

Scott - Mayor

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.

Email address *



Candidate Information

Name

Brandon M. Scott

Candidate for:

Mayor

Home address

City, ZIP code

Phone

Email address

Present occupation

City Council President

Employer

City of Baltimore

Party affiliation

Democrat

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

I have been endorsed by SEIU, UFCW, and Liuna as a councilman in the 2nd District in 2016

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

Yes. From 2011 - 2019 I served as the Second District Councilman. In May of 2019 I was unanimously selected by the members of the City Council to serve as Baltimore City Council President.

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 the only candidate for Mayor who has graduated from Baltimore City Public Schools in the last 30 years, and as a son of Park Heights from a union household, I understand the concerns of and challenges faced by your members.

I have a proven track record as a progressive legislator rooted in community in the work that I do, and am committed to being accountable to City employees, labor organizations, and everyday residents.

As Mayor, I will continue this work, rooting my administration in equity; fully funding public schools; strengthening protections for workers; regularly meeting with the community, progressive groups, and organized labor. I will fight against the status quo that led us to where we are now and work with community organizations to push this City to work better for everyone.

This is the most important election in Baltimore in decades. Our election is about the future of Baltimore. This election is a choice between the status quo choice who has demonstrated a lack of commitment to moving the city forward, and a candidate who has a track record of leading on the issues important to your organization. I have the vision and the organization to win this race.

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

Yes. UFCW Local 27, From September 2001 to August 2002. My mother is a proud member of UFCW Local 27, and I worked with her while I was a senior in high school.

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. Whether it's workers at the Enoch Pratt Free Library System, Baltimore Convention Center, or any other city-supported enterprise, all workers should have the right to collectively bargain. Institutions that receive substantial city funds must not stand in the way of their employees' push to unionize. As Mayor, I will use my position to advocate for collective bargaining rights for employees at these institutions, as well as BCCC and Circulator drivers.

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?

Yes. Although issues such as these are ideally addressed at the state level in order to give workers across Maryland the protections they deserve, I would support and pursue legislation closing the State's minimum wage loopholes. As a councilmember, I supported City Council Bill 17-0018 to raise the minimum wage for all workers to \$15. I commit to introducing legislation closing loopholes that would: include tipped employees, workers under 18, and anyone else exempt from the state legislation. This legislation would also increase the minimum wage ahead of the state's July 1, 2026 deadline and be indexed to inflation.

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. Baltimore City should offer career City employees a robust defined benefit plan. People who commit their careers in the service of this city deserve to be taken care of in retirement.

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 readily pledge to keep our retirees' prescription drug benefits where they are. Retirees who dedicate their lives to service in Baltimore City, whether for the City of Baltimore or Baltimore City Public Schools, deserve security in retirement.

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?

Everywhere City employees work should be a safe workplace, be it in an office, a transfer station, a wastewater treatment plant, or other city-operated worksites. I will appoint City agency heads who understand the importance of worker safety. As Mayor, I will instruct all agency heads to submit workplace safety plans, and hold them accountable if they fail to do so. Additionally, as Mayor, I will make workplace conditions assessments a part of my citywide analysis of real estate and offices. As I've made my practice as City Councilman and now Council President, I will continue to meet with frontline City employees to listen to their concerns directly. Most recently, I worked with Councilwoman Shannon Sneed to introduce City Council Resolution 19-0184R - Informational Hearing - Death of Trina Cunningham. Under my leadership the Council will discuss the circumstances surrounding the death of Trina Cunningham, as well as worker safety at all wastewater treatment plants.

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

I believe that the structural funding gap is the most important issue facing Baltimore City Public Schools. This means our buildings are rundown, our class sizes are too large, our schools are under-staffed, and our curricula are underdeveloped. We need to fully fund our schools and ensure that all of our students, regardless of where they live, are able to attend great schools. When elected, I will prioritize making full payments to the local contribution of Kirwan so that, along with our state, we will finally fully fund our schools. Beyond the funding gap we need to do a better job attracting, developing, and retaining high-quality teachers, particularly men of color and graduates of city schools. Additionally, we need to strengthen our whole-child supports with wraparound services by ensuring all city agencies are working with City Schools to provide our young people with healthy meals, recreation, after school programming and access to physical and mental health care as well as trauma responsive support.

In addition it is critical that we work with our educators, labor unions and businesses to ensure that our young people's education can lead to career opportunities immediately after high school.

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?

This must be a transparent process, with robust City Council Oversight. As Mayor, I will seek to appoint school board members who understand the needs of City students, who recently attended or has children who attend Baltimore City public schools, and who have a strong foundation in equity. As the only candidate for Mayor who has graduated from Baltimore City Public Schools in the last 30 years, I know how being a public school student can shape your perspective, and think this perspective will be valuable for school board members.

Yes, I would commit to only support a candidate with at least 3 years of classroom experience working in a public school system. It is imperative that the members of the school board have a keen understanding of the joys and challenges that occur in a City public school classroom.

I believe we should have some positions on school board that are required to be filled by those who meet these qualifications. However I also believe that board appointees should be confirmed by the council like other boards.

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?

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, with a supermajority of elected members and a handful of Mayoral appointments based on seat criteria. As Mayor, I commit to a fully transparent selection process for any appointed seats.

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?

Students living in concentrations of poverty and amid violence often and repeatedly experience trauma in their daily lives. This trauma manifests itself in different ways -- and unfortunately and too often through acts of violence. We must make Baltimore City a nationwide leader in trauma response. I am encouraged by the work of City Schools to emphasize restorative practices, de-escalation, and other ways to support the whole child. By fully funding and fully staffing our schools we will be able to better support our students with the most needs. That said, when acts of violence do occur, our schools and district must have adequate responses in place to protect student and staff safety. Our schools must therefore be equipped with more resources, and more professionals, to support students to be ready to learn. The best strategy to ensure that our school buildings are safe and welcoming environments for children, teachers, and other education professionals in Baltimore City is to fully staff our schools with the experienced professionals that we need - mental health clinicians, community school coordinators, paraprofessionals, and school resource officers so that teachers can teach and students can learn. While revisions to the code of conduct for student behavior can be considered as part of a larger approach, these revisions will accomplish little without the larger structural improvements discussed above.

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?

Yes. For far too long, our public resources have been diverted from the neighborhoods that need them most, triggering a vicious cycle of disinvestment that has plagued generation after generation. This inequity continues to impact Baltimore's Black neighborhoods hardest. This must stop.

On a personal level, I know the impact school closures can have on a neighborhood, having attended two now-closed public schools. This is why I introduced an ordinance that requires each City agency to analyze their programs and spending through a lens of equity. That ordinance, and accompanying charter amendment, was overwhelmingly approved by the majority of voters and is in the early stages of implementation.

As Mayor, I will reverse the trend of disinvestment from our Black neighborhoods and make sure residents have a stronger voice in determining the outcome of our shared City resources. As to the use of the buildings, there are several opportunities available to utilize them as community resources and neighborhood anchors that can benefit and serve the multifaceted needs of our communities. These decisions should be community driven and based on the unique needs of our neighborhoods.

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. As Mayor, I will approach all issues from a framework of equity and look to redress inequities where they exist. This includes our school boundaries. I will direct the City Department of Planning to work with City Schools to revise the boundaries based on the results of the 2020 Census. If our school districts do not accurately reflect our population, it’s impossible to allocate our precious resources effectively and justly. I will use whatever means are at my disposal to pursue a policy of school integration. Just last month I was on a panel discussing a book that demonstrates the efficacy of school integration as a means-tested policy to close the achievement gap.

It is my hope that such a push may help alleviate the disinvestment discussed in the previous question. A model for this approach may be a law that I advocated for and passed the last legislative session: the legislation requires that the Baltimore City Police Department redraw its district boundaries based on population, calls for service, and other relevant metrics.

I will also work with BCPSS to encourage them to adhere to my equity assessment legislation so that the school district continuously evaluates all policy and program decisions through an equity lens.

The entire process of school redistricting must be rooted in strong community engagement. This is critical because caregivers and students will have an opportunity to meaningfully participate in the process, thus ensuring a smoother transition for affected families.

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 employees should continue to be considered employees of Baltimore City Public Schools and enjoy all the benefits and protections that come from the BTU collective bargaining agreement.

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

The district should continue to weigh the opening and closing of charter schools against a rigorous framework that includes school performance and the needs of the entire portfolio of the school district. At a time when we are closing traditional schools as part of the 21st century building initiative we should be applying the strictest scrutiny to any new programs.

As we move towards a more equitable system we must consider all options to make sure some students aren't left out including charter cap. I commit to having an analysis conducted on what BCPSS's ratio of charters and traditional should be to maintain equity.

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 commit to raising the City's contribution to Baltimore City Public Schools. We have never had a Mayor who considered the school system as their responsibility and made it a priority. In August, in the first piece of my Legislative Agenda, I introduced a resolution demanding the City's Department of Finance to present the City Council with a proactive plan to increase local funding for our public schools for the Kirwan Commission's recommendations. On December 3rd at 5 pm, we will hold a hearing on the City's fiscal readiness for Kirwan. We must be ready to capitalize on this once-in-a-generation opportunity for our City's youth.

Baltimore City Public Schools have been underfunded by nearly \$290 million over the past 10 years. The State of Maryland must do more, but so must the City. We know the Kirwan Commission will make recommendations to the General Assembly that includes over \$300 million in investments to support education. The City will have to increase its contribution to our schools and we must ensure we are prepared to meet that responsibility. This is not an option. Thus, every dollar we can reprioritize to education is important.

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

As Mayor, I will increase the City's contribution to public schools to right these historical wrongs so that our City's children get the education and resources they deserve. As Mayor, I plan to assemble a fiscal accountability task force. The task force will be charged with making recommendations on how to redirect funds to increase the City's support to schools as well as change the city procurement system - of which more than \$300 million a year is spent on professional services. This task force will be responsible for analyzing all city spending, including contract spending, through the following lenses: worker rights and benefits, contract compliance, equity, efficiency, small business support, and minority- and women-owned businesses. I commit to implementing the recommendations from this task force.

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 title of Superintendent is more appropriate for the leader of a school system, especially considering that nearly every jurisdiction in the state already uses that title. Although I recognize that a name change would require state action, I would support the 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?

I sponsored the charter amendment mentioned here, as well as a more recent charter amendment that would prohibit the privatization of our City’s conduit system. I cannot think of any instance in which I would support the privatization of city services or property. This includes trash pickup, which should not and will not be privatized while I am mayor.

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. For far too long, our public resources have been diverted from the neighborhoods that need them most, triggering a vicious cycle of disinvestment that has plagued generation after generation. Baltimore is the birthplace of redlining, racially-restrictive covenants, and discriminatory lending practices. The legacy of those practices, with respect to race, gender, sexual orientation, and economic status, is still with us today. This inequity continues to impact Baltimore's Black neighborhoods hardest. This must stop. As Mayor, I will reverse the trend of disinvestment from our Black neighborhoods and make sure residents have a stronger voice in determining the outcome of our shared City resources.

Baltimore has a shortage of quality low-income and affordable housing, despite there being great need. Additionally, affordable housing options tend to be consolidated in high poverty neighborhoods, often isolated from grocery stores, community amenities, and other resources. As Mayor, I will work alongside CUB, BTU, and some of the organizations doing vital work in this area, such as the Fair Development Roundtable. Together we can increase the supply of affordable, yet high quality, rental housing across our city so that individuals and families can achieve the stability they deserve.

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

As Mayor, I will not be reliant on top-down, developer-driven economic development tools. When we allocate subsidies that only benefit developers, that derive little to no community benefit, we are missing an opportunity. During my tenure in office, all proposed projects will be evaluated through a framework of equity and fiscal responsibility, recognizing the overriding need to fully fund our public schools. Our youth are our most important resource and it is our duty to fully invest in them and their education.

I will also look at the arrangements that are currently in place for both developer subsidies like PILOTs and TIFs and the PILOT agreement that is in place for our non-profit institutions and universities. Given varied and competing fiscal needs, we must analyze whether those arrangements make fiscal and moral sense for Baltimore and our students today.

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

In one of my first acts as Baltimore City Council President, I announced a 26-point Legislative and Policy Proposal. This agenda includes a commitment to introduce legislation to establish a pilot program for the use of Community Workforce Agreements (also known as Project Labor Agreements) on certain city contracts. Councilwoman Shannon Sneed and I intend to introduce such legislation on - worked on in partnership with the Building Trades and LIUNA - at the Council Meeting on Monday, January 27.

And as Mayor, I will direct my contracting agencies to each implement a PLA pilot programs for contracts not subject to the legislation. Whether whole-block demolition in the Department of Housing and Community Development, road resurfacing in the Department of Transportation, or one of the billions of dollars of water and wastewater contracting that the City must pursue in the next decade, there are many City contracts that are good candidates for a PLA.

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

If an employer benefits from City subsidies, the City should insist that those employees have a right to organize. I will support legislation to this effect.

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?

As Council President, I cosponsored 19-0479 Property Tax Credit - Low-Income Employees of the City of Baltimore with Councilman Ryan Dorsey. This bill is a direct consequence of the legislation passed in annapolis, thanks to the hard work of CUB. It will create a tax credit against the property tax imposed on the principal residences of certain low-income employees of the City of Baltimore. It is my goal to pass that legislation that bill into law and provide much needed financial support to low-income city employees.

Additionally, I was instrumental in creating Affordable Housing Trust Fund. \$20 million a year is placed into this fund to help residents. I would like to applaud the fantastic advocacy and work of the Fair Development Roundtable, and I will work to enact the funding recommendations of the task force and through my budgets will full support the efforts of the task force, including through capital dollars.

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

Yes. You read my complete and detailed approach to public safety, which I recently released, here: BUILDING PUBLIC SAFETY IN BALTIMORE: An All-Hands-On-Deck Approach to Fighting Crime in Our City.

The plan centers youth programming and education funding in my approach to public safety, because any approach that does not have youth at its center will fall short. Specifically, the plan includes:

- Fully Funding the Kirwan Commission’s Recommendations
- Expanding Police Athletic League (PAL) Programming to All Rec Centers
- Piloting a Year-Round, Fully Funded YouthWorks Program
- Expanding the Youth Engagement League
- Implementing Restorative Justice Programs in Our Schools
- Supporting Residents Returning Home from Prison
- Strengthening Partnerships Between Community & City Services
- Reforming Vacant Lot Management
- Strengthening Code Enforcement for Nuisance Businesses
- Addressing Lead Paint Poisoning
- Holding Absentee Landlords Accountable
- Trauma Response Teams: Responding to Incidents As They Occur
- Trauma-Responsive Care

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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