

Candidate Name: Ly Xīnzhèn M. Zhǎngsūn Brown

Position: Delegate

District: 7A

What are your unique strengths for this position? What committee(s) would you like to serve on and why?

I am a committed community organizer and activist with nearly twenty years of experience building coalitions and working across communities and movements to advance disability justice, racial justice, queer and trans liberation, and economic justice. As an East Asian (and specifically Chinese) survivor of transracial/transnational adoption, I believe that members of marginalized communities and our allies must work in solidarity across all of our communities and movements to fight the harms of white supremacy, fascism, patriarchy, and racism.

In 2018, I founded The Autistic People of Color Fund, which is a 100% autistic BIPOC led organization, to put into action my belief that communities that have long faced resource extraction, exploitation, and state violence deserve material resources now. This organization’s model is rare but revolutionary, because we get cash directly into the hands of Black, Brown, Native/Indigenous, Latine, and Asian autistic people, and reject racist, classist, and ableist gatekeeping that many charitable organizations require.

As a lawyer and policy professional, I am equipped with the tools and knowledge of how to navigate government spaces, alongside my commitment to working with the most impacted and marginalized communities for real solutions to the most urgent problems we face. My values and my goals align with BCPDC’s – fighting for just work and labor protections, a strong social safety net, real work and educational opportunities, actual (affordable, accessible, and culturally responsive) health care, sustainable climate practices, and protection for the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of all Marylanders, especially people who are negatively racialized, gender marginalized, disabled, immigrants, and low-income.

I would like to serve on the Health Committee, Economic Matters Committee, Appropriations Committee, Ways and Means Committee, and/or Judiciary Committee. Each of these committees directly addresses my own advocacy and legislative priorities, relating to civil and human rights, social justice, and economic justice for all.



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What legislation would you introduce/sponsor to address economic inequality in Maryland?

I will sponsor (or introduce) legislation establishing rent stabilization along with protections against evictions and foreclosures, including increased funding for construction of more locally owned and tenant-controlled affordable housing and programs to assist with rent, utilities, down payments, and accessibility home modifications. I will also sponsor (or introduce) legislation to expand the Access to Counsel in Evictions program to protect renters facing eviction, expanding financial aid programs for first-time homebuyers and owner-occupants to purchase and rehabilitate distressed properties, and renovate for longer-term sustainability and reduced reliance on fossil fuels. Access to a home is often the primary or even sole mechanism for building wealth and economic stability for people who are not born in the wealth-privileged class.

Construction of new data centers, inflation, and the impacts of climate change have all contributed to higher utility costs. I support legislation shifting control and management of utilities to public entities rather than private corporations, energy price caps for low- and middle-income families, more robust utility payment assistance programs, a construction moratorium on new data centers that are driving rising utilities costs, grants for low-income homeowners to install renewable and sustainable energy infrastructure and protections for tenants using renewable energy tech, and increased wages (including an increased minimum wage) as measures that will all slow down these utility cost increases and improve people's financial wellbeing.

I support strengthening all worker protections, including protecting the right to organize for all workers, including public workers; increasing the minimum wage to at least \$25 (which would be the minimum living wage for a person working at minimum wage for 40 hours a week); eliminating subminimum wage for tipped jobs, agricultural workers, and incarcerated workers (as Maryland has already phased out the subminimum wage for disabled workers, which I supported); enforcing safe working conditions (such as the proposed federal rule to protect workers from extreme heat); ensuring access to paid family and medical leave for all workers alongside access to other benefits, and a guarantee of paid sick days for all workers, including part-time and temporary workers.

Additionally, I will support legislation expanding state grants for higher education, vocational training, and apprenticeship programs, including Maryland's existing need-based grants and grants for specific populations. We do not currently have state



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educational grants that are specifically targeted for victims and survivors of domestic violence or for currently or formerly incarcerated people, both of which are populations that could greatly benefit from reduced financial barriers to educational opportunity, which translates into greater economic opportunity.

We need much more funding to improve access to public transportation across the state. I will support legislation appropriating funds to expand public transportation networks to better connect underserved and unserved communities across the state, not merely in or adjacent to my district, with particular attention to disability accessibility. Accessible and affordable public transportation connects people living in all types of communities from rural to urban and everywhere in between, increases access to educational and economic opportunity, and makes it possible for everyone to have greater dignity, safety, and freedom of movement within Maryland and to neighboring states and Washington DC.

I will also support legislation to expand the Maryland Earned Income Tax Credit and the Maryland Child Tax Credit as levers to immediately alleviate poverty, along with an expanded Maryland Disability Employment Tax Credit to incentivize employment and retention of disabled workers who face greater economic disparities (especially when accounting for race and gender within this population). Additionally, I will support legislation to better protect the limited assets of low- and middle-income individuals and families from Medicaid estate recovery, including funds held in a disabled person's ABLE account.

Finally, I will support legislation that seeks to eliminate junk fees and cap high interest rates, especially on predatory lending products, to the extent states can impose such interest rate caps. Because the current administration has gutted the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, states must take the lead in advocating for strong consumer protections for the most vulnerable and marginalized people in our communities.

What would you do to address the impacts of climate change in Maryland and how would you encourage growth without degrading our environment and natural resources?

I support aggressive reductions in local and state-wide greenhouse emissions. I also oppose construction of new AI data centers, which pollute nearby communities, excessively consume otherwise drinkable/potable water, and rely on a global ecosystem of



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labor exploitation, largely of Black and Brown workers in the Global South. The ongoing climate catastrophe is a mass disabling event that disproportionately impacts impoverished communities and communities of color, with exacerbated effects on people who are already disabled. I have always been committed to working with all groups and communities that care about reducing corporate and government waste, consumption, and pollution, and creating more sustainable, humane, and dignified conditions and communities for actual human beings. I will work with state agencies to coordinate between legislative aims and regulatory language to incentivize and provide real guidance on sustainable construction, renewable energy, and accessible design to developers, builders, architects, urban planners, and other stakeholders who are contemplating or engaged in broader economic, commercial, and residential development projects.

What legislation would you introduce and/or sponsor to ensure Marylanders' rights and wellbeing in the face of current federal policies? Please address protections for women, the LGBTQ+ community, and all populations under threat.

As a multiply disabled person in community with many other multiply disabled and chronically ill people, I understand firsthand the myriad systemic barriers to affordable, accessible, high quality, and culturally responsive health care, including high costs of prescriptions, unaffordable health insurance plans, understaffing at medical providers' offices, unsupportive or discriminatory health providers, and lack of support for people in impacted communities to enter and remain in the many medical and allied health professions. I will support (or introduce) legislation in favor of a universal single-payer health care system that provides long-term care, in-home supports and services (as many disabled people rely upon!), and access to prescriptions, preventative, specialist, and emergency care. In the immediate term, where there is not yet a universal single-payer system, I will support legislation enabling access to Medicaid for all Marylanders, with expansion and a more accessible Medicaid buy-in program for working people with disabilities; a reinstatement of the marketplace tax subsidies enabling affordable health plans; and patient protections against insurance denials as were proposed in the Community Health Access Program legislation.

As someone who was born outside the United States and works closely with many people in immigrant communities, I am very directly witnessing and experiencing the effects of our current federal government's escalation of immigration enforcement and deportation operations. I no longer leave my own house without my U.S. passport and other documentation on my person. Even though I am not currently among the groups facing the



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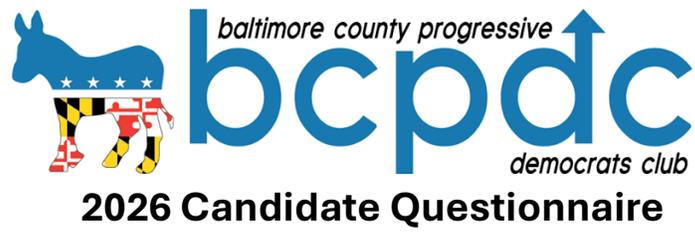
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most intensified state violence, I know that all of our safety is intertwined. Thus, I will support legislation enacting stronger housing, labor, and health care protection for all immigrants as part of Maryland's communities, and support for immigrants in Maryland public schools, community colleges, and public universities. I oppose any cooperation between cities, counties, and the state with ICE's mass deportation agenda – not merely an end to 287g programs, but prohibiting Maryland from cooperating by sharing resources, data, and facilities. I will support legislation providing state funding for legal representation in immigration court as an expansion of existing legal aid programs in the state for low-income people and disabled people; previously, I helped author language in federal law to require funding for free legal assistance to immigrants with mental disabilities facing immigration proceedings. And I will support legislation banning face coverings used to conceal identities of ICE agents.

Additionally, I will support the proposed Data Privacy Act to keep people's data and information safe, which is all the more important in an age of increasing digital surveillance and carceral tech. I will support legislation to protect queer and trans people's access to health care at all ages, including gender affirming care, and to accurate identity and vital documents for us and members of our families. I will support legislation protecting people from proposed expansions of civil commitment, that is so often weaponized to harm disabled people, homeless people, and many other marginalized community members, and which does not promote mental health and wellbeing. I will also support a legislative ban on conversion therapy for people of all ages, along with all other proven harmful and pseudoscientific treatments used to abuse LGBTQIA+ and disabled children and youth. Finally, I will support legislation ensuring a dedicated funding stream for trans-led organizations that operate with an intersectional framework, and fully funding a Maryland Office of LGBTQIA+ Affairs, similarly to the existing Maryland Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Affairs.

How do you plan to address the funding shortfall that will soon reach Maryland due to Federal budget cuts to education, infrastructure, disaster response (FEMA) and others?

It is our responsibility to appropriate state dollars to policies, programs, services, and activities that support people and families, and divest from harmful policies and practices both in the state and outside of it. Specifically, I will advocate for Maryland to divest from AI data centers, exploitative real estate development and gentrification, money invested in Israeli apartheid and occupation, and arms companies that violate international



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humanitarian law. Meanwhile, I will advocate for Maryland to invest in education, economic security, housing, and health care.