

Pryor. District 3



Candidate Information

Name

Rain Pryor

Candidate for:

3rd District City Council

Home address

City, ZIP code

Phone

Email address

.....

Present occupation

Executive Producer/performer

.....

Employer

Self/MGM

.....

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?

No

.....

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?

You should support my campaign because I will vote or propose legislation that will support your needs and goals and will hold good administrators accountable

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

SAG/AFTRA since 1981

## 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 believe if employees desire to have collective bargaining rights they should. I support any effort to organize to put employees at an advantage that would support them equitable wages and opportunities.

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 am in favor of raising the minimum wage to meet inflation recognizing that small businesses are being effected. I would like to gather at the table business owners and employees to figure out what is suitable so we can build equitable employment opportunities and growth. I would be willing to look at closing loopholes where financially feasible and fair.

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?

Defined contributions gives an assurance of income for retirement. I support defined benefits which has been very beneficial for our adult seniors.

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?

I will support what our retired educators like my mother in law desire. Knowing you have assurance with prescription benefits is very important, and access to affordable healthcare is a basic human right.

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?

Yes, I would support a law requiring the various city departments to partner with Maryland Occupational Safety and Health.

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 biggest problem facing Baltimore City Public Schools is our teachers and youth are not seeing the benefits of being the 3rd highest funded school district in the nation. This says to me, there is a lack of transparency in regards to financial oversight.

As City Council, I would support external audits of the budget, and support educators and students above administrators. I would also vote to see a more balanced school board with 50% locally elected as to represent the districts fairly. Having worked in Baltimore City Public Schools and having relatives and a Child in Baltimore City Public Schools, I know we have done a disservice to our teachers and our youth in not providing equitable infrastructure and salaries. I want to hold the city accountable.

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 think the board should be 50/50 with the city council being allowed to have a voice and the community to be able to have a voice and vote. I commit to supporting local school board with 3 years of experience and also support parents and guardians of school age children to be elected to the board. Involving community is very important to me as it is my role as an elected official to represent the people.

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 as I stated above. I support having election and would love to see it 50/50 and would support 10-20% hybrid.

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?

I think we need to see an amendment in our Bullying, Violence, Intimidation and Harassment protocols and how restorative justice practices are implemented. The current data shows that, "Restorative Justice Practices," are only beneficial when the bully or bullies are remorseful, show the desire to change behavior, and is lead by a specifically trained individual. The model has proven ineffective in cases where there has been a threat of physical harm, or actual physical contact.

I would propose All schools must have trained staff to lead restorative justice practices, with the minimum of 16 hours of documented training.

All schools must adhere to the same policies, and report all incidents. This holds schools accountable for procedures protocols.

All schools to staff, social worker and mental health counselors to provide assessment and follow ups until the situation is entirely rectified, and offending student can enter into and participate in the school community.

All schools must be dedicated to holding a one week bully education and team building events that support school culture and community. All schools must have special programs yearly dedicated to community building. Example the organization WombWorks, has a comprehensive outreach program for high risk youth and come into schools to hold special sessions and projects. Also, Maria Broom is an Baltimore contracted educator who has a wholistic approach to building community in schools that support victims and bullies. All schools will follow documentation protocols that are evaluated by the administration & board; giving a reason probation period to evolve school culture.

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?

As a city council member, I would like to research private funding and grant sources to revitalize our underserved communities and especially schools. Equitable education is beyond important in not only changing culture but in crime reduction. When we invest in our youth and communities we send a message of hope.

We need to start focusing our spending on not gentrification, but on actual investments that fix infrastructures and create opportunity.



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?

How about we invest in underserved communities instead of forcing our kids further away from their homes and relying on an inadequate public transportation system. If we want to face the systemic nature of inequities in education we should be talking about real financial investments into those communities and schools.

I do believe in school choice, and I also believe in actually addressing and fixing our cities issues instead of continuing to develop in other areas that aren’t addressing the real issues.

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 Schools should have both since it’s made up by members of the community, but part of the public school funding.

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

I think Charter Schools come out of the need for parents and community to create educational opportunities for students. I think until we fix our public schools infrastructure and can offer equitable education, we need to allow Charter Schools and perhaps a collaboration. After all these are public charters that due hire union teachers.

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

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 think we need to seriously consider how we can contribute at least 16-25% and not turn that over to our taxpayers.

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

Looking at private investments and fundraising models that are based in a desire to brand as well as creating a education foundation that focuses on Baltimore City education funding matches etc.

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?

Cultivating a level playing and financial educational field would benefit by title of Superintendent and doing away with a corporate based model. The corporate based model is part of the reason our funding isn’t going to those that need it most.

#### 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?

I believe we should not have privatized jails or prisons or youth detention centers ever. Keeping business in the city is important and we should be looking at being able to collect taxes from private entities that also revive public subsidies and funding.

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?

We can't keep giving loans we can't payback or that developers can abandon. I would like to review actual plans that consider the demographics of the communities and their needs. Allowing community to know exactly what development and developers are offering in their plans and the transparency of those cost. Affordable housing can be achieved as well, if we open up to community developers and homeowners the opportunities to buy and renovate creating local investments and incentives to grow in the community.

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

Yes

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

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

Yes

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?

Why not rebuild the population a tax credit based on the invitation to purchase a home, and if rented the landlord passes those savings on to their tenants.

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

I would want to implement vocational training, mentorships and job placement. This is helpful towards crime reduction as well as implementing affordable mental health services.

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](mailto:treynolds@aftmd.org).



This form was created inside of AFT-Maryland.

Google Forms