



AFT-Maryland Candidate Questionnaire for Baltimore City Races

The AFT-Maryland is a federation of local unions of the AFT within the state, including the Baltimore Teachers Union and the City Union of Baltimore—whose members work for the city—as well as state employee members of the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT Healthcare-Maryland, and the Maryland Classified Employees Association. Together, with the Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees, AFT-Maryland has thousands of members who are citizens of Baltimore City, as well as thousands of members who work to make Baltimore City a better place for its citizens and children.

The AFT-Maryland has prepared the following questionnaire for candidates running for office in Baltimore City as a means to familiarize the candidates with issues that our members care about most. It also allows us the chance to see where the candidates stand on these issues.

AFT-Maryland locals participate fully in the endorsement process of the Metropolitan Baltimore AFL-CIO Council; the council will announce its final endorsements sometime in February 2016. However, because we are a large contingency within the Baltimore AFL-CIO, the unions of the AFT-Maryland have a heavy influence on who Labor chooses as its candidates for endorsement.

Please take the time to complete this candidate questionnaire. It may be returned to

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Please return this completed questionnaire no later than February 5th, 2016, at 5pm. If you have any questions, please contact Todd Reynolds, AFT-Maryland Political Coordinator, at 410-764-3030.

2016 Candidate Questionnaire—BALTIMORE CITY RACES
AFT-Maryland

Candidate for: **Mayor**

Candidate's name: **Carl Stokes**

Address: [REDACTED]
721 E. 25th Street, 21218 (headquarters)

Phone: **443-554-3620 (headquarters);** [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Occupation: **City Councilman** Who is your employer? **City of Baltimore**

May we make your answers to our questionnaire public? **yes**

Party affiliation (circle one):

Democrat **X** Republican Independent Other (please specify) _____

Have you received an endorsement from a labor union? If so, which ones? **None at this time**

Have you ever held elected office? When? **City Council, 1987-1995; 2010-present**

General

1. The AFT-Maryland is a federation of numerous employee unions, including Baltimore City teachers and paraprofessional and school-related personnel (BTU); Baltimore City employees (CUB); as well county and state employees; public health professionals; and higher education workers. Why should we support your campaign?

I have always been a strong supporter of organized labor and strongly believe that through organized labor, working men and women have a greater voice in their own futures and their ability to provide for their families. As chair of Taxation, Finance and Economic Development Committee, I have not in the past and will not in the future allow any pension reforms bills move forward unless the labor unions agree to the language of the bill.

2. Have you ever been a member of a union? If yes, please give the union name, local number, and date.

Yes, twice. The first time as a cashier and stocker at Food Fair, later Pantry Pride in the Retail Clerks Union (now UFCW), 1967-69. The second time as a steelworker at Sparrows Point, 1969-70.

Worker Rights

3. Should Baltimore City librarians be granted the right to engage in collective bargaining? Should employees of the Baltimore Convention Center? If you are elected to office, will you work to expand collective bargaining rights to public employees who currently do not have that right?

Yes, to including librarians and employees of the convention center and other public employees who are not already part of the bargaining unit. I have always supported and stood on the lines with working men and women.

4. Many cities nationwide have passed ordinances that raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Would you be in favor of Baltimore raising its minimum wage to \$15 per hour? Why or why not?

Yes, I do. While we must be mindful that cities will have different economic standards, the Baltimore City minimum wage should be raised to \$15 per hour to meet the current cost of living in the area.

5. Retirement for city workers: defined benefit versus defined contribution. The city of Baltimore has been discussing moving from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan (401K) for its employees' retirement. Do you support such a plan? Why or why not?

No, I do not support this move from a defined plan to a contribution plan. I will work closely with the pension boards to make sure our pension fund is stable.

The Role of Public Education in Baltimore City

6. What do you think are some of the biggest problems facing Baltimore City public schools today? If elected, how would you help solve these problems?

Class size, antiquated facilities, lack of after school-time programs, and a lack of comprehensive support systems for students and families, which directly affect to academic shortfalls.

First off, we will redirect operational funds to schools and away from the police. Currently we invest \$200 million in our children and \$500 million to our police. The city spending on police is at an all-time high, spending on education and youth is at an all-time low. We have our highest crime statistics and our greatest achievement gap among our students. This will change under my administration. This increase in funding will allow us to decrease class size and address other needs.

I will work closely with the state government to continue acquiring capital funds to upgrade our schools to a point where they are healthy schools.

Finally, I am a proponent of providing resources to our students and their families at the school. When students come to school in need of mental health services, or a family requires assistance from social services, those services and programs are available. Many of this will be through partnerships with health institutions and nonprofits throughout Baltimore.

7. Community Schools: Beginning in August 2015, Baltimore City will have 51 of its public schools serving as designated community schools. A community school is a public school that partners with some entity (UM-Baltimore or the Baltimore YMCA, just to name a few examples) to provide either after-school academic or social services to both students and members of the community. Would you be in favor of expanding the Community School Strategy in Baltimore by working to make more Baltimore City public schools community schools? If so, why? If not, why not?

Yes, community schools are a significant asset to our students and their families. Community schools offer services that allow our children to succeed. The community school model has proven itself to be effective so that when students come to school in need of mental health services, or a family requires assistance from social services, or students need to be challenged in new ways that can be offered through out-of-school time programs, those services and programs are available.

8. Public Charter Schools: There are just over 40 public charter schools in the state of Maryland, and the vast majority of them reside in Baltimore City. The large, out-of-state charter operators would like to weaken state law to make teachers and staff employees of the charter board, rather than employees of Baltimore City Public Schools. This would remove all protections that teachers and staff have under the collective bargaining agreement between the teachers union and the school board. This would also limit oversight of these privately run public schools by taking them out from under the purview of BCPS, as well as giving these charters a “blank check waiver” from any local school board policy. Should charter school teachers and staff be considered employees of the charter school or of the local school board? Should oversight of these schools be weakened?

Charter school employees should be employees of the School Board. All teachers and staff should be members of public unions. Oversight of these schools should not be weakened. They are City public schools.

9. Charter School funding. There has been a long-running dispute between certain charter school operators and Baltimore Public Schools over appropriate funding. As a feature of being a public charter school in Baltimore, the charters are largely given cash—calculated on a per-pupil basis—from the district, in lieu of the services that the central administration provides

neighborhood schools. Most recently, the system presented a per pupil funding formula that mandated funds intended for students living in poverty or who are English language learners actually receive those funds. Some charter operators have countered with a lawsuit, arguing that those special funds for high-poverty students or ESOL be distributed to every student equally, regardless of need. How do you think BCPS should calculate its charter school per pupil funding model?

Traditional public schools are not given autonomy to use their per pupil dollars because the system dictates how some of those funds will be used. Charter schools are autonomous and can decide exactly how that amount is used. All public schools, traditional and charter should have the autonomy to make the decisions as to how their budget it spent.

10. School vouchers: should government give out vouchers (either a tax credit, or even a tax rebate) to parents who want to send their children to a private school? Please explain your answer.

No. You don't fix a broken system with vouchers by sending children out of the system.

11. Education funding: This past year, lawmakers in Annapolis severely cut education to Baltimore City schools. Some in Annapolis have argued that the city should be contributing more to public schools, as property values (especially in and around the Inner Harbor area) have rapidly increased. Do you agree with this assessment?

I have, and always will, advocate for the increase of city funding to our schools. We currently dedicate 11-13% of our operating budget to city schools. Every other jurisdiction in the state dedicates, on average, 50% of their budget for public schools. I will dedicate 35% of the city's operational budget to our public schools.

12. Some current members of the Baltimore City Council have proposed a city charter amendment that would guarantee 3% of the city's budget for youth programs in the city, like recreation programs, youth mentorship, and afterschool programs. Would you be in favor of such a charter amendment? Why or why not?

Yes. We already know that not having these programs doesn't work.

13. Due to the limited number of certified nurses in Baltimore City Public Schools, administrators and/or staff are forced to administer medication to students, share nurses between multiple school locations, and utilize part-time nurses. How would you help solve this issue?

We need to reprioritize the health department budget to dedicate funds to more school nurses. The lack of basic health services in our schools is a citywide public health issue. I also propose to work with the many healthcare institutions and medical community in Baltimore to partner with the schools to offer services.

14. Currently, all seats on the Baltimore City School Board are appointed. Legislation is introduced almost every year to allow for at least a partially elected school board. Would you be in favor of such legislation?

Yes.

15. Violence in the city schools. What do you think is the best strategy to assure that our school buildings are safe and welcoming environments for children, teachers, and other education professionals in Baltimore City?

We need consistent and strong discipline policy that protect students, teachers and school personnel. We should not allow for disruption by a few students and at the same time be able to pull those students from the classroom environment to give them the necessary services to get them back on track. The public charter school I founded uses this method to work with the students.

Vision for Baltimore City

16. The city has begun shutting the water off for accounts that are delinquent by more than \$250. It has started to turn off the water for both individual accounts and business accounts. Do you agree with this plan? Why or why not?

We would not be asking this question if the water bills themselves were not so high because of our fees and rates. I will lower water bills in Baltimore City. That said, we can't continue to allow residents and businesses to not pay their water bills. We know that if the water is turned off, people find a way to pay their bills. Because the water system is self-sustaining, if water bills are not paid those losses are passed on to other users. We also want to minimize the number of people who lose their homes for nonpayment because they didn't know that would happen. We need to also promote better that we have low-income and low-income senior water assistance programs. Many who are eligible do not take advantage of this program because they do not know about it.

17. Privatization. Many rumors have been circulating that the city has been looking into privatizing water services. When, if ever, do you feel it is appropriate to privatize public services or to sell off or privatize city-owned resources?

When a service is a true "public service" it is the responsibility of the government to provide those services and do so with pride and efficiency with well-trained and compensated employees.

18. There are at least two competing strategies to help the city raise funds for recreation centers: one calls on the city to sell off a number of public parking garages downtown; another calls for

the Downtown Hilton to be sold. Do you prefer one plan over the other? Or a different plan to raise revenues for more rec centers? Do you think raising more funds for recreation centers should be a priority for city leaders? Why or why not?

We should not sell the garages which is a consistent revenue stream. We should dedicate this revenue to recreation programs. It is better to have the annual income than one influx of cash by selling the garages. As to the Hilton, first we need the discussion to find out if the hotel is profitable or not before we can make an informed decision. We don't know at this time.

19. The City is entertaining proposals to build a trash incinerator near Curtis Bay, located less than one mile away from Benjamin Franklin High School and Curtis Bay Elementary school. Supporters claim this incinerator will create much-needed jobs for the community. Opponents argue that incinerators pollute even more than coal-burning power plants, and should not be constructed so close to public schools. What is your position on the construction of a trash incinerator in Curtis Bay?

As much as I want to see more jobs in Baltimore the effect on the health of the residents of south Baltimore is at stake and at what cost? The amount of trash necessary to feed the incinerator will not come from Baltimore – there isn't enough. Therefore, trash will need to come from other jurisdictions and other states and that will increase diesel truck traffic and emissions adding to the level of pollutants put on the residents. The communities of Baltimore, in the early 1990s, fought successfully to pass legislation so that incinerators would not be built near schools, yet the state is willing to provide a waiver for this facility. Why do we have laws that protect our children and citizens if the state is willing to disregard those laws.

20. According to some statistics, there are approximately 16,000 vacant buildings and 14,000 vacant lots in Baltimore. Combined they total 30,000 vacant properties within the city limits, and play a large role in contributing to crime and other problems facing the city. More than 75% of all vacant property in Baltimore city is privately owned. How can we fix this problem and make sure land is being used effectively and efficiently in Baltimore?

I have proposed that we bring back the dollar house program and put those houses in the hands of homeowners and small developers who can afford to rehab those that are structurally sound. The developers would work with Baltimore residents enrolled in training programs to rehab the houses providing them a skill and a pathway to full employment. Getting these properties on the tax rolls while improving the infrastructure of a community is critical to the well-being of Baltimore. In addition, houses that are ready to be torn down, should be and those empty spaces would then be parks, gardens, farms, and playgrounds. We will need to work closely with Annapolis to make sure the \$700 million investment they are making in Baltimore is directed to this effort and is specifically directed by the leadership of Baltimore and its residents, not the leadership at the State level.