**Progressive MD Candidate Questionnaire**

District: 21

Party: Democrat

**Campaign Contact Information**

**Committee Name:** Citizens for Mary Lehman

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**Treasurer Contact Information**

**Treasurer Name:** Jeanne Taylor

**Street Address:** 14904 McIntosh Court Silver Spring, MD 20905

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**Candidate History**

**Previous Elected Offices:** Prince George’s County Council

**Which Years Did You Serve**: Elected November 2010; sworn in Dec. 6, 2010

Re-elected November 2014; sworn in Dec. 1, 2014; term ends December 2018

**Have you ever received an endorsement from Progressive Maryland?** Not sure but do not think so

Have you ever assisted Progressive Maryland in achieving its goals?

Yes, I sponsored an earned sick and safe leave bill for Prince George’s County in 2015. It was voted down in the Planning, Zoning and Economic Development Committee, in large part because councilmembers believed state lawmakers who insisted the General Assembly was poised to pass a paid sick leave bill in the 2016 session. The GA did not end up acting until 2017 and because Gov. Hogan vetoed the legislation, Maryland residents (except in Montgomery County) will not have paid sick leave until April 1, 2018 at the earliest. There is a possibility implementation will be delayed further if state lawmakers decide to postpone enactment of the law.

I have consistently opposed expansion of big box stores like Wal Mart because they undercut unionized retailers.

On Tuesday, Jan. 30, I am introducing CB-4-2018, public financing of campaigns, and have three co-sponsors on the bill. It is my No. 1 legislative priority in 2018.

**Major Endorsements (Elected Officials/Organizations/Opinion Leaders):** Del. Joseline Pena-Melnyk (D-21)

**Issue Questions**

1. **Do you support ending the money-based bail system?**

Yes. The financial requirements of pre-trial release involving cash, property or bonds are discriminatory and create unnecessary and unfair incarceration of poor defendants. The 2014 report of the Commission to Reform Maryland’s Pre-Trial System has 14 suggested changes to the current system. The two most important, I believe, are Nos. 1 and 4. The first calls for a uniform pre-trial services agency for all 24 Maryland jurisdictions and use of a statewide risk assessment tool to determine initial appearance, flight risk and supervision, plus referrals for substance abuse treatment, counseling and other services.

Recommendation No. 4 says secured financial conditions for the pre-trial release of low-risk defendants, versus the allowance for high-risk defendants to pay their bonds and depart without supervision should be eliminated.

The overall goal of a coordinated, cost-effective and fair statewide criminal justice system is outlined in Recommendation No. 14.

1. **Will you support a $15 per hour minimum wage for all Maryland workers? If yes, over what time period would you suggest implementing it? Do you support including an indexing provision?**

I have spoken of this publicly and say on my Web site, Facebook and in my campaign literature that Prince George’s County has the highest minimum wage in the state at $11.50 but it is not enough. Montgomery County’s full phase-in of $15/hr. is too slow, taking until 2024 for the smallest employers. I think full phase-in should occur by 2022.

Following full phase-in there should be annual indexing each year thereafter. Minnesota has written this into its $15/hr. law, with increases announced every September, taking effect the following January. Maryland should adopt this approach.

1. **Do you support public financing of State Senate and Delegate races similar to systems enacted in Montgomery County and Howard County?**

Yes, I think the state is several years away from doing this; however, I believe that pressure to do so will increase significantly if Prince George’s becomes the third jurisdiction in Maryland to adopt public financing of county elections. Also, the existing state system should be amended from the limited grant program to the small donor matching system that counties favor.

1. **Do you support increased protections for workers in terms of scheduling practices? In particular, will you support requiring employers to give 3 weeks’ notice to employees of their shift schedule, requiring employers who call employees into work only to send them home before the end of their shift to provide a certain percentage of the pay that the employee would have made that day, and prohibiting employers from scheduling an employee to work back-to-back shifts or shifts scheduled only a few hours apart without the employee’s consent?**

Yes, increased scheduling protections for workers should certainly include a threshold percentage of pay when employees get sent home early and should eliminate back-to-back shifts without the employee’s consent. I am not certain about the 3-week notice of shift schedule only because the logistics of this in some industries might not be feasible. In the fast food industry in particular, there is a high turnover and absentee rate. I am not saying 3-week scheduling is out of the question, I am simply not well informed enough about the issue to respond responsibly and honestly. I believe a 2-week notice should be an absolute minimum.

1. **Do you support workers’ rights to organize in the private and public sectors? Will you make it a priority that all public employees be covered by a public employee relations act, similar to the National Labor Relations Act, which has governed work in the private sector for over 80 years?**

Yes, the right to organize should be universal across sectors and industries. A public employee relations act in Maryland for federal, state and local government employees would create a more level playing field for workers with NLRA rights. Also, the NLRB adjudication process for workers who have grievances would better solve those cases through clear rules and by trained administrative law judges.

1. **We believe that the financial security of women is integral to the health of our economy. Do you feel that legislation ensuring the equal treatment of men and women in the workplace is appropriate? If so, what legislation will you support as a member of the General Assembly to bring women to parity with their male colleagues?**

Yes, we need clear and enforceable equal pay laws, parental leave policies and a serious, professional and transparent system for the reporting of sexual harassment, or coercion. The sexual harassment policy should begin by being applied *inside the General Assembly itself*. The General Assembly must establish these standards on sexual misconduct first before looking elsewhere.

1. **Do you believe that employers should be required to make reasonable accommodations for employees and applicants for employment who have known limitations due to conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth?**

Yes, I don’t think this requires any further explanation.

1. **Are there any instances in which the state should place restrictions on a patient seeking abortion care, such as stage of pregnancy, access based on age, or the type of abortion care that state funding should cover?**

Yes, I think late second trimester and third trimester abortions should be as rare as possible, though I hesitate to spell out conditions. I am not avoiding specificity; however, beyond fetal abnormality or threat to the life of the mother I cannot think of other conditions that would warrant exceptions. I do not think there should be age restrictions for abortions, but minors should be required to have a designated adult for consent and help with follow up care in the absence of parental consent. Abortion care should be paid for by the state for indigent patients.

1. **Will you support single-payer health care in Maryland? If so, how would you pass it and how would you pay for it?**

Yes, I am a strong supporter of the concept of Medicare for All but am not certain about funding it. The state could certainly negotiate lower prescription drug rates for Maryland’s 6 million residents, but a single payer health care system would probably have to involve a combination of taxes and an employer premium. MD gubernatorial candidate Ben Jealous has asserted that a combination of state taxes to finance a single payer system would still be less than insurance premiums under the current employment based system of coverage.

1. **Will you support instituting transparency rules for Pharmacy Benefit Managers and drug corporations as well as creating a drug cost review commission for high cost drugs?**

Yes, it looks like PBM rules in Maryland have not been updated since 2012. A summary of the current rules ([www.ncpanet.org](http://www.ncpanet.org)) focuses almost exclusively on audits of pharmacies, disputed claims, overpayment, modification or denial of reimbursement, etc. There is little to suggest any transparency, but the rules are so esoteric it’s difficult to tell. The fact that audits are limited to claims less than two years old is too restrictive and of concern to me. Absolutely yes to creating a drug cost review commission!

1. **In general, do you support or oppose charter schools?**

Support: I am guardedly supportive of established and reputable charter schools like those operated by the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation. CLF has three schools in my council district (on each of a K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 school) and operates schools in both Anne Arundel and Prince George’s counties. My preference though is for strong neighborhood public schools, staffed by highly trained and unionized teachers.

1. **Do you support or oppose school vouchers that would allow public school students, K-12, to attend a private school instead of their local public school? Please explain your support or opposition.**

Oppose: I think vouchers for private schools represent an abandonment of public schools. I do not support tax money going to religious or other schools that promote discriminatory views of certain people, faiths, lifestyles or laws such as those that have legalized abortion or gay marriage.

1. **Will you support making state colleges and universities free for all in-state students?**

No, the shorter term, more realistic goal must be free community college so that an associate’s degree is free. Eventually, we may be able to extend this to 4-year colleges and universities. However, someone has to pay; we have to figure out whom and how!

1. **Will you support the Trust Act?**

Yes, the failure of the General Assembly in 2017 to enact protections for immigrants was unacceptable and an indictment of the Democratic Party leadership. Preventing police from asking about a person’s immigration status is the most basic and most obvious level of protection our immigrant neighbors deserve. Written policies to formalize this and better police training on how to interact with immigrants who are either stopped or detained is imperative.

1. **Will you support closing corporate loopholes by requiring combined reporting as most other states have done? Will you support bringing back Maryland’s 6.25% tax rate on incomes of more than $1 million to allow upper income residents to contribute more to Maryland?**

Yes, I am not very knowledgeable about combined reporting, but if requiring that related corporations are treated as a single entity for tax purposes, I am in favor of it. Yes, a 6.25% income tax rate for those earning $1 million should be re-instated.

1. **Do you plan to introduce or support legislation to provide for the Potomac, Chesapeake or other shared environments that have federal funding for protection removed?**

Yes, at my urging my colleagues on the council just adopted and sent to Gov. Hogan a Jan. 23 letter opposing issuance of a state permit allowing fracked gas to be piped across the Potomac River in Western Maryland. I led the effort to ban fracking in Prince George’s County, in large part because of its threat to our waterways and our drinking water supply. I passed legislation in 2012 to reimburse county residents up to $2,500 for replacing impervious walkways and driveways with pervious materials, planting street trees or rain gardens, or installing rain barrels or green roofs, all of which reduce stormwater runoff that pollutes tributaries that feed the Bay. I will be a strong and reliable supporter of the Potomac, the Patuxent, and Anacostia rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

1. **What legislation and regulations can Maryland state government enact to protect residents from the damage inflicted by Trump’s federal government?**

We can enact several of our own laws to counter the Trump effect:

First, Maryland must figure out how to mitigate the impact of limits on state and local tax deductions from their federal tax bill that were eliminated in the recent tax reform bill passed by Congress.

Secondly, we must counter climate change by advancing policies that increase our use of renewable energy through targets, economic incentives and investments in alternative energy technologies and green jobs.

Lastly, we must pass the Trust Act and go further by not turning over non-violent undocumented defendants to immigration agents. We should not turn over any undocumented defendant without a judge’s order.

1. **Do you support the creation of a progressive caucus in the state legislature?**

Yes, it’s hard to believe there is not one already! If I am elected, I will gladly start a progressive caucus!

1. **For the measures above that you have agreed to support would you be willing to:**

**Co-sponsor legislation?**

* **Work with our Policy and Legislative Director to help pass a bill?** Yes
* **Testify at a hearing in support of legislation?** Yes
* **Speak at events in support of legislation?** Yes
* **Write a letter in support of legislation?** Yes
* **Write an op-ed in support of legislation?** Yes**\***

Why would I be running if I was not willing to do these things?!

**\*** I co-authored an opinion piece in the Washington Post with Montgomery County Councilman George Leventhal urging a statewide ban on fracking. (Ban Fracking for Good in Maryland, Dec. 9, 2016.) I am a former journalist, so writing an opinion piece is not a hardship.

1. **Would you be willing to engage with Progressive Maryland members and their communities by:**

* **Speaking at Progressive Maryland events?** Yes
* **Meeting with our membership annually to report on the progress of our shared priorities and answer questions from our members?** Yes
* **Writing a letter to unorganized workers endorsing an organizing drive by a labor union?** Yes