, and play. This will reduce commuting times and greenhouse gas emissions while creating connected, livable communities.
- We support policies that decarbonize new homes and retrofit older homes to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- We support financial and tax credit incentives for installing and maintaining clean energy upgrades such as solar panels and vehicle electric charging stations.
- We support requiring all new residential building to include solar panels.
- We support requiring all new commercial development include solar panels, vehicle electric charging stations, and other clean energy upgrades.
- We support building codes that require new homes to be resilient to the effects of climate change, including flooding and extreme weather.

Rural and Agricultural Resources

Our rural and agricultural communities contribute immensely to the greater quality of life enjoyed in Maryland. Rural areas and open spaces provide environmental protections, among which is serving as a 'green lung', cooling and cleaning air and protecting drinking water, and the threatened Chesapeake Bay watershed. These lands supply critical habitats for plants and wildlife. Marylanders in all areas of food distribution, including restaurants, grocery stores and farmers markets, benefit from locally produced farm and watershed products. Preserved within these areas we find much of what remains of historic and prehistoric life in Maryland. These lands provide myriad recreational opportunities for Marylanders such as tourism, hiking, biking, photography, boating, and birding. Thousands are employed in agriculture and related peripheral industries that support its consumer and recreational aspects.

Maryland's rural counties enjoy areas of great natural beauty, historical sites, and open lands. Forested mountains and lakes grace rugged Western Maryland's scenery. Eastern Maryland's shores and islands enhance the area's rustic qualities. More than their scenic beauty, these natural wonders preserve environmental quality and support the regions' economy through tourism and recreation.

A substantial agricultural base supports a diverse business community. It builds a strong economic base for Maryland. Preserving open spaces and natural resources enhances Maryland's beauty and quality of life.

Rural Maryland

A large part of Maryland is rural, including eighteen counties and significant areas in other counties. Maryland's rural residents have limited transportation options, lack access to and availability of healthcare, and generally have lower per capita income and limited economic opportunity. While these issues have impacts across Maryland, rural communities need different solutions.

The Maryland Democratic Party is committed to every person in the state enjoying economic and educational opportunity and having locally accessible and available healthcare. We are committed to protecting rural areas and their ways of life, even as these areas develop their untapped potential.

- The Maryland Democratic Party supports developing land use programs to conserve and preserve irreplaceable natural resources for present and future generations.
- We support the addition and improvement of transportation alternatives to facilitate rural residents' access to employment, and commercial resources.
- We support expanding low cost, high-speed broadband accessibility to all rural communities and individuals.
- We support funding for additional and improved healthcare in rural areas including building clinics and hospitals and increasing availability of dental, eye and other healthcare professionals.
- We support incentives to attract healthcare professionals to work, live and remain in rural areas.
- We support federal, state and local conservation efforts to preserve our natural, historic and prehistoric resources.
- The Maryland Democratic Party supports ending educational disparities that adversely affect rural areas. While these disparities also generally occur in urban areas, their solutions must be specific to the region.

- We support expanding Maryland's rural water and sewer systems to ensure that rural residents and businesses have access to clean water and sanitary, non-polluting waste disposal.
- We support continuing efforts to ensure the health of all Maryland's rivers and streams and of the Chesapeake Bay.
- We call for all states in the Chesapeake Watershed and the Environmental Protection Agency to strengthen and enforce state and Federal clean water standards to ensure the Bay's economic and cultural viability.
- We support further efforts to ensure continued success of Maryland's watermen and fisheries of the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean.
- We support continued efforts to ensure the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean are enjoyed by current and future generations of boaters and fishers.
- We support programs to protect wetlands and ecologically fragile shorelines from the effects of climate change.
- We must proactively plan to address the human displacement and environmental and economic impacts of water level rise.

Agriculture

Maryland's resilience depends upon our ability to supply our own needs at any given point in time. Recent events have shown we cannot be fully dependent upon food commodities and supplies from other countries or even other states being readily available to Maryland's residents. Maryland must consider what investment it will make to ensure foodstuffs are locally grown, caught, or raised within Maryland.

- We support preserving large contiguous areas of land for farming and open space. Commercial development must be planned to avoid degrading land preservation and agricultural use of adjacent areas.
- We support policies to preserve family-owned farms and build new generations of family farmers in order to retain and expand food self-sufficiency.
- We support regulating factory farms to protect the environment and preserve family farming.
- We support strong agricultural worker protection laws and regulations that include the right to organize, reasonable work schedules and working conditions, jobs that pay a living wage, adequate and appropriate temporary housing, and sanitary facilities in fields.

We support strengthening guest worker programs to provide essential labor for periods in the food production cycle where American workers may not be available.

Sustainable Agriculture and Local Food

Food production is known to deplete soil and water resources. Historically, crop rotation has been used to avoid overfarming an area. Sustainable agriculture is a constellation of practices designed to increase profitability of farming, promote environmental quality, enhance quality of life in agricultural and rural areas, and increase crop yield for human consumption. Sustainable practices result in reducing agricultural use of pesticides and other food and environmental damaging chemicals, increasing nutrient densities in soil and crops, and moving food from the farm to the consumer rapidly, preserving the nutritive value of produce. Distribution and sale of locally-grown foods reduces transportation and storage costs, making fresh, healthful foods less costly for consumers and creates a path to eliminating food deserts.

The Maryland Democratic Party encourages the expansion of sustainable methods wherever they can be applied.

- We support using state and local resources to provide small and medium sized growers with marketing, sales, distribution, bulk buying, production coordination, training access, shared equipment, and other infrastructure and services in order to enhance their economic viability.
- We support policies to enhance local self-sufficiency and food security with exportation throughout Maryland and to surrounding states of Maryland-produced foods.
- We support the use of pastured and rotationally grazed animals instead of contained animal feed product operations.
- We support programs to reduce the use of antibiotics in animals used as or in producing food.
- We support programs offering financial incentives to reduce fertilizer use and optimize crop yield.

Governance and Voting

Clean and Fair Elections

Maryland has taken great strides to guarantee free and fair elections for all, increase citizen participation in elections and protect voting rights, but more remains to be done. In our ever-changing world we must do more to make our elections fairer and more accessible to all. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed shortcomings that need to be address in order to continue our state's progress toward free, secure elections.

- In light of the impositions that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced on election procedures, the number of polling places has been drastically reduced, limiting access to election day voter registration. Therefore, we must evaluate the Maryland voter registration process to determine how it can meet our state's constitutional obligation to provide voter registration up to and including election day.
- We support legislation allowing unaffiliated voters to declare their party affiliation during early voting and on election day. While unregistered voters can register on election day, already-registered unaffiliated voters do not enjoy this right. We support extending same-day changes to party affiliation to all voters.
- We must continue or expand voter registration outreach efforts to new citizens and the formerly incarcerated.
- We must engage in outreach to educate voters on Maryland's primary system.
- Maryland must end partisan gerrymandering as part of a national compact. We call for an end to local gerrymandering at the precinct level.

Campaign Financing

- We support small-donor matching systems for all public office campaigns at all levels of government. These systems provide matching funds to candidates who qualify and agree not to accept larger donations. Small donor matching empowers citizens and reduces the excessive influence well-financed special interests hold over our elections. We call for sequestering public funds in campaign accounting to allow candidates accepting matching funds to use private contributions for other registered campaigns or for political parties.
- We support strengthening disclosure requirements. All organizations must disclose their large donors. We must end the process of allowing donors to hide their donations by funneling them through intermediary organizations.
- In accordance with the 2016 DNC platform, we support a U.S. Constitutional amendment to reserve Constitutional rights for natural persons only, to overturn Citizens United, and restore the right of the nation and states to regulate contributions and expenditures intended to influence elections.

Good Government

We support strengthening transparency laws regulating open meetings, disclosure, and responses to public information requests. Transparency is essential for citizens to hold government accountable and for the government and the press to inform residents.

Voter Protection

Voting is the keystone of our system of government, Every vote in every election is an essential expression of democracy, contributing to the confidence every citizen has in the legitimacy of our government. To restrict a citizen's right to vote is more than an abrogation of that citizen's vote. It is an attack on the core of our system of government. The Maryland Democratic Party stands for protecting every voter, every vote, and our democratic process. We support full participation in all elections. Every legitimately-cast vote must be accurately counted.

- The Maryland State Board of Elections must produce and provide to the public detailed precinct-level election results for every Maryland precinct voting in every local, state or federal election.
- Maryland law requires reporting precinct level election results and must not be waived under any circumstance. The manner in which a vote is cast, either at precinct polling places, early voting centers, vote polling sites or mailed ballots must not be a factor in producing precinct level voting data and providing it to the public. Precinct level voting data is vital for court adjudication of redistricting cases and is significant for detecting fraud, abuse and error.
- We support the continuance of Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act, which prohibits discriminatory redistricting. Courts depend upon the racial and ethnic data available through precinct level voting data for determinations.
- We support using polling places to accommodate the needs of those who must vote in person; this includes first-time registrants, the homeless, and those who need special accommodations or other forms of assistance with voting.
- We support policies to make in-person voting available to more people who need it, such as moving election day to weekends or making election day a work holiday.
- We support the Maryland State Board of Elections adoption of formal rules to allow county Boards of Elections to count mailed ballots after a prescribed "cure" time to prevent disease spread.
- We support Maryland State Board of Elections adopting formal rules that require county Boards of Elections to make best possible efforts to locate and obtain a voter's signature when presented with an unsigned ballot. Rejecting ballots as a punitive measure for simple forgetfulness or misunderstanding is inconsistent with conducting free and fair elections.
- We support Maryland State Board of Elections adopting formal rules mandating the use of additional, adequate and appropriate audio and visual equipment sufficient to allow close-up observation of ballots at any time they are touched by human hands.
- We oppose the Maryland State Board of Elections suspending formal rules requiring ballots be canvassed by two persons of different political parties.
- We support the Maryland State Board of Elections adopting formal rules to limit printing of 'online' ballots to special circumstances. We theoretically support the concept of voters' right to print their own ballots, known as online ballots, and mail them to their local county Board of Elections, where they are manually copied to standard, pre-printed ballots and scanned. This transcription process is open to errors. Also, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, registered voters receive absentee ballots. Additional protections must be put in place to assure that only one vote is counted from voters who both submit online ballots and return mail-in ballots. To avoid the possibility of a person submitting more than one ballot, we ask that requests for absentee ballots and online ballots be held in abeyance until all pandemic vote-by-mail ballots have been mailed statewide.

- We encourage the Maryland State Board of Elections to consider use of in-state and union printers and mailing houses in the production and distribution of ballots and other information.
- We are proud that Maryland does not purge voter rolls as some states do, and we oppose all attempts to inappropriately remove voters from the rolls.
- Pre-trial and otherwise incarcerated citizens who have the right to vote must be allowed to exercise their right to vote by having full access to information mailed or otherwise provided by the Maryland State Board of Elections and to receive personal ballots.
- We must ensure the security of all elections held within Maryland. We must protect the electoral process from all forms of interference, both foreign and domestic. The Maryland State Board of Elections must routinely provide evidence, such as matching counts of ballots cast and voting machine tallies, and the chain of custody of ballots in ballot boxes to demonstrate that to the best of their ability, our elections are safe, tamper-free and secure from all outside interference.

Infrastructure

Throughout this platform we've spoken of the interconnectivity between infrastructure, climate change and equity. Maryland's infrastructure goes far beyond its physical presence. Our infrastructure depends upon our social, cultural and economic connections as much as it does upon our roads, electric grid and water service.

Parts of Maryland's infrastructure have suffered years of underfunding and neglect. To ensure our state's economic strength and public safety, Maryland must undertake new and creative programs and to build, improve and maintain much of this infrastructure.

Roads, sidewalks, bridges, dams, sewers, schools, and other parts of our infrastructure are aging. They need repair, rebuilding and modernization. The climate crisis forces us to add resiliency to existing infrastructure and build new green energy infrastructure. These will create jobs and boost our economy.

Transportation Infrastructure

The roads, bridges, and tunnels that connect Maryland's regions must be modernized to allow for efficient commuting, the movement of people and goods.

Maryland's Democrats call for improving and expanding reliable public mass transportation. All improvements in transportation reduce road congestion and the state's carbon footprint. They pay immediate dividends in terms of resident usage. These are critical investments in Maryland's future.

Transit development is economic development. It provides transportation to existing jobs. It creates temporary construction jobs and permanent maintenance jobs. It encourages transit-oriented development that puts even more jobs within reach of Maryland residents.

- We support planning, development and funding of accessible, reliable, efficient, multi-modal transit systems that provide ready access for everyone to jobs, recreation, shopping, schools, and home within a reasonable amount of time.
- We support equitably focused road and transit planning to ensure access to underserved urban and rural communities.
- We support making regional transit planning decisions by those living within the region, who know best their region's needs, rather than by those at the state level.
- We support the design of neighborhood, suburban, and urban streets to enhance the community, with plenty of space for pedestrians, bicycles, bus lanes, recreation and natural spaces, rather than focusing primarily on moving cars through.
- We support policies and incentives to accelerate adoption of clean energy vehicles, including increased access to electric charging stations.
- We support funding for rapid transition of buses and government fleets to zero-emissions vehicles.
- We support transit system planning that moves public transportation to zero emissions and builds in resilience to the effects of climate change.
- We support fully funding adequate and appropriate maintenance for existing transit systems to prevent breakdowns, ensure smooth and continuous operation, and protect the safety of passengers.
- We support funding research and development for additional multi-modal transportation planning within communities and across the state.

- We strongly support funding for complete review and mitigation of all transit systems and surrounding areas for accessibility issues. All public transit must be made accessible from approach to use for people with disabilities.
- We support expanding availability and range of on-demand mobility transit services.
- We support developing high-speed, light-,or mono-rail service between population centers. Such rail must be equitably planned to avoid impact on communities along the route, particularly low-income and minority communities.
- We support developing additional rail service access to connect rural communities and population centers.

The Port of Baltimore is a major economic hub for the city, state, and nation, vital to the state's prosperity. It is the most convenient Atlantic port of entry for goods traveling as far west as the Mississippi. The Maryland Democratic Party supports restructuring the Port of Baltimore, a vital part of Maryland's economic stability, to increase its ability to import goods and accommodate larger ships, making it a more efficient and more productive port.

- We support updating rail access and tunnels to facilitate transfer of goods to and from the Port.
- We support modifying rail structures to accommodate larger, double-stack containers. This will allow the rail system to move cargo faster.
- We support allocating funds to enable the Port to process double stacking containers
- We support further study on ways, including a higher Key Bridge, to make the Port of Baltimore more accessible to larger ships.
- We support more dredging to enable larger ships to use the Port of Baltimore.
- We support actions to make the Port of Baltimore a destination for the cruise industry.

Communications Infrastructure

All those living in Maryland and across America depend upon a robust communications system for commerce, information, and entertainment. These systems are inequitably available to Maryland's residents.

The Maryland Democratic Party is committed to making broadband internet service a public utility fully available throughout Maryland.

Every person and business needs access to fast, reliable broadband service for information and commerce. Also, many people depend on broadband for recreation and communications.

Broadband Internet Access

Inexpensive, widely accessible high speed internet is essential for every person, public and commercial enterprise in the state.

- We call upon Maryland to create a statewide broadband internet public utility to build the necessary structures and systems needed to make broadband internet access universally available throughout Maryland.
- We support high-speed, reliable and ready access to broadband internet for all students, and staff of Maryland schools at no additional cost to those students, staff or the schools.
- We strongly support net neutrality for all internet content.

Electric Infrastructure

The Maryland Democratic Party supports the goal to reach 100% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2050. To help meet this goal we support the work of federal and state regulators and the independent electric grid operator to institute policies that will encourage the rapid development of renewable energy and the retirement of carbon emitting fossil power.

Public School Infrastructure

The learning environment impacts on students' ability to learn. When school buildings are deteriorating, overcrowded, and lacking adequate heating and air conditioning, it can lead to public health issues and worse academic outcomes. It is essential that students in public schools have buildings with adequate space to eliminate overcrowded classrooms. School facilities must maintain proper temperature ranges for students and staff to work in.

The problems of inadequate school facilities disproportionately affect low-income and predominantly Black and Brown neighborhoods. State and local jurisdictions must distribute resources equitably in historically underserved communities to close these longstanding deficiencies.

We must modernize our aging school buildings.

- Older schools in poor condition must be renovated or replaced to create clean, modern, healthy schools with 21st century classrooms.
- All schools must have adequate heating and air conditioning.
- School enrollment must not exceed capacity.
- Classrooms in newly-constructed and renovated schools must be designed to accommodate all improvements needed to create a modern learning environment and allow for social distancing.
- Schools can be designed as multipurpose structures for their communities.
- School construction planning must be done through an equity lens.

Public Service Infrastructure

Recycling and Sanitation

The Maryland Democratic Party supports programs to increase environmentally appropriate disposal of the many kinds of waste that winds up in landfills. Modern, efficient waste disposal systems yield environmental benefits, economic advantages, improved land use and public health. They also help reduce dumping of trash on streets and in other private and public places.

Moving toward zero waste is difficult and requires more research to develop ecologically sound cost-effective, and practical solutions. Maryland must improve our recycling infrastructure and expand composting. When China stopped accepting Maryland's recycling waste, some counties were left without the ability to recycle some common materials. Some recyclables are shipped to other states, but it is not clear this may be counted on as a long term solution. There is currently limited capability in Maryland to do our own, large-scale composting, an essential part of reducing waste.

Composting is essential to reducing the volume of waste we produce. Maryland must develop strategies to increase composting.

- Maryland must commit to planning, building and implementing large-scale, in-state recycling and composting facilities throughout the state.
- We support statewide funding for programs to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste. Broad implementation of programs for organic waste recycling, rainwater reuse are needed to ensure capacity for future generations.
- We support statewide programs that ensure waste disposal is equitably achieved across land use types and socio-economic areas.
- We support further study in all jurisdictions statewide of water runoff from all roadways and impervious surfaces, its impact on Maryland's environment, including Maryland's natural water drainage systems, and proposed mitigation
- We support increasing programs and facilities for water reclamation in residential, agricultural and commercial locations.

Manufacturing Infrastructure

Improvements to Maryland's transportation, communications, and energy infrastructure will transform the state into a magnet for industry. We have learned from the current pandemic not to allow ourselves to be dependent upon other countries for our supply chain. Maryland can lead the effort to attract environmentally-safe manufacturers of necessary goods. Even if it's less costly to produce goods in other countries, Maryland must do its share to manufacture an adequate minimum of all types of goods. Strengthening our industrial base will do more than improve our state's economy.

We support buying American products for use by consumers and in production, manufacture and construction of goods and services.

Information Infrastructure

United States Postal Service (USPS)

The Maryland Democratic Party unequivocally supports the protection, financing and continued operation of the USPS. The USPS is the most basic and essential service provided to residents of Maryland and the United States. The USPS is the only delivery service to reach every community in Maryland, and it is the delivery service of record.

Libraries

Maryland's school, public and college and university libraries and professional Librarians are the source and defenders of freedom of information in our state. Our Librarians struggle to ensure information is made available at no cost to the consumer and that the consumer's information use is and remains private.

The Maryland Democratic Party is proud of the investments in libraries made by communities and organizations and of the professional librarians work for freedom and privacy.

Libraries of all types are interconnected by both electronic and physical systems that provide access to information for consumers.

We recognize public and university libraries are essential hubs for distribution of federal, state and community information.

The Maryland Democratic Party supports increased funding for school, public and college and university libraries including increased salaries for professional Librarians.

Lens Framework of the 2020 Maryland Democratic Party Platform

Introduction

This 2020 Maryland Democratic Party Platform is written by the Party's Platform Committee.

In writing this platform, the Platform Committee determined it would consider all issues in light of three overarching issues, our lenses. These are infrastructure, climate change and equity. To improve the lives of Marylanders, we must review the impact each lens has on every aspect of life in Maryland.

Infrastructure Lens

We must meet our challenges with an integrated approach we choose to call infrastructure. Infrastructure represents the many interconnected fronts -- from housing to schools, to jobs, to transportation, to health, to manufacturing, to utilities, and more -- upon which we must confront these challenges. This approach ensures Maryland will have strong communities, neighborhoods, towns, and cities.

The beginning months of 2020 have irrefutably demonstrated the interconnectedness of all aspects of human life in Maryland, the USA, and the world. Our society depends on safe roads, rails and harbors to bring us the goods that drive our economy. We count on the good health of each resident to assure the good health of all other residents, and upon the fair and just treatment of each individual by law and by custom.

Democrats are called to build a better Maryland and a better world. Maryland now must choose what it will become as we move forward in this 21st Century and beyond.

Climate Change Lens

The 2016 DNC platform declared climate change is "an urgent threat and a defining challenge of our time." As time has passed the threat has grown even greater, the challenge more urgent. The Maryland Democratic Party recognizes climate change is a perspective through which we must examine every aspect and topic of life on earth.

The earth has passed the turning point when destructive processes of the current climate change phenomenon can no longer be reversed. Urgent and significant leadership and real solutions to make critical changes are required to ensure the survival generations to come.

Climate change impacts everyone and everything in Maryland and globally, exacerbating economic instability, causing irreversible damage to our biodiversity, impacting all communities, and disproportionately impacting vulnerable populations.

Our time available to respond to this crisis is critically short. Measures taken thus far are not adequate to slow or reverse the adverse impacts of the changing climate already being felt by Maryland's communities.

Maryland Democrats know science represents truth. Science tells us we must act now to prevent further damage to our people, other species, the planet and our economies.

In light of the pervasive impact of climate change, this 2020 Maryland Democratic Party Platform views all issues through the lens of climate change.

Equity Lens

We have focused on equity as a core value throughout this platform. Economic inequality, structural racism, and discrimination against women, gender minorities, religious minorities, and people with disabilities are embedded throughout our society and government. We cannot look at any single issue without considering equity.

Donald Trump's presidency is founded in hate, from the moment he stepped off that escalator to disparage immigrants from Latin America. Since then, his policies and rhetoric have fomented hate against all immigrants, Black people, Latinx people, gender minorities, women, people with disabilities, Muslims, and Asian-Americans. The Maryland Democratic Party rejects hate and discrimination in all its forms. We unequivocally declare the Maryland Democratic Party represents a vibrant multiracial, multicultural coalition. We stand for the rights of all people in the U.S.A. to participate without discrimination in all aspects of our country.

We know hate, discrimination, and inequity did not begin with Trump, and that we must purge these from our society, so we may finally, fully, and truly fulfill the words of our Constitution, "We, the people."

We recognize Maryland, its people, government, and businesses, are in the midst of an economic crisis. Economic failures affect all ages and generations; for millennials, this is the second economic crisis of their prime working years. We know this isn't the first and won't be the last such economic crisis. Even before the pandemic, income inequality was at the highest level ever recorded. During periods of economic expansion, most growth accrues disproportionately to those with higher incomes. What Maryland does during both economic crises and 'good times' to secure equity for all is the focus of this lens for the Maryland Democratic Party. This "equity" lens focuses on Maryland's actions to secure fairness and equity for all people.

We must ensure all Marylanders fairly and justly enjoy the benefits of economic growth and opportunity.

Poverty is one of the most destructive forces in Maryland. Democrats have been at war with poverty since our Party's inception.

Systemic racism has been with us since the first Africans were brought to America over 400 years ago. Today, there are racial disparities in every aspect of society, including health, education, housing, jobs, and income. The average White family has ten times the wealth of the average Black family. We must eliminate these disparate racial impacts as we work to develop solutions in every policy area.

Who you love, your sex, or your gender identity should not impact the way you are treated by society. Although Maryland passed marriage equality in 2013, many disparities still exist that impact the lives of sexual and gender minorities. We must end discrimination, ensure equity, and uphold their rights.

We must root out racism, poverty, hate, and all forms of discrimination wherever and whenever they exist. Throughout this document, the need for equity in our society has shaped our perspective of every issue in this platform.

Conclusion

These three lenses form the framework for our review of the issues that have importance to Maryland's Democrats. We have considered every issue as it relates to infrastructure, climate change and equity

Attachment: Resource Document for Agriculture and Rural Section

The following is the issues statement used by the Platform Committee to develop and prepare major portions of the Platform Section on Agriculture and Rural Issues section, prepared by Platform Committee member Cleo Braver

MD Dem Party 2020 Platform Input

Issue Summary of Ag, Job and Economy Creation, Resource Protection, and Health Impact of Effort to Create Regional Food System

Background Reason for this Platform Provision

Even before the coronavirus, there has been a growing recognition by both policy makers and the public that the current large-scale opaque industrial food system (1) imposes extraordinary health care costs –and bad health outcomes- on Marylanders as on all Americans, from obesity and diabetes epidemics, to heart disease and cancer; (2) creates food security issues which paradoxically live side by side with obesity as highly processed low nutrient foods become increasingly the norm; (3) imposes significant environmental costs on soils, and on the Chesapeake Bay, the Gulf of Mexico and other watersheds (which eclipse its transportation requirements and the effect of the transportation requirements and food miles traveled); (4) creates a remarkable missed recession-proof labor-intensive (aka jobs) economic opportunity to become the breadbasket for the Eastern seaboard; and (5) creates national security issues as Maryland relies on other states and other countries to provide this most fundamental and relatively inelastic human requirement. There is a healthy vibrant economy waiting to be born in growing healthy food in a regionalized food production system on Maryland's Eastern Shore and throughout Maryland. Delmarva is, after all, the largest contiguous undeveloped land mass on the East Coast..

We believe that rebuilding a regional food production and distribution system, (referred to as a "Food Hub") and paving the way for it with enlightened cross-pollinating public policies, can address the following unmet needs:

1. The need to focus on growing healthy nutritious produce and pastured animals, and to select varieties, follow growing methods, and distribute our food in ways which maximize nutrient density in the soil and plants and the retention of nutrients once food reaches consumers (healthy soil-healthy plants, healthy people). "How" food is grown is in fact more important than "Where food is grown. (CDC estimates that over 80% of American health care costs can be eliminated with food and exercise.)
2. The need to address issues of food access and food justice by (i) working to reduce the costs of healthy food through the economies of scale offered by aggregation and by eliminating the profit motive of this alternative distribution model and (ii) working in geographic areas of the Eastern Shore and the State where healthy food is not easily accessed, included targeted areas of the 71 Maryland census tracts with limited grocery store access.
3. The need to foster environmentally sustainable production practices (restricted and conditioned use of synthetics and pesticides, true crop rotations and extensive use of cover crops, buffer strips around all farming operations, etc.) and labeling as such (e.g. certified organic, naturally grown, pastured/grass-fed, certified humane, Regenerative,

and emerging models). De minimus standards could be required such as requiring watershed protective buffer strips (paid for under federal CRP programs) and eliminating the synthetic inputs most harmful to human health (chlorpyrifos which damages developing brains, atrazine (linked to breast and prostate cancer), glyphosate (linked to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma), and neonicotinoids (linked to bee deaths).

4. The need to market locally and regionally produced foods within a 200 mile food-shed, reducing food miles traveled from an average of 1,500 miles so that food is fresh and nutrient levels are maintained and there is more transparency in this most fundamental of goods. Foods would be marketed in such a way as to identify the farm where it was produced, the production methods used, and product attributes such as nutrient density (becoming easier as apps and devices are now bringing commercialized which will allow the consumer to determine nutrient composition by pointing at the product.)
5. The need to aggregate product of multiple producers in order to effectively and reliably sell to regional institutional and other buyers such as (a) public schools, universities and hospitals taking the Real Food Challenge which have large populations and can serve as excellent role models, (b) prisons (which recognize that recidivism rates are cut in half when prisoners work on prison farms), (c) distributors and food service organizations willing to work with local and sustainable producers in order to meet increasing demand for both, (d) grocers, restaurants and specialty markets who are ready to promote local and regional foods, and (e) the public (increasingly keen to feed their families nutrients and not just calories).
6. The need to enhance local self-sufficiency and food security with the exportation throughout Maryland and to surrounding states of Maryland-produced foods rather than the importation from Florida, California, Canada and Mexico of food for consumption in the State of Maryland;
7. The need to increase public awareness of the connection between personal food choices, personal and public health, agriculture and the environment;
8. The need to pay producers fairly for the important work they do in furtherance of these purposes.
9. The need to provide small and medium sized growers with marketing, sales, distribution, bulk buying, production coordination, training access, shared equipment, and other infrastructure and services in order to enhance their economic viability.
10. The need to do these things through community-owned non-profit infrastructure which passes through higher prices to farmers for the hard work they do and lower prices to consumers so that all can have access to safe nutritious food.

Due to our large areas of undeveloped farmland, our unparalleled access to demographic markets (making it a much lower risk than a Food Hub in a state with scattered population), a vulnerable Chesapeake Bay and other factors, Maryland can and should play a role in the emerging paradigm shift to regional and sustainable food production which can address these needs. Our rewards will include a vibrant regional economy, enhanced food and financial security, better health and lowered health care costs for our citizens, and meaningful implementation of a host of sustainability practices which will reduce our carbon footprint, rebuild our soil and protect our waterways.

Broader Plan

The broad goals include:

1. Transitioning agriculture from the production of "Feed" to the production of "Food" by supplementing (or transitioning out of) confined animal feed production (CAFO's) to

pastured rotationally grazed animals, and by supplementing (or transitioning out of) the conventional commodity row crops which feed CAFO animals to low-input, or regenerative, or organic production of vegetables, legumes, herbs and other produce which feed people. An additional benefit gaining traction in the States is the recognition that healthy soils – in low-input agriculture and in rotationally grazed pastured are recognized by the science to sequester significant amounts of carbon in the soil. Land not intensively farmed for conventional row crops can be freed up not only for pasture and low-input crops, but for the implementation of federally-funded grasslands, wetlands, pollinator habitat, filter and buffer strips and other important environmental practices which will increase biodiversity and reduce release of nutrients and pesticides into the Bay.

2. Addressing issues of food justice and access
3. Creating a Food Hub infrastructure will increase the fairly low revenues and economic viability of Maryland's small farms, as well as encourage emerging farmers at a time when the average age of farmers in the State is over 60. A Food Hub could be used by organic or low-input producers (as well as producers interested in learning about becoming more sustainable), farms seeking an output for surplus product, farms seeking to expand or diversify products or markets or revenue (such as with year-round tunnel production, or new crops with technical assistance, or value-added products produced in the commercial kitchen), farms seeking to transition commodity grain or CAFO animal production to more natural production methods, farms wanting to access institutional markets only accessible with aggregation with other buyers (higher than average concentrations of universities and hospitals in our foodshed), farmers seeking to lower costs with joint bulks purchases of seeds, equipment, packaging and other costs, and landowners seeking growers who will implement alternative farming operations on their land. (It is important to note that in Maryland 65-85% of land is farmed under lease.)
4. Creating a vibrant multi-billion dollar rural regional food economy that we currently leave to other states and countries. This economy can create jobs in many substantive areas beyond food production including marketing, transportation logistics, nutrition and wellness, producer coordination, warehousing, greenhouse construction (increasingly required because of climate-change-induced rain events), animal husbandry and breeding, cooking and chef training, commercial kitchens, community gardening, public education and outreach, variety trials and development, sustainable agriculture development, and many other areas merging art and science.
5. Bringing more value to a natural resource-based industry that is already one of Maryland's biggest industries. Gross revenues for feed corn approximate \$500 per acre for feed corn. Gross revenues can approach or exceed \$100,000 per acre for intense vegetable production, particularly with high tunnel or greenhouse production which is increasingly more important for weather protection.
6. Creating a physical space where Maryland families can come together around food – for healthy eating and nutrition classes, and demonstrations, for health and environment related education, to create food in a commercial kitchen, to purchase clean food.

Revitalization Impact

Most importantly, this labor-intensive model of food production can create jobs in our community. Every 1.5-3 acres of land in sustainable production can support one job on the food production side alone, and intense greenhouse production can employ as many as eight employees per acre. And there is an important multiplier effect - it has been estimated that 2.2 jobs can be created with each \$100,000 in local food sales.

The broad economic impact of Maryland Food Hubs is easier to see when we consider that we would be replacing billions of dollars now spent in the State of Maryland on food grown in Florida, California, Mexico and Canada, with Maryland-grown food which is distributed throughout the State of Maryland and to surrounding states. The State of Illinois estimated that \$10 billion in annual fruit and vegetable sales currently met by California, Florida, Mexico and beyond could be met in-state. If Maryland can produce one third as much "in-house" food as Illinois' estimates, that can mean 70,000 new jobs for Marylanders. The Maryland Department of Planning's September 2012 analysis "Managing Maryland's Growth: Planning for the Food System" recognized that if only 5% of food dollars from Southern Maryland households were spent on local food, local growers would be selling an additional \$100,000,000 in product. In fact, the Urban Design Lab and Earth Institute of Columbia University view the Delmarva Peninsula as a prominent source of food for New York.

Maryland must recognize its potential.