



2026 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Sarah R. David

Position: Baltimore County State's Attorney

District: N/A

What unique strengths do you have for this position and what do you hope to accomplish if (re)elected?

As State's Attorney for Baltimore County I intend to build a safer Baltimore County by focusing on preventing crime in the county by using modern, data- driven approaches. I believe the State's Attorney is the elected leader responsible for public safety in our county and to that end, I believe the State's Attorney needs to have a strong relationship with the community she represents. As State's Attorney my goal is to enhance and improve community relationships with the State's Attorney's Office, develop a more robust victim/witness services department, manage and measure data related to our cases and outreach and work with community partners for a safer Baltimore County.

I grew up in Baltimore County and attended Baltimore County Public Schools. I attended Wellwood Elementary School, Sudbrook Magnet Middle School and Pikesville High School. I started working on Baltimore County campaigns when I was eleven years old and loved engaging with people and listening to their challenges to work to develop solutions. I developed more of an international focus after the attacks on September 11, 2001 and while attending Johns Hopkins University. I switched from studying Japanese to Arabic and developed community programs in emergency preparedness to teach high school students in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. The programs were called Securing the Future and were ultimately adapted by the Department of Homeland Security into learning tools to be used all over the country.

I knew that if I wanted to learn another language I needed to live in countries that spoke that language. I moved to Cairo, Egypt to attend the Arabic Language Institute. While in Cairo, I signed up to teach English to Sudanese Refugees and learned how important community engagement was to understanding a culture and a country not one's own. I also learned how hard it was to navigate very basic tasks— grocery shopping, filling out forms for school, etc when one does not know the language. I continued my Arabic studies at the Arabic Language Institute in Morocco and then moved to Belfast, Northern Ireland to study comparative ethnic conflict as a George J. Mitchell Scholar. While in Belfast I joined an organization that helped facilitate conversations between Catholic and Protestant Students and another that taught sex education in schools. I have always believed in coupling my academic and paid work with community engagement— which is a key part of my vision for the State's Attorney's Office in Baltimore County.

After Belfast, I moved to New York City to work for the New York City Police Department's Counterterrorism Division. At the time, the NYPD was working to recruit people that might otherwise go to other intelligence agencies to help the NYPD prepare its officers for terrorist threats and other threats abroad. I was tasked with developing training for tactics observed in the Levant and Iraq and also training officers in reactions to biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, hostage negotiations, hostile surveillance, etc. I ultimately became the primary briefer to the Deputy Commissioner for



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Counterterrorism and was assigned to the Joint Terrorism Task Force where I worked active terrorism cases around the country and in New York City. The NYPD taught me not only the importance of diverse perspectives in intelligence but also how important it is to partner with the public in ensuring public safety. Our NYPD Shield programs helped educate public and private stakeholders on mechanisms to make New York more safe.

I left New York to pursue a law degree back here in Maryland at the University of Maryland King Carey School of Law. After law school I clerked for the Hon. Alexander Wright Jr. on the Maryland Appellate Court (then called the Maryland Court of Special Appeals) before being hired by former State's Attorney Gregg Bernstein as an Assistant State's Attorney at the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office. After my time there I went to the Maryland Legislature where I served as Chief of Staff to the Chair of the Judicial Proceedings Committee in Annapolis. There, I learned how to negotiate legislation and get results through negotiation, innovation and partnership. I worked on laws to strengthen modern threats including criminalizing revenge pornography and sextortion. I continue to work hard on ensuring our laws are up to date when it comes to protecting our residents from artificial intelligence, cyber fraud, etc.

Now I prosecute political corruption, police misconduct and election law violations all over the State of Maryland. I also am responsible for a state agency's budget, legislative agenda, strategic partnerships, and litigation. In that vein I am well versed in how to manage statistics for results and how to work with our partners to leverage resources that can best be shared between agencies with similar goals. In that capacity I have handled some very high profile cases and have also served as a prosecutor on the federal level for some of those cases. Serving in different counties, different levels of government and in different types of cases has helped me learn how to test new ways of doing things to develop best practices. That is also how I manage my team. I know how important it is to ensure an office is run efficiently and fairly by a manager who understands different skill sets, generations and challenges to ensure retention of top talent.

I am also a mother of two children, ages five and eight. I mention this because while I have always been motivated to build better systems and make the world a better place, as a parent there is a special lens in seeing a better future for your children and other children. My son is now in Baltimore County Public Schools and I envision more partnerships with the State's Attorney's Office to educate on safety in schools– not only from the horrific increase in gun violence– but also from cyber bullying, online forums, and other challenges. We need to work with our schools to make sure our students and teachers are safe and that they are given the resources they need to succeed. I envision a State's Attorney's Office that works with non profits that focus on food insecurity, housing insecurity, addiction treatment, mental health treatment to be innovative in our approach to ensuring safety in schools. I believe it is an essential part of crime prevention.



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In that vein, I believe that crime prevention is what we have been lacking in Baltimore County with an office that has been exclusively reactive to the challenges Baltimore County faces today. All prosecutorial candidates believe in holding violent offenders accountable, but I recognize that proving a case against a violent offender means having a community outreach program that makes witnesses and victims comfortable coming to court. All prosecutorial candidates believe in reducing crime, but I understand that often that comes with addressing the underlying reasons for the crime including addiction, mental health, etc. All prosecutorial candidates can espouse tough rhetoric when it comes to accountability but I understand that results are what matters. I'm not going to tell people that I am creating a safer Baltimore County, I am going to show them with data and metrics that assure our county we are safer with Sarah.

How should juvenile offenders be treated in the criminal justice system and what age limits should determine their treatment as adults?

Our juvenile justice system is different from the system for adults– in the mechanics of the cases, the resources available, the laws that guide investigations and so much more. The most important thing our prosecutorial offices should create is a specialized juvenile division with prosecutors who are committed to juvenile prosecutions. Currently, this division is used as a training ground for new prosecutors who are not familiar with not only the mechanics of the cases but also the resources available in the cases. Experienced prosecutors know that general policies are problematic because each case is different. Our office should have specialized prosecutors reviewing every juvenile case so that each case is evaluated with the appropriate expertise about how it should be handled.

Right now the State's Attorney's Office does not publish data about its cases inclusive of the efficacy or lack of efficacy of juvenile programs both for diversion and for accountability. We need to make sure that we are not sending juvenile offenders to programs that don't give them the tools not to reoffend. We need to know if programs are resulting in reoffending or they are not. We need to track what happens with our most serious and our least serious offenders to make sure we are actually making society safer. Without that, we are simply relying on rhetoric as it relates to juvenile crime and how to solve it– and I want to base our policies results instead of rhetoric.

In addition we need to be focused on crime prevention when it comes to juvenile crime. Despite a significant increase in public concern about juvenile crime the State's Attorney's Office has not launched any initiatives, pilot programs, or published any plans for how to prevent juvenile crime. As the elected State's Attorney I will work with community partners including the business and real estate community, non profits, schools, faith leaders and others to help prevent juvenile crime.



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I have heard a lot of discussion about the charging of juveniles with very little information out of Baltimore County. I want to review the data on this issue in Baltimore County once I am elected as it is not publicly available now to see what has been done and where we can improve. All I have heard is anecdotal evidence from the State's Attorney's Office about cases and that is not sufficient to develop policy. I believe in building a system where well-trained prosecutors have the ability to make decisions about charging juveniles as adults weighing all the factors of each specific case. There should absolutely be the ability to try egregious crimes committed by children such as school shootings, mass murders, violent rapes as adults – however it should be the exception. We need to make sure we do what works, both to ensure accountability and rehabilitation. We are not engaging in progress when we are not building a system that prevents future crime as well as addressing past crime.

What stance will you take regarding undocumented persons living in the County? Please address how would you act regarding current federal policies' impacts and expectations that law enforcement bodies in local jurisdictions cooperate with ICE.

The State's Attorney of Baltimore County serves every resident of Baltimore County. That is not only an important sentiment but a necessary message for public safety. Regardless of citizenship status, race, gender, age, neighborhood, etc any person could be a victim or witness of a crime at any moment through no fault of their own. If that witness is not a citizen of this country then the State's Attorney's Office needs to ensure that they are still comfortable coming forward and participating in the investigation and prosecution. Without ensuring that all residents of this county are comfortable with the State's Attorney's Office we are all less safe.

The current federal climate makes people who are not citizens of this country less likely to engage with law enforcement and increases their fatality risks especially in cases of sexual assault and domestic violence. One of the most important tools for the State's Attorney in this space is the U-Visa program. The U-Visa program allows the State's Attorney to sign off on a special visa for people who help with investigations and cases. It is rooted in the important fact that for accountability we need to get convictions. It is not enough to say "I will hold violent offenders accountable" if you aren't ensuring that the witnesses necessary for that conviction feel safe and comfortable coming to court. It is not the role of the State's Attorney or local law enforcement to enforce immigration laws. It is the role of the State's Attorney to ensure that all residents of this county feel safe and see the office as a resource if they are the victim or witness of a crime.



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How should the office's Domestic Violence Unit handle cases of domestic violence that include undocumented victims and/or perpetrators?

A person who is not a citizen of this country has an 80% higher fatality risk if he/she/they are experiencing domestic violence than a person who is a citizen. One of the reasons is their hesitancy to engage law enforcement and threats of deportation often made by the perpetrator. The State's Attorney's Office, first of all, needs to make sure its victim/witness advocates and prosecutors are trained in resources available to individuals who are not citizens of this country, especially non profits that help address collateral issues such as family law, immigration, custody, etc. This can significantly reduce fatality especially if the person is given the tools to extricate him/her/themselves from the violent living situation.

I would also reiterate the importance of U-Visas discussed in the previous question. This is an important tool to ensure that victims and witnesses feel more comfortable as part of the court process. I'll add in this context that ensuring we have victim witness coordinators and community partners with diverse linguistic skills is also really important to helping victims understand and feel more comfortable with pursuing a case against their abuser. Survivors are already traumatized by the experience and adding to that the trauma of having to communicate in a language that is not one's primary language can be avoided with an investment and understanding that linguistic barriers exist and are important to address. As to perpetrators of domestic violence, prosecutors should have discretion about how to consider their citizenship status. In most cases, prosecutors should prosecute the case as they would regardless of that status. While for non-violent offenders we have tools like the PBJ(c) which was designed to avoid immigration consequences, those would be less appropriate in cases of domestic violence. However, again, I think that the key is to train prosecutors to evaluate every aspect of the case and make the just decision with all the information rather than have policies that undermine that discretion.

What do you see as the biggest law enforcement issues in Baltimore County?

The biggest law enforcement issues in Baltimore County stem from the fact that we are relying on tradition rather than information to guide our programs, policies and decisions. Baltimore County has fallen behind the rest of the State when it comes to preventing crime. First, we are not tracking any data when it comes to whether we are actually holding people accountable for their crime and if the programs we are using are effective in preventing recidivism. Without that information neither the police nor the State's Attorney's Office can make the necessary judgments to ensure convictions in important cases. Are cases being dismissed because witnesses are hesitant to come to court? Then we have to increase our community outreach efforts. Are cases being dismissed or lost because juries are confused by the use of a modern form of technology? Then we have to train our prosecutors and officers on that. Tracking



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information helps us build. We have data that shows that racial profiling is a serious issue in Baltimore County– what are we doing about? What partners need to be a part of the discussion? What have other jurisdictions done to help address these issues?

While all of these are important questions they are not areas where we have seen our State's Attorney leading here in Baltimore County and we deserve better. We need to make sure that when we are addressing juvenile justice issues we are doing it with information and efficacy so that we are preventing future offenses in a system of accountability. We need to make sure that we are focusing on deterrence where it matters, violent offenders, and not when it comes to people with mental health or addiction challenges. If we ran our office with real metrics we could also work with our county partners to address challenges related to racial profiling and improve equity in our justice system. We need to build a system together, that is fair and transparent and the result will be making us all safer.

The State's Attorney's Office and the police department have to have a good working relationship that builds the best team for public safety in the County. While the State's Attorney should not be involved in personnel matters regarding police officers to preserve important evidentiary issues in case there is a criminal case against a police officer, it is also important for the State's Attorney to have a transparent system for officers an the public when it comes to officer testimony. All instances where an officer has a veracity issue should be disclosed to defense counsel without exception. If the State believes the issue is not relevant to the officer's testimony (such as a minor infraction involving something like a parking ticket) then the State can litigate that in front of a judge. If an officer has such egregious veracity issues the officer should be fired. This "no call list" practice of keeping officers around who the State believes is not truthful is not transparent or fair to the public or the police officers who without being found guilty are being sanctioned.

We need to partner with our police for community engagement and public safety education and as we modernize we need to modernize together. We need to come to the table to address issues related to racial profiling, new technology (AI), and strategic response to crime prevention in the County.

Recruitment for police has been a challenge and we need to make sure we are highlighting good work together. As we build a State's Attorney's Office that promotes trust and transparency we will be bringing that to law enforcement more broadly in the County.