

Adobison - City Council Dist 13

## 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, the Maryland Classified Employees Association, and Maryland School for the Deaf. Together, with the Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees and the Baltimore County Federation of Public Health Nurses, AFT-Maryland has thousands of members who are citizens of the city of Baltimore, as well as thousands of members who work to make Baltimore a better place for its residents.

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 Late February 2020. 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 by no later than January 17th, 2020, at 5:00 p.m.

If you have any questions, please contact Todd Reynolds, AFT-Maryland Political Coordinator, at 410-764-3030 or [treynolds@aftmd.org](mailto:treynolds@aftmd.org).

Email address \*



Candidate Information

Name

Jackie Addison

Candidate for:

Baltimore City Council, District 13

Home address

City, ZIP code

Phone

Email address

Present occupation

Neighborhood Liaison

Employer

Baltimore City Government

Party affiliation

Democrat

Have you ever been endorsed by a labor union? If so, which one(s) and when?

No

Have you ever held elected office? If so, when?

Yes, Baltimore City State Central Committee for District 45, 2018-present

### Candidate Questionnaire

Please note the AFT-Maryland plans to make these questionnaires public. Only candidates agreeing to this provision are eligible to be invited to any future AFT-Maryland Candidate forum for the 2020 Election.

## General Questions

1. The AFT-Maryland is a federation of numerous public employee unions, including Baltimore city educators (Baltimore Teachers Union, or BTU, Local 340) and municipal employees (City Union of Baltimore, or CUB, Local 800). Why should we support your campaign?

I am committed to making Baltimore work for working people.

Where I live, too many people struggle to make ends meet. I want to go to city hall and fight for legislative changes that will help families succeed.

Organized labor has historically been a partner in improving the city. I look forward to working with labor to pass reforms that improve the lives of workers in East Baltimore. We need to instill equity into government operations, properly fund our schools, and improve the quality of life for my neighbors.

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

No, but I am a member of the Managerial and Professional Society of Baltimore, Inc. and recognize the value of collective bargaining in advocating for the needs of workers.

## Questions on Worker Rights

3. Collective bargaining for city employees: Should Baltimore City librarians and those who work for the Enoch Pratt Public Library System be granted the right to engage in collective bargaining? Should employees of the Baltimore Convention Center be granted the right to collective bargaining? If you are elected to office, will you work to expand collective bargaining rights to municipal employees who currently do not have that right?

Yes, if elected, I will work to expand collective bargaining rights to municipal employees who currently do not have that right. Even local governments can sometimes take advantage of its employees if there are no laws and/or regulations in place to curtail their influence and power. Expanding collective bargaining agreements to protect the rights of librarians, employees of the Baltimore Convention Center, and Baltimore City Community College is crucial to maintaining a level playing field for all kinds of workers in Baltimore City.

4. Minimum wage: In the 2019 Legislative session, the state passed a minimum wage law that excluded tipped workers and did not link the minimum wage to inflation. In addition, the state's minimum wage won't reach \$15 per hour until 2025. Would you be in favor of Baltimore City linking the minimum wage to inflation, and removing the exclusion for tipped workers? Would you be in favor of removing the delay and closing these loopholes in raising the minimum wage?

Closing minimum wage loopholes is extremely important to addressing several of Baltimore City's most pressing issues from public safety to homelessness. Passing legislation that directly improves the quality of life for our tipped workers helps improve the city as a whole, brings in additional tax revenue and, overall, bolsters the economy.

5. Retirement for city workers - Defined Benefit versus Defined Contribution: The City of Baltimore has in the past discussed moving from a defined benefit to a defined contribution plan (401k) for its employees' retirement. Do you support such a move? Why or why not?

No. Public sector jobs, in general, pay less in exchange for guaranteed retirement funds. Public employees deserve the security of defined benefit plans in return for their hard work. Switching to a defined contribution plan would make public sector jobs less attractive and cause some of the public sector's high-functioning employees to look for work in the private sector, leading less effective and/or efficient public services.

6. Retirement benefits for educators and city workers: Over the past few years, retired educators and employees of Baltimore City have had concerns that, just as the state did to its public workers, the city will discontinue the retiree prescription drug benefit and move all retirees to Medicare Part D for prescriptions. If elected to office, do you pledge to never vote to move retired educators and city employees to Medicare Part D for their prescription benefits?

Yes, I will never vote to deny retired educators and city employees the benefits that were promised to them.

7. Safe working conditions for city employees: This past year, a number of city employees have been severely injured—and in at least one case, killed—on the job. Whether it be Transportation Safety Officers merely directing traffic, DPW workers inspecting our water reclamation systems, or Department of Transportation officers needing to repair damaged roads—all employees deserve the right to work in safe conditions. Far too often, city workers feel the leadership of various city departments are either unaware of or completely ignore workplace safety protocols. If you are elected to office in Baltimore City, will you support a law requiring the various city departments to partner with Maryland Occupational Safety and Health to do a no-cost, wall-to-wall inspection of all city workplace facilities to help identify potential employee safety hazards?

I will work on legislation that will investigate workplace violence incidents, risks, or hazards as soon as practicable; provide training and education to employees who may be exposed to workplace violence hazards and risks; meet record keeping requirements; and prohibit acts of discrimination or retaliation against employees for reporting workplace violence incidents, threats, or concerns.

### Public Education in Baltimore City

8. General: What do you think are the three biggest problems facing Baltimore City public schools? If elected, how will you solve these problems?

1. Inadequate learning environments.

a. I will work to secure funding for the maintenance and restoration of our public schools. As Councilwoman, I will advocate for additional capital budget funds for BCPSS to go towards: repairing crumbling infrastructure, providing reliable heat and air conditioning units, and paying janitorial staff to ensure that our schools are clean and hygienic.

2. Underfunded education system.

a. I will work with fellow councilmembers to secure funding for the Kirwan Commission Recommendations and work with councilmembers and the city delegation in Annapolis to explore ways for Baltimore to meet its contribution requirement.

b. In addition, teachers are severely underpaid and deserve to be better compensated for their work.

3. Safety.

a. I will push for a mental health based approach to discipline in order to identify and address underlying issues that may make a student misbehave in school. It is important that we provide adequate counseling services to students in need.

9. Appointments to the City School Board: Just recently, a law was passed that gave the mayor (but not the city council) more authority in choosing the members of the city's school board. What role do you think the city council should play in this process? What should be the qualities Baltimore should prioritize in choosing a member of the city's school board? Would you commit to only support a candidate for local school board with at least 3 years of classroom experience (as a teacher, or a teacher's aide, for example) working in a public school system?

I believe that the City Council should have the power to confirm or reject mayoral school board appointees. We should prioritize school board members with teaching backgrounds in public schools. I am happy to commit to supporting candidates with, at the very least, 3 years of classroom experience. Ideal school board members are individuals with integrity, knowledge of the unique challenges faced by BCPSS, and committed to transparency.

10. Baltimore City School Board: In 2022, Baltimore City will finally be allowed to vote two additional members to the school board. Baltimore City is currently the only jurisdiction in the state whose entire School Board of Commissioners is appointed. In 2022 the board will expand from 10 to 12 seats, with the two additional seats being elected rather than appointed. Of the 23 other Maryland County School Boards, 19 are fully elected, and four are an appointed/elected hybrid, with only Wicomico County having more appointed than elected positions. If elected, would you support legislation transitioning Baltimore City to a fully elected or hybrid board with the majority of seats being elected? What is the optimal structure for Baltimore City's School Board and why?

Yes. At a minimum, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners should have a combination of elected and appointed members. While I am familiar with and sensitive to the concerns about accountability, I think the best structure for Baltimore is a hybrid school board, with a supermajority of elected members and only handful of appointments based on seat criteria. This will balance the professionalism of appointees with the accountability of elected board members.

11. Student and staff safety: A number of recent, high-profile incidents of violence in our schools have drawn attention to questions of student discipline. Additionally, in surveys to families about reservations on enrolling their children in a BCPSS school, student safety is cited as their #1 concern. Generally, employees of the school system have questioned the current code of conduct as ineffective, whereby students are suspended from school only to return when the suspension is over with the same underlying issues. Are there any revisions to the code of conduct for student behavior that you feel should be considered?

As mentioned above, I will advocate for a mental health based approach to discipline in order to identify and address underlying issues that may make a student misbehave in school. Suspending students with behavioral problems without addressing underlying factors doesn't help the 'problem' student, in addition to teachers and other students who may be put at risk by their actions. Students with repeat behavior issues, rather than being suspended, should be recommended to trained mental health professionals.

12. Baltimore's population loss has contributed to enrollment declines in City Schools. Lower enrollment has also been caused by under-investment fueled by systemic racism that's lowered the quality of City Schools' programming. As part of the 21st Century Schools initiative, Baltimore was required to close a number of schools in order to qualify for renovation funds. School closures have also been triggered by low achievement, as part of the district's portfolio approach to schools. These policies have resulted in a disproportionate number of vacant schools in black neighborhoods that are already under-resourced. If elected, what is your plan to utilize these potential community resources?

We have to invest in the neighborhoods that need the money the most. Baltimore has historically not done so, and it is painstakingly obvious in my district. Black people live in worse conditions and get less service. I would work to implement Council President Scott's equity legislation. We can use these vacant buildings as community resources. These decisions should be made in partnership with the surrounding community and based on the unique needs of those communities.



13. In Baltimore, as across the nation, school zones and neighborhood boundaries have historically served to limit access to high quality public schools. While Baltimore City Public Schools students in middle and high school are assigned to schools through a complicated "school choice" process, students in elementary schools are still largely assigned to schools based on enrollment zones. These zones were created over a generation ago, and in the years since, population shifts (notably large growth southeast Baltimore of the English Language Learner population, which required additional services and support) have resulted in several schools being overcrowded, while others are under-enrolled. Additionally, the school district's Equity Policy requires it to examine its plans and practices to determine and address the ways they exacerbate racial and economic inequity. In order to meet the needs of Baltimore families, and move towards a more just and equitable school system, a comprehensive redistricting plan should be completed, involving the coordination of the Baltimore City Planning Department and Baltimore City Public Schools. However, changing neighborhood boundaries causes significant public backlash. If elected, would you support school redistricting and would you direct the Baltimore City Planning Department to partner with City Schools to create a comprehensive plan?

Yes, all issues we try to address in the City government should account for equity and remedy inequalities. This includes our school boundaries. We should draw boundaries based on the Census data and allocate funds accordingly. The equity legislation will help alleviate the issues here because likely require a plan that incorporates an equitable analysis. I will use whatever means are at my disposal to pursue a policy of school integration and equity. The entire process of school redistricting must be rooted in strong community engagement.

14. Public Charter Schools: There are 50 public charter schools in the state of Maryland, the vast majority of which are in Baltimore City. Some charter school operators would like to weaken state law to make the teachers and staff at the charter employees of the charter non-profit board, not the school system. This would remove all protections that the teachers and staff have under the BTU collective bargaining agreement. Should charter school teachers and staff be considered employees of the charter school board or the city's public school board?

Charter school teachers and staff should be considered employees of the city's public school board. Charter schools receive funding through the BCPSS budget and should adhere to collective bargaining agreements made between BCPSS and the BTU.

15. Should there be a cap on the number of charter schools in Baltimore City? Why or why not?

Yes, absolutely. Without a limit on the number of charter schools in Baltimore, Baltimore City Public Schools will receive less and less funding, and the City will see already underfunded schools lose attendance and continue to lack sufficient resources.

16. BOOST/School Vouchers: Should government give vouchers (either as a tax credit or even a tax rebate) to parents who want to send their children to a private school?

No, funds that go towards private school vouchers is money that could be put towards improving the quality of public education. Parents should be able to have the choice to send their children to private schools, but not at the expense of our public school system.

17. Education funding: Some in Annapolis have argued that Baltimore City should be contributing more to its public school system than is currently budgeted. The city ranks among the worst in Maryland when it comes to the local contribution to its public school system; while on average a county in Maryland contributes roughly 36% of its annual operating budget to its local school system, in Baltimore, the city contributes only 14% of its budget to its schools. The Kirwan Commission is recommending the city increase its contribution by \$300 million, more than doubling its current contribution.

17(a) How large of an increase, percentage wise, should Baltimore City commit in its budget to funding public schools?

I believe that Baltimore City should increase its contribution to BCPSS by 15%, from 14% to 29% of its operating budget, in order to meet the obligations set by the Kirwan Commission recommendations.

17(b) In order to meet Kirwan obligations, how would you propose raising that additional \$300 million?

I will work to with my fellow elected officials renegotiate PILOTs (payments in lieu of taxes) that non-profit landholders pay the city in place of property taxes. Nonprofits collective own over \$5 billion in real estate and pay a combined \$6 million on this. The city originally negotiated this deal with little public input. The Council needs to renegotiate the PILOTs and get nonprofits to contribute more money that could be put towards funding education. Additionally, I support a thorough examination of the city's budget to explore other ways we can divert money towards our school system and will work with our delegation in Annapolis to make sure we have the resources needed to meet the Kirwan Commission's recommendations.

18. In every school district in Maryland the head of the school system is the Superintendent of public schools. However, in the two majority minority school systems—Baltimore City and Prince George's County—the head of the school system is instead titled the CEO of public schools. This title change, while subtle, has been significant: since the switch to a more corporate-based model with this title change, these two districts have seen a substantial portion of their schools become charters, and an overall explosion in the amount of standardized testing has followed. If elected to office, will you be in favor of returning the title of the head of our public school system to "Superintendent" so as to be identical with other school districts in Maryland? Why or why not?

Yes, if elected I will be in favor of returning the title of the head of our public school system to "Superintendent", rather than "CEO". Despite the subtlety of this issue, we must not underestimate its impact on the functionings of our public school system. Our school system should not take on a business model. Our educational system should be centered around students and teachers, not finances and administration.

Vision for Baltimore City

19. Privatization: Recently, CUB and AFT-Maryland worked with the City Council and Food and Water Watch to pass a city charter amendment that would prohibit our water from ever being privatized. Are there other resources that are owned by the city that you believe should never be privatized? When, if ever, do you feel it is appropriate to privatize public services or property?

There are no resources in Baltimore City that should be privatized. Privatization of city resources endangers the quality of life of the Baltimore City residents. I do not feel it is ever appropriate to privatize public services or property, unless it is absolutely necessary. Private companies only respond to the needs of their shareholders and are not accountable to the public.

20. Development: In 2016, the city passed a multi-billion dollar re-development plan, supported by a \$535 million TIF request to develop Port Covington. Opponents worried development projects such as these, funded through public tax revenues, will be used not to the betterment of all in the city, but instead to the betterment of wealthy elites, widening the gap between the haves and have-nots in Baltimore. Do you have a vision for development in Baltimore City that...

20(a) ...assures neighborhoods will contain equitable amounts of low-income and affordable housing?

Yes, I will ensure that developers willing to build affordable housing have access to the necessary resources and government support. I will also fight to make sure that we distribute affordable housing to areas where it is needed the most while, at the same time, avoiding an overconcentration of low-income housing projects.

20(b) ...will help the city improve its financial contribution to its public school system?

Yes, I will support incentivizing developers to build community resource centers for students and families in and around Baltimore in order improve public safety in our neighborhoods and foster innovation in our schools.

20(c) ...will be completed by workers who live in and around the Baltimore region, and follow prevailing wage standards and project-labor agreements?

Yes, I will work to ensure that developers in Baltimore follow prevailing wage standards and project-labor agreements in order to create and sustain good, well-paying jobs, for working-class Baltimoreans.

20(d) ...will contain businesses that must follow labor peace agreements?

Yes, I will ensure businesses follow labor peace agreements and will hold them accountable if they fail to do so.

21. Affordable housing: Recently, CUB worked with legislators in Annapolis to pass legislation that would allow the city to grant low-income city employees a property tax credit on their homes. Affordable housing is a priority for city educators as well, as there are more homeless students in Baltimore city than there are total students in some county districts. What is your plan to increase accessibility to quality, stable housing in Baltimore city?

I will work with local developers to explore and help push through affordable housing projects across the city. I will work to make sure such developments are done so that they are best able to address the needs of Baltimore City residents, including heavily subsidized housing for current students and the continuation of property tax credits for city employees. I support the \$2,500 property tax credit for low-income municipal staffers recently passed by the City Council.

22. Crime: Do improved education and expanded city services play significant roles in your plan to reduce crime in Baltimore city? If so, how?

Improved education and expanded city services play crucial roles in my plan to reduce crime in Baltimore City. One of my top priorities is to ensure that our City schools have the resources and personnel for students to succeed. I believe we must offer our students a holistic education, providing them with a foundation that will allow them to excel academically, socially, and professionally, and, in turn, prevent them from engaging in criminal activity.

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this candidate questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact Todd Reynolds, AFT-Maryland Political Coordinator, at (410) 764-3030, or [treyolds@aftmd.org](mailto:treyolds@aftmd.org).



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