

Glover - 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 treyolds@aftmd.org.

Email address *



Candidate Information

Name

Antonio Glover

Candidate for:

Baltimore City Council - 13th District

Home address

City, ZIP code

Phone

Email address

Present occupation

Community Liaison

Employer

Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office

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?

Democratic Party State Central Committee - 2016-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?

AFT-Maryland should support my campaign for several reasons. First and foremost, I firmly believe in, and will be a staunch advocate and supporter of, the basic right of workers to unionize and engage in collective bargaining. I have the utmost respect for the teaching profession as I have many teachers in my family. They instilled in me the value of a good education, which I can directly attribute to all of personal and professional successes. Unions are critical to maintaining a fair and functioning economy. As a society, we are indebted to unions for the minimum wage, rigorous safety protocols, paid leave, and workers' compensation, among many other historic legislative and work policy reforms. Unions also ensure a better trained and more knowledgeable workforce. That said, I will work tirelessly to ensure that AFT-Maryland is given its fair due in collective bargaining, surrounded by the best facilities and a safe environment, and the very best support systems, tools and training, in order to do their jobs teaching our children.

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

1998-2014 AFSCME Local44

2014-present CUB

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?

I absolutely do support the right of all municipal employees to be granted the right to engage in collective bargaining. I will support any and all legislation with seeks to support this position for our city workers.

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?

I support a living wage of \$15 for all Baltimore City and Maryland State residents, subject to and linked with increases in the rate of inflation. In addition, at present, many of our city's restaurant and service workers unfairly receive sub-minimum wage salaries because their wages are subject to special exemptions in state law and workers cannot rely on tips to make up the difference. Our state government has been complicit in this unfair outcome through its recent minimum wage legislation, which has both severely hampered the city's autonomy to increase the minimum wage and maintained special wage exceptions for restaurant and service workers. As a councilman, I will relentlessly lobby our state legislature to end wage loopholes, including removing the exclusion for tipped workers, tie any future minimum wage increases to inflation, and allow Baltimore City the autonomy to choose for itself what wages it believes are best for its citizenry.

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?

I do not support a defined contribution plan, as this system relies on the stock market, and government should not be in the business of gambling with its workers' retirement. Instead, I support a defined benefit plan that isn't dependent on market fluctuation, but on a plan that will be able to guarantee a readily knowable income for all its workers.

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?

You have my commitment.

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?

This sounds like a reasonable legislative remedy which I can and will support, yes.

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?

The poverty rate among many of the families who send their children to Baltimore City public school is the greatest challenge we must address. Poverty creates unemployed and underemployed parents that are unable to feed their children, and who often are also unable to reinforce school lessons, make sure homework gets done, and ensure bed times are strictly enforced. This, in turn, leads to children incapable of following a basic lesson plan and many frustrated teachers. Much has been made about how much the City spends per-pupil on education, but the simple fact is that we must control for the ills of poverty. As a Councilman, I will insist on providing children with free quality daycare, finding adult mentors for at-risk students, developing appealing educational and recreational activities at parks and recreation centers, and adopting alternative curriculum and programs for children facing the most adverse circumstances.

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?

Extensive research must be conducted to adequately respond to this question. However, that while I am open to the 3 years of classroom experience requirement for candidate's suggestion, I am hesitant to make a commitment to exclude all future applicants who do not meet that bar, as I can certainly envision future potential candidates who possess many other exceptional qualities for which the board and the students, teachers and faculty it serves can benefit, and who deserves to be receive fair consideration

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?

I support a hybrid approach to structuring the school board, with a mix of both elected and appointed members; with greater emphasis given to those who have earned their seats through the democratic process.

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?

Revisions to the student behavior code should only be made after careful consultation with school administrators, classroom teachers, public safety officers, student parents. I would not feel comfortable offering changes until such time as I've had a chance to confer with each of these very important stakeholders and interested parties.

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?

The city should work with local, community based non-profit organizations on ways in which these vacant school buildings can be renovated and adopted (by said organizations), for the sole purpose of working in the very same neighborhoods that desperately need their help.

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, the time for a comprehensive redistricting plan is long overdue, in order to address systematic racial and economic inequity issues within the City of Baltimore, as it relates to population shifts, school overcrowding, and the equitable allocation of resources.

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?

Public Charter School operators MUST remain accountable to the city's public school system. The key word is "accountability". Charter schools are, in the end, private interest enterprises. I am highly skeptical about public money funding private entities to educate the public's (our) children, and all of the related potential threats to employee protections, rights and collective bargaining agreements, should teachers and staff become staff of each charter school.

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

Yes. It is my opinion that charter schools have often served as a drain on public funds; monies which would otherwise have been directed to, and better spent on, traditional public schools. Additionally, there is scant evidence to show that charter schools (as a whole) have consistently demonstrated the capacity to make significant improvements in student performance and achievement.

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?

On principle, I am opposed to school voucher programs for the same reason that I am highly skeptical about school charter schools: public funds should not be used to enrich private interests charged with educating our children, particularly since, in many cases, these schools have not shown better than average student performance and achievement. School vouchers drain money from the 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 do not have an exact figure in mind, however I do believe that Baltimore City's contribution must increase. The challenges facing Baltimore City, outside of its schools, are many and very complex, with a tax base that has been shrinking. However, the council and the mayor have a responsibility to come up with creative ways to raise the necessary revenue to give our children a fighting chance to succeed; whether it be through cutting wasteful programs, increasing sales taxes on certain items, floating municipal bonds, or taxing the large corporations which have not traditionally paid their fair share of taxes to benefit the public good here in Baltimore.

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

Raising the additional \$300 million will rely heavily on whether or not the community has an appetite for government imposing or raising new taxes to fund the recommendations offered by the Kirwan Commission. I will fight for solutions which balance to overwhelming needs identified in the report, and the already often regressive nature of government imposed taxes on the citizens of Baltimore. Ultimately, however, if we want better schools and better prepared students, we all must be willing to make sacrifices.

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?

Again, I strenuously oppose the privatization of our public schools. If, by changing the title of the leader of our schools to "CEO" suggests, or will encourage said leader to view our children more as numbers instead of young, impressionable minds, then I stand in opposition to such a change.

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?

Public parks and other public spaces (their administration and/or ownership) should never be privatized. I would be open to selling public parking lots if a compelling reason can be given for why that option makes more fiscal sense than maintaining current public administration and its related positive streams of revenue.

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?

I don't have a plan, but I strongly believe that any development project which is supported by a TIF must include both affordable housing units and a uncompromising commitment to adherence to MBE/WBE sub contracting laws.

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

I wholeheartedly believe in the concept of codifying into law or into any MOU with a large developer, that a certain percentage of any future tax revenue be used to help fund our public 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?

Again, any business which benefits from public funds MUST include significant participation from minority and women-owned businesses during the procurement process.

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

No plan, but I am completely committed to this principle.

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?

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

Educated citizens, with proper skills training (at the very least) is the best hedge against poverty, crime, and political and economic disenfranchisement. No plan is complete without acknowledgement of this very simple truth.

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 treynolds@aftmd.org.



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