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## 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

Joseph Kane, II

Candidate for:

Baltimore City Council - District 14

Home address

City, ZIP code

Phone

Email address

Present occupation

Federal Contractor

Employer

The Kenific Group

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?

As someone who was born and raised in Baltimore City and returned home after serving in the Army, I've experienced the impact from the lack of investment in education and the disparity in the distribution of City services. As a result I've organized as a PTO president, bringing parents and teachers together to get the resources and support they need to be successful in the classroom. I serve on my community association board as a vice-president working to organize neighbors around community-driven initiatives. I've always supported organized labor and know the impact an organized movement can have on public policy. Our campaign is rooted in putting people back at the center of decision making in Baltimore City. I'm running because I recognize we need organizers like us in City Hall who value the voice of the community. I've done this for the last 10 years and will continue once elected.

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

No

## 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?

As a student at Morgan State, I joined a campus group (Morgan United) and our first action was standing with food service workers at Johns Hopkins University who wanted to unionize. All of the workers listed should be granted the right to engage in collective bargaining. If elected I will work to expand collective bargaining rights to municipal employees who currently do not have that right.

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?

Being raised in Baltimore by a single mother of four boys, I know what it feels like to have a mother who worked 2-3 jobs at a time and still struggled to pay all the bills. This often resulted in lights being disconnected, eviction, and me growing up early to help raise my three younger brothers. I don't have many photos of me as a child because we were evicted so many times. So, yes and yes. The passage of the \$15 minimum wage in the Maryland General Assembly was a huge success but it doesn't go far enough, fast enough. When elected I will do everything within my power and organize outside of my power to close the loopholes locally.

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?

City workers are often overlooked but are truly the people who keep Baltimore operating. Ensuring they have stability and security after retirement is our debt to the work they've done over the years. I fully support honoring the current system and working to negotiate what's in the best interest of both parties moving forward. Unilateral decisions should be taken off the table.

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 do not support making changes to any benefits to retired workers. These are benefits earned and should be honored by Baltimore City.

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?

Safety has been at the forefront of my mind as it relates to working conditions since I was an 18 year old soldier in the United States Army Field Artillery and reinforced every day now during my work at the United States Coast Guard Logistics Center. In my current role, I am responsible for creating, maintaining, and updating maintenance schedules for the entire Small Boat Fleet of the USCG. This requires creating and maintaining systems that set validation dates for task, details who performs those tasks, and outlines what equipment should be used for those tasks. As a councilmember, I would audit the current system used to mandate safety training's, inspect equipment, and replace equipment. If those systems aren't in place or need improvement I will hold those agencies accountable to bringing them up-to-date.

I 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.

Finally, I would ensure that those directly impacted by the workplace conditions are leading the conversation around workplace safety as they are the workers who have to work in those conditions.

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?

As a graduate of Baltimore City Public Schools and now a parent of four children in Baltimore City Public Schools this issue has been at the center of my advocacy for the last 10 years.

The first issue facing Baltimore City Public Schools is the chronic under funding of our public schools by the State of Maryland and Baltimore City. Despite Maryland's constitutional duty, we have failed to fully fund our schools for decades. This under funding has undermined every effort to provide high quality education to our students. It has left a trail of crumbling schools (outlined in the 2012 Jacobs Report), outdated technology, and exhausted teachers. In addition to the States neglect, Baltimore City has willfully neglected to invest in our schools.

The second issue facing our public schools is the gap between parents and schools. As former PTO president at my children's school and current board member of the Parent and Community Advisory Board, I've experienced the undervaluing of parents voice within the district. This gap creates an adversarial spirit between educators and parents when we should all be on the same team. When parents are a valued member of a school community the climate in our schools is improved, teachers feel supported, and children are successful.

The third issue facing our public schools is the gap between the district and our teachers and PSRP's. While I'm not a teacher, I've organized and worked with enough teachers and PSRP's to know that they want to feel supported and not micromanaged. The district needs to let teachers and PSRP's lead their classrooms.

As a member of the Baltimore City Council I would bring a unique perspective to k-12 education in Baltimore City because I know the pressure points within the system where change can be made and will organize parents, teachers, and community members to apply pressures in all the aforementioned areas. This is what I've done for the last 10 years and will continue to do as I will use the bully pulpit of the Baltimore City Council to organize on a larger scale.

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?

The Baltimore City Council should have the authority to confirm an appointments made to the Baltimore City School Board of Commissioners. This level of oversight and accountability is important as we work to restore trust in local government.

The Baltimore City School Board of Commissioners govern our schools and should have a number of qua

I would only support a candidate looking to fill the technical background requirement who has been in the classroom in a public school for 3 or more years.



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?

As a member of the Parent and Community Advisory Board for Baltimore City Public Schools (an organization that was created at the same time as the Baltimore School Board of Commissioners – a result of the Bradford v. Maryland State Board of Education), I know firsthand the commitment it takes to operate a volunteer board. I've also had the privilege of participating as a community panelist to select two of the current school board members. I support a hybrid school board.

I believe a paid hybrid board is important because it has the potential to strike a balance between parents, community members, education professionals and finance professionals. Parents and community members offer a first-hand understanding of the outcomes. This will be useful as the board creates the vision for how to move the district forward and identifying areas of improvement in real time. Education professionals understand best practices and know the success and shortcomings of what's happening in the schools. Ideally, finance professionals would bring fiscal responsibility to the board.

Under my model, there would be a mix of elected and appointed members. The elected board members would represent geographical boundaries and cover an equal amount of schools. This provides the taxpayer with someone to hold accountable to how schools in the designated area are performing. That accountability factor is currently missing within our district. The appointed individuals would be selected by a community panel, convened by the mayor. The mayor would select an individual who would need to be confirmed by the Baltimore City Council. These professionals would be at-large members who would bring the technical background (Education and Finance) to the school board.

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 a member of the Parent and Community Advisory Board for Baltimore City Public Schools and the previous policy chair for the advisory board, I've had a lot of hands on experience with informing district policy. As a result, I know there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer to the questions concerning our code of conduct for student behavior.

Creating a safe environment for our school community has to be our top priority. This goal should be met through a trauma informed lens that acknowledges the burdens our school community confront before and after the school day. Student behavior is not equal and should be treated as such. No two students experiencing a crisis share the same starting point. The districts approach to dealing with student behavior should not be standardized but should meet certain criteria to ensure the needs of the students are being met.

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?

When Waverly Elementary Middle School opened its new building, it left the old school building across from the school vacant. Community members have worked for years to attract investment in this property to no avail and the building sits vacant and deteriorating today. Fortunately, this doesn't have to be how the story ends. In West Baltimore, community leaders partnered with state and local officials to re purpose the former Langston Hughes building into a full service community center. This is the approach I will take in my community. Furthermore, I as a councilmember I would work to introduce legislation that will mandate a transition plan for these buildings once they are returned to the city. Such plan will be created in collaboration with community stakeholders.

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?

As a parent with four children in Baltimore City Public Schools, my wife and I faced this problem with our neighborhood school. Instead of looking for the next best school and wishing the other children and families good luck, I joined the parent and teacher organization, eventually became president and worked to transform our school. Today, our school is at 90% enrollment and families who once took their children out of the school are returning.

Nonetheless, I would support redistricting in Baltimore City and would bring all stakeholders to the table to discuss solutions. I will also continue the work I’m doing to empower and organize parents and community members to apply pressure on the school district to ensure all our schools are providing high quality instruction in a safe and fun environment.

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?

As the Parent and Community Advisory Board representative to the Baltimore City Charter and Operator Led Advisory Board I am proud of the way we facilitate Charter Schools in Baltimore City. Teachers and staff are under the BTU collective bargaining agreement and it should remain that way. I will never support an effort to change such structure.

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

There should be a cap on Charter Schools based on the services offered by these schools. Charter schools in Baltimore City are designed to fill gaps in services that the district may have. If a charter school is functioning at a high level the district should not move to expand those schools but take best practices and model more traditional schools after the charter example.

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?

The choice of where a parent sends their child(ren) is private and should not be infringed upon. However, public dollars should be limited to public schools. As a member of the Baltimore City Council I will work to ensure that all of our schools are high quality and our schools are the first choice for parents in Baltimore City.

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?

Our campaign is advocating for a floor of 25% of the Baltimore City annual budget to support Baltimore City Public Schools and would propose a charter amendment to ensure that it never drops below that level. Ideally, our contribution level would be the largest expenditure of our annual budget. Investment in our schools is the best way to ensure Baltimore City thrives for generations to come.

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

Baltimore City currently brings in enough revenue to fully fund the proposed Kirwan recommendations. However, we have invested that money in more policing with little to no results. We have to move money from the Baltimore City Police Department to education. A comprehensive public safety strategy is one that adequately invest in education. We also have to end the sweetheart deal we have given institutions like Johns Hopkins University and renegotiate the current PILOT's and end the double dipping tax-breaks these institutions enjoy. Finally, we have to lobby the state legislator to legalize recreational marijuana. This will create new tax revenue that will help pay for education among other initiatives.

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?

The root of this controversy is not the title of the leader but rather the philosophy of the leader. The Baltimore City School Board of Commissioners is responsible for the direction of the district and should be more active in setting the philosophy of the person hired to lead the district. I'm in favor of having a paid full-time hybrid school board of commissioners. This change will allow the commissioners to take a more active role in balancing the budget and setting priorities while the leader carries out goal.

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?

Some of the benefits of living in a major city is its ability to provide public good services such as public transportation, trash collection, a well trained police force and other services. The charter amendment to prohibit the privatization of water was the right thing to do. There should never be an occasion where public goods or natural resources are privatized. As councilmembers, we represent our constituents and their interest in City Hall not that of big money. I will do everything to ensure these services and goods remain 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 am a proponent of community land banks. This will ensure that there is always affordable housing in Baltimore City. Currently, Oakland is facing a crisis that is creating a housing insecurity crisis. We have to learn from the examples across the country and be proactive in ensuring Baltimore doesn't face the same problem.

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?

As a city we have to be intentional about who we are paying to do work in our City to ensure the public money that is invested in these projects stay in Baltimore City. Ensuring the work is done by those who live around the region helps this goal.

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

Yes, I would fight hard to ensure to build up and support the important work of our unions.

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?

We have to invest in community land banks, fund the affordable housing trust fund, and get creative with programs to increase home ownership. As someone who experienced multiple evictions as a child, I know what it feels like to go to school not knowing where home would be at the end of the day. We have to ensure that no student experience this type of insecurity.

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

Access to high quality education and equity in the distribution of city services is at the root of why I'm running for City Council. Ensuring these are functioning properly is part of my comprehensive public safety strategy. Addressing the root causes of crime is the only way we see significant changes in Baltimore.

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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