



# 2024 MARYLAND PRIMARY ELECTION

## MARYLAND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 6 CANDIDATE SURVEY

Early voting: May 2-9 | Primary Election Day: May 14

**ABOUT THIS GUIDE:** The Maryland Catholic Conference sent candidates a survey covering policy issues of interest to Catholics. Their responses (agree/disagree and statements) are below. Before you vote, please review the responses, including the candidate comments, and reflect upon the document Faithful Citizenship ([mdcatholic.org/parish-elections](http://mdcatholic.org/parish-elections)) as you form your conscience and prayerfully discern your vote.

The Maryland Catholic Conference does not endorse or oppose any candidate, under any circumstance, and no inference of endorsement or opposition should be concluded as a result of the information provided here.

PARTY	CANDIDATES: MD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 6		1. Poverty	2. Abortion	3. Immigration	4. Education	5. Environment	6. Family	7. Conscience Rights
D	Peter	Choharis *	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	
D	George	Gluck							
D	Geoffrey	Grammer							
D	Ashwani	Jain *	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X
D	Lesley J.	Lopez							
D	Tekesha A.	Martinez *	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X
D	April	McClain Delaney							
D	Stephen R.	McDow, II							
D	Mohammad S.	Mozumder							
D	Adrian	Petrus							
D	Joel	Rubin	Ended candidacy past election board deadline						
D	Laurie-Anne	Sayles *	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D	Joe	Vogel							
D	Destiny Drake	West							
D	Kiambo "Bo"	White *	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
D	Altimont Mark	Wilks							
R	Dan	Cox *	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R	Chris	Hyser *	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R	Neil C.	Parrott *	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓
R	Todd A.	Puglisi							
R	Mariela	Roca *	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
R	Tom	Royals							
R	Brenda J.	Thiam *	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**KEY** D = Democrat R = Republican

\* = provided additional comments | ✓ = agree X = disagree blank = no response

**We encourage you to read the additional comments provided by candidates to more fully explain their positions.**

- 1. Poverty.** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other similar initiatives provide funding for millions of poor Americans who cannot afford to adequately feed themselves or their families. Congress should oppose restrictions on SNAP that prevent the most vulnerable from receiving these benefits.

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**DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

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Peter	Choharis	My sister and I were raised by a single mother. I know firsthand the importance of such programs.
Ashwani	Jain	By 2030 - we should also increase the minimum wage to \$26 an hour (or \$55K a year). Living comfortably in a stable environment is a basic human right that we need to provide all Americans. Here are the full details about my plan - <a href="https://jainforcongress.com/issues/26-min-wage">https://jainforcongress.com/issues/26-min-wage</a>
Tekesha	Martinez	From my published Women's Agenda platform piece: Protect and expand access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for low-income families by aligning purchasing power with grocery prices, streamlining enrollment, removing unreasonable barriers for eligibility—such as requiring that military housing allowances be included in income calculations—and providing training and resources for understanding best-use practices.
Laurie-Anne	Sayles	As a single mother and former SNAP benefits recipient, I have personally experienced the struggles of living in poverty. As a county council member and lawmaker, I introduce policies to end childhood hunger and food insecurity and care for the most marginalized members of our society, and these policies will continue in Congress as I introduce legislation uplifting the poor and vulnerable to create a just and equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

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**REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES**

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Neil	Parrott	Like all government welfare programs, SNAP is subject to waste, fraud and abuse. Fully 13% of the country is on it. Congress should strengthen work requirements for eligibility. Work requirements help people get off welfare, they promote marriage, promote mental health, and help people build social capital. The Biden administration greatly increased SNAP spending, and that has disincentivized work, and a large percentage of our population permanently disengaging with the labor market. Congress should crack down on SNAP fraud, eliminate the marriage penalties in qualifying for SNAP, and increase the financial role of states.
Mariela	Roca	Yes, SNAP should be available for poor Americans who cannot afford to adequately feed themselves or their families, but like any federal government program, It's important to strengthen SNAP's work requirements and see that the program is promoting upward mobility through work for able-bodied adults.

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2. **Abortion.** Congress should enact legislation permanently banning the use of taxpayer funding for abortion and banning abortion in federal healthcare facilities or from being performed by federal employees.

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**DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

Peter	Choharis	Was adopted from Greece as a child. I have friends who traveled the world to adopt a child because they couldn't do so in the U.S. We have to end the stigma attached to mothers who give their children for adoption and to adopted children. We also must provide support and safety for mothers who want to adopt. But I believe that women who make the difficult decision to have an abortion have that right. If a woman chooses, after consulting her doctor, her right should not depend on finances.
Ashwani	Jain	While abortion rights and gender-affirming therapy were enshrined into the Maryland Constitution in 2020, millions of Americans around the country still do not have access to the care they need and deserve. That is why I am fighting to federally protect access to safe abortions and gender-affirming therapy.
Tekesha	Martinez	I am vehemently against any obstacles to any individual exerting the right to control their own bodies. Today, these barriers are becoming so great that federal assistance may be required to ensure that Americans retain their rights. If programs like Medicaid are to recognize the importance of providing healthcare to people with low income, reproductive care must be included. Safely or unsafely, people will exercise the right to bodily autonomy, so we should ensure safe, comprehensive access.
Laurie-Anne	Sayles	Women must have the autonomy and freedom to make decisions about their bodies. They should have access to high-quality healthcare and be able to consult with their healthcare providers to ensure the best possible outcomes for their reproductive health. As a Christian and a recently endorsed Common Good candidate, I believe Congress should enact legislation helping our most vulnerable residents access healthcare.
Kiambo "Bo"	White	I am pro choice but I'm not anti-life. I feel that abortion should not be taken lightly, however I feel there are exceptions which must be considered.

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**REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES**

Neil	Parrott	Since 1977, the Hyde Amendment has banned the use of any federal funds for abortion, only allowing exceptions to pay for terminating pregnancies that endanger the life of the pregnant person or that result from rape or incest. This flips when Democrats hold the presidency, but should be made permanent law.
Brenda J.	Thiem	The sanctity of life must be valued. If a woman chooses to have an abortion, federal funds should not be used to support this act. We need to focus more on preventing unwanted pregnancies and encouraging men and women to use contraceptives to prevent pregnancies that are not wanted. Abortion is not healthcare and most Democrats try to pass it off to citizens as such.

- 3. Immigration.** Congress should pass legislation to reform immigration policy to protect children and young people, such as the Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act, to provide humanitarian protection to abused, neglected or abandoned youth.

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**DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

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Ashwani	Jain	I was the first in the race to release an Immigrant Rights agenda. This includes creating a pathway to citizenship, expediting work permits, ending the use of private prisons to house immigrants, reforming ICE and ending local programs like 287(g). This also includes increasing funding and appropriation for ESL programs, making public college free, canceling student debt, Medicare for All and a \$26 Minimum Wage. Details here - <a href="https://jainforcongress.com/issues/immigrant-rights">https://jainforcongress.com/issues/immigrant-rights</a>
Tekesha	Martinez	It is especially important to approach immigration issues with care and understanding.
Laurie-Anne	Sayles	I am the daughter of Jamaican immigrants who came to the United States to pursue the American dream. As an advocate and lawmaker, I strongly advocate for compassionate immigration reform that welcomes and cares for immigrants seeking opportunities to thrive and fleeing violence in their communities. In Congress, I will prioritize introducing compassionate immigration policies that reflect solidarity, dignity, and respect for all individuals navigating pathways to citizenship.

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**REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES**

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Dan	Cox	Fighting the trafficking of women and children is something I have passed unanimously as a state Delegate. The Open Border is a travesty of justice endangering the lives of millions of trafficked persons, as well as endangering the lives of Americans in our communities from the cartels and criminal gangs. I will fight to end this on Day One as your Member of Congress.
Neil	Parrott	Our broken immigration system and the Biden administration's open-border policies are our number one national emergency. Until we have a secure border and reform our asylum and immigration parole laws, we cannot entertain legislation that expands asylum rights. The typical effect of these Democrat-sponsored immigration bills is to let more illegal immigrants into the country while doing nothing to reform the system or protect anyone from harm. Incentivizing the cartels and coyotes to bring more minors across the border is bad public policy, and it ultimately serves to harm more people than it helps.

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- 4. Education.** Congress should enact legislation, such as the Educational Choice for Children Act, which empowers parents in every state with expanded educational options through federal tax credit incentives that will fund scholarships for K-12 students, including those attending Catholic schools.

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**DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

Peter	Choharis	I have enormous respect for the Catholic school system. My sister, nephew, and niece all attended Catholic schools. And I tutored at a Catholic school as a high school senior as my public service project. But we need to focus on bolstering our public school systems.
Ashwani	Jain	Parents have the right to choose the educational setting (public, private, charter or homeschool) that they believe is best for their children. That said, all public funds should be prioritized to ensure public schools can fully serve all students in the most efficient manner. This also comes with greater accountability and transparency with how funds are being used. I also believe that the real education experts - the educators themselves - should have a say in how federal funds are spent.
Tekesha	Martinez	Public funding must be put towards public schooling first, especially in a time with such budget shortfalls, underpaid teachers, and overfilled classrooms. We should be focused on providing those resources to make sure our public school students have what they need to succeed. Still, partnerships are useful at all levels, and work with non-profits to support students continues to be important.
Laurie-Anne	Sayles	Quality education from early childhood to adulthood helps families access education that reflects their values. Her platform includes Head Start, a living wage for teachers, academic support for special needs students, and financial aid for college students. As a Congresswoman, she will invest in apprenticeship programs, advocate for free community college, and reduce student loan interest rates.
Kiambo “Bo”	White	I am a Catholic school high school graduate. It was one of the best experiences I've had. I feel having options are very important but I have have mixed thoughts on how that should be handled.

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**REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES**

Dan	Cox	I was a key sponsor of voucher and tax credit legislation as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates. As a former private Christian school teacher and current homeschool dad, I believe strongly in educational opportunities for all.
Neil	Parrott	I strongly support school choice. I promoted school choice as I served 12 years in the Maryland House of Delegates and believe that the money should follow the child. No child should be trapped in a failing government school.
Brenda J.	Thiam	Parents and children should have a right to choose where their child receives their education and funding should not be a factor. No child should be trapped in a failing public school because that school placement is based on their zip code.

5. **Environment.** Congress should pass legislation to encourage the responsible stewardship of the environment and its natural resources by protecting and promoting our national parks and wildlife preserves.

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**DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

Peter	Choharis	If we were given dominion over the earth, then we were given responsibility for it as well.
Ashwani	Jain	I was the first in the race to have a “Climate” agenda. This agenda includes plans to Electrify all cars, trucks and buses by 2035, Impose a Rooftop Solar Power Mandate by 2035, Optimize Long-Duration Energy Storage, Build more Offshore Wind Farms, Invest in Renewable Agriculture, Prevent Drilling of Fossil Fuels on Public Lands, and having Smart Growth and Mixed-Use Development. Details here - <a href="https://jainforcongress.com/issues/climate">https://jainforcongress.com/issues/climate</a>
Tekesha	Martinez	Having been deprived of nature in my own childhood, I understood the significance of both restoring the green spaces that once were and protecting the plants, animals, and land that surround us. It is imperative that our children and grandchildren have a healthy planet to call home.
Laurie-Anne	Sayles	As a recognized advocate for creating a cleaner and sustainable future, urgent action is needed against climate change, and investment in green infrastructure is crucial. I support conserving natural resources, cleaner air and water, and renewable transportation solutions like electric vehicles, transit systems, and charging stations that create new job opportunities and climate change solutions and promote responsible stewardship of the environment.

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**REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES**

Neil	Parrott	I support responsible environmental stewardship. Our national parks and wildlife preserves are an important part of our national heritage. I do not, however, support legislation that ends up sending more of our manufacturing jobs overseas and raising energy prices for all Americans. The primary world polluter is China. US environmental policy should not sacrifice American manufacturing jobs to countries like China that would pollute at a much higher level to produce the same goods. Instead, trade laws should be used as one negotiating tactic to get China and other countries to pollute less.
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- 6. Family.** Congress should enact legislation to support families, mothers and children, such as increasing and extending the child tax credit to include unborn children, extending the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and providing increased funding for childcare programs and foster programs.

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**DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

Peter	Choharis	Again, my sister and I were raised by a single mom. Nearly one-half of all U.S. families are now single-headed households. We need to protect and nourish the next generation of Americans.
Ashwani	Jain	I was the first candidate in the MD-06 Congressional race to release a comprehensive Reproductive Justice platform that includes protections to safe abortions and gender-affirming therapy, comprehensive sex-ed in all public schools, free menstrual products in public restrooms, Medicare For All, and affordable childcare. Full details here: <a href="https://www.jainforcongress.com/issues/womens-rights">https://www.jainforcongress.com/issues/womens-rights</a>
Tekesha	Martinez	From my published Women's Agenda platform piece: End the stigma surrounding the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), work to expand its scope, and raise awareness to encourage those eligible to take advantage of resources available to them.
Laurie-Anne	Sayles	As a public health expert, I am committed to advocating for policies that address health disparities and promote pathways to self-sufficiency. In Congress, I will work to meaningfully impact the lives of vulnerable populations by supporting families, children, and seniors through initiatives such as increasing the child tax credit and providing funding for childcare, social safety net programs, and foster programs.

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**REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES**

Dan	Cox	I also was the primary bill drafter and sponsor of the Parental Rights Act of Maryland, which would ensure parent's 14th Amendment rights to the care, custody, control and religious education of their children is not interfered with by the state or schools. We do not co-parent with the government. I will fight for this fundamental right in Congress as your next Member of Congress.
Neil	Parrott	I support legislation that helps families, mothers, and children, such as expanding the child tax credit to include unborn children. Blanket expansion of often wasteful government programs is rarely, if ever, the answer. WIC already serves half the nation's infants. Legislation that incentivizes and encourages marriage, work, and self-sufficiency will help American families much more than government handouts. Lower taxes, policies that combat inflation, and a reduction in careless and inefficient government spending will do much more for families of every socioeconomic status than handing blank checks to an often unaccountable, wasteful federal bureaucracy and activist, left-wing NGOs.

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**7. Conscience Protections.** Congress should pass legislation to ensure religious freedom and rights of conscience for healthcare workers and other government employees.

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**DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

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Ashwani	Jain	Healthcare workers should be required to provide all necessary medical services, regardless of their personal beliefs.
Tekesha	Martinez	I agree with the American Medical Association's position. Conscience protections must be balanced against the fundamental obligations of the medical profession and physicians' paramount responsibility and commitment to serving the often urgent, immediate, and potentially life-altering needs of their patients. Current efforts in government have not navigated this correctly, which is why courts struck down a previous HHS rule that was too broad, considering it "arbitrary and capricious."
Laurie-Anne	Sayles	I am passionate about ensuring religious freedom and rights of conscience for healthcare workers and other government employees by advocating for policies that respect individuals' beliefs and allow them to practice their faith without discrimination. In Congress, I will help safeguard the ability of Catholics and others to live out our faith while promoting respect for diverse beliefs in society.

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**REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES**

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No candidates provided comments.

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## 8. Why should Catholics vote for me? (table is two pages)

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### DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES

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Peter	Choharis	Growing up in a working-class family, I learned the importance of hard work and family values. My work in war-torn and famine-stricken regions reflects my commitment to serving others. My thousands of hours of pro bono work in the last few years alone and my work on human rights (including as a Board member of a human rights group that helps free unlawfully detained people overseas, including those persecuted for their religious beliefs), demonstrates my dedication to social justice and religious freedom. I am a former acolyte in the Greek Orthodox church and am committed to upholding human rights and dignity, values that are shared by people of faith.
Ashwani	Jain	My name is Ashwani Jain. I'm a 34-year-old son of immigrants and small business owners, a product of Maryland public schools, a published author and a cancer survivor. I also have experience in the public, private and non-profit sectors. I am for Congress in my HOME district - not just to be Maryland's first Millennial and first Asian to be elected - but because I have specific policy solutions that will open the doors of opportunity for our community. Full details at <a href="http://JainForCongress.com">JainForCongress.com</a>
Tekesha	Martinez	Born and raised in my hometown of Hagerstown, I started off in the foster care system. I had 5 kids by the age of 25. Me and my first daughter spent time living at St. Ann's Infant and Maternity Home in Hyattsville. That's where I met First Lady Hillary Clinton when she visited, and that stuck with me. I've experienced the lowest lows and the deepest trauma, and it is with that experience in mind that I hope to serve the people of Western Maryland regardless of background. I already serve Hagerstown in this way as the first Black Mayor, and I need your help to bring it to Congress.
Laurie-Anne	Sayles	I developed a policy platform called the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Sixth District vision that proposes priority areas to provide resources and opportunities for residents to succeed. As your advocate in Congress, I will fight for safer communities, revitalize the economy, tackle climate change, ensure quality education, safeguard religious freedom, strengthen families, care for the environment, advocate for just immigration policies, provide access to healthcare, promote peace, and restore reproductive rights. I am committed to making a real difference for families, small businesses, and our democracy. With my experience and determination, I am ready to hit the ground running and ensure that Washington works for us!

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**REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES**

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Dan	Cox	As husband to my wife Valerie of 28 years, parent of 10 children together, constitutional attorney admitted to and having fought for our elections to the Supreme Court, drafter of dozens of pro-America First bills in the Maryland House including pro-life legislation, I have the experience and dedication of an effective elected legislator and small businessman to serve you well as your next Member of Congress. I fought to Reopen Maryland in the lawsuits to do so, one of which reopened restaurants at Christmas and the other which helped gain the right to worship at Easter during the lockdowns. I fight for parents' rights and for our constitutional values and I work hard across the aisle to win votes, unanimously passing good bills. I will always put Constitution over Party. I humbly ask for your vote.
Chris	Hyser	Drawing on my diverse background and strong passion for collaborative problem-solving, I believe I possess a unique set of qualifications to effectively represent all constituents of MD District 6, regardless of their backgrounds. My journey has been characterized by service and dedication. As a retired Maryland State Trooper with a Medal of Valor, I proudly served my country during seven tours in Iraq and three tours in Afghanistan, protecting US Generals as a contract security consultant and dignitary protection agent. In 2020, I earned a Master of Divinity/Chaplaincy from the Bayan Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, CA, and I am currently an active volunteer Chaplain within the Interfaith community.
Neil	Parrot	People matter, and right now, American families are hurting – high cost of living, struggling businesses, crime, the border crisis, and battles over what children are taught in schools. I want to work to change this and help families across the district. I'm a professional engineer and small-business owner who likes solving problems. It was my privilege to solve problems for constituents and to help them for 12 years in the House of Delegates. I am running for Congress so that I can help people directly. As a legislator, I will work together with others to develop and implement effective solutions. My record in the House of Delegates on pro-life issues, religious freedom and freedom of conscience issues, and pro-family legislation speaks for itself. Catholic voters had no better friend than me in the 12 years I served in Annapolis.
Mariela	Roca	Catholics in Maryland should consider voting for me because as a practicing Catholic myself, I prioritize principles aligned with Catholic social teachings, such as compassion, care for the marginalized, and the common good. My policies aim to address issues like poverty, healthcare access, and education, reflecting values deeply rooted in Catholic doctrine. I advocate for policies that promote human dignity, protect the sanctity of life from conception to natural death, and support families. Additionally, I am committed to fostering dialogue and cooperation among diverse communities, respecting religious freedom, and upholding moral integrity in governance.
Brenda J.	Thiam	I'm a Christian and I believe in the sanctity of life. We need to work together to encourage women to keep their babies who are growing inside the womb. On the other side of "keep your hands off my body" is a dead future doctor. On the other side of "my body, my choice" is a dead future teacher. On the other side of "keep your hands off my uterus" is a dead future researcher who will discover the cure for cancer. We need to also consider sponsoring legislation that will help pregnant women keep their babies instead of aborting them. God doesn't make mistakes when the baby is conceived in the mother's womb. That's the message we need to keep stating to women who are pregnant and considering abortion.

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