

Boyce - House - 43A

# AFT-Maryland Candidate Questionnaire for the 2022 Election

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, as well as state employee members of the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT Healthcare-Maryland, and the Maryland Classified Employees Association. Together, with the Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees, and Baltimore County Federation of Public Health Nurses, AFT-Maryland has thousands of members who work to make the state a better place for its residents.

The AFT-Maryland has prepared the following questionnaire for candidates running to represent us in Annapolis 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 Maryland and DC AFL-CIO State Federation; the state federation will announce its final endorsements in early 2022. However, because we are a large contingency within the Maryland 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 May 12th, 2022, 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).



## Candidate Information

Please note the AFT-Maryland plans to make these questionnaires public. However, personal information will be redacted.

Employer

Maryland General Assembly

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Party affiliation

Democrat

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

Yes, AFSCME and LiUNA

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

Yes, elected in 2018. I am an incumbent Delegate

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General Questions

1. The AFT-Maryland is a federation of numerous employee unions, including Baltimore City teachers and paraprofessional and school-related personnel (BTU); professional state workers (MPEC—Maryland Professional Employees Council), state healthcare professionals (AFT Healthcare-Maryland), state classified employees (MCEA—Maryland Classified Employees Association); as well county (BCFPE and BCFPHN) and city (CUB) employees. Why should we support your campaign?

The AFT-Maryland should support my campaign, my re-elections, because I have been an ally and support of the federation since elected in 2018. I come from a grassroots background understand standing organizing and advocating for residents in the city that usually are the hardest working and yet under represented. I support public schools and public school funding (the Blue Print). I support teachers and their needed support (salary, resources, certification, and training). I have supported collective bargaining for various state professions in my four years in the General Assembly. I am a staunch advocate for mental health and substance use disorder and desire for our to support residents with their needs from a supported and highly trained healthcare professionals. I was honored to support the rangers this past session with the parks investment commission recommending full compensation for our park rangers. I supported unions with advocacy training as well as attending rallies during COVID. And while I did not grow up in a union, I've been a supporter of unions, apprenticeship programs, and the ability to organize. You will find me as a honest and transparent public servant who wants to work alongside advocates, organizations, unions, and my constituents to bring forth the best solutions to our most pressing challenges. And that means sometimes we disagree on the method, but we never disagree on who or what we are serving and why. Thank you for the opportunity to gain your support and looking forward to our continued partnership in the next four years should I be re-elected

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

Yes, years ago, I believe, with MAPS at Baltimore City Hall.

## Questions on Worker Rights

3. Expanding the right to collective bargaining. Currently, a number of state and public school employees in Maryland have collective bargaining. However, many still do not. For example, state judiciary branch workers; grad students, adjuncts, and full-time faculty in the University of Maryland System; faculty at our state's community colleges; coordinators in community schools; and many county and city librarians; do not have the right to bargain collectively. If elected, will you sponsor and/or support legislation to grant these public employees the right to engage in collective bargaining with their employer?

Yes I will and as I have done for legislation on collective bargaining my four years in the House

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4. Raising the minimum wage. Our members see every day the harmful impact of a minimum wage that does not keep up with rising costs of living throughout the region. While Maryland will raise its minimum wage to \$15 per hour in 2025, it still will not be indexed to inflation, and Marylanders working at this compensation level will continue to fall behind. If elected to office, will you author and/or support legislation to tie the minimum wage to the rate of inflation?

Yes, I will support legislation to amend our current \$15 by 2025 goal to increase the minimum wage and index to inflation and cost of living.

5. Binding arbitration in contract negotiations.

Maryland recognizes the importance of collective bargaining as a way to assure employees at the state, municipal, and school district level have a fair and democratic voice in the conditions that govern their employment. For many of those employees and their unions, when disagreements arise during negotiations, there is no mechanism by which those disputes can be resolved. In most cases when the parties reach an impasse, management can implement their proposals without the consent of the employees. Because of this, management often realizes there is no need to bargain in good faith. To fix this flaw, many states and local governments have implemented binding arbitration. When an impasse arises at the bargaining table, management and the union agree to take their case to an objective, third party arbitrator. The arbitrator hears the case, and issues a ruling that both management and the employees must agree to. There is some form of binding arbitration for state employees in Connecticut, Delaware, and Maine, and Baltimore County offers binding arbitration for its municipal employees, for example.

Do you support objective, binding arbitration for contract negotiations for school district, city, county, and state employees? As an elected official, would you support strengthening those rights for the public employees that fall under your jurisdiction?

Yes, if re-elected I would support strengthening those rights for the public employees that fall under Baltimore City.

6. Public employee compensation. Under the current governor's administration, it is rare for state workers to get the compensation they deserve, even though the state has often had a budget surplus. As a result, too many public agencies have staffing problems, as many employees leave for better compensation in the private sector. What is your plan to assure state, county, and municipal employees (including workers employed at BCCC, the Maryland School for the Deaf, and all public, state-supported higher education institutions throughout the state) that their compensation levels will be financially competitive with the private sector?

My plan to assure state, county, and municipal employees compensation levels will be financially competitive with the private sector is to work with the administration and unions to reset those compensations levels so that we can also compete for the best workers.

7. Health insurance transparency. Audits and budget analysis show some government healthcare surplus funds are being diverted for use in unrelated areas. In effect, employees are therefore paying much higher than their negotiated healthcare splits for employer self-insured healthcare coverage. What should a public body (the state, the municipality, or the local school system) do with money refunded to employees' health insurance programs? As an elected official, will you sponsor legislation that would force government employers with self-funded insurance programs to be more transparent with actual claim cost, rebates and other refund programs?

Yes, I would sponsor legislation that would force government employees with self-funded insurance programs to be more transparent with actual claim cost, rebates, and other refund programs.

8. Retirement for public employees: defined benefit versus defined contribution. Most Maryland public employees have defined benefit retirement plans like a pension. This allows employees to plan for their retirement because they know exactly how much income they will be receiving. With defined contribution retirement plans like a 401(k), employees contemplating retirement are never quite sure when the right time is to retire because of changes in their plan's investments. Do you support keeping public employee retirement plans as defined benefit/pension plans?

Thank you for actually explaining this. I am not very knowledgeable about the two retirement plans. Consider this explanation, I would support keeping the retirement benefits that allows an employee to know when it is best to retire and with how much.

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9. Prescription drugs for retired state employees. The State of Maryland is currently being sued by a group of retired state employees over the loss of their prescription drug coverage. Their position is the state has backed out of the promised retiree prescription drug benefit. Do you support full health benefits for retirees including prescription drug benefits? Under what circumstances, if any, would you agree to a reduction in benefits for retirees?

I support full health benefits for retiree prescription drug benefit. I wouldn't agree to a reduction but know that at times funding becomes fragile. I would ONLY agree to a reduction in benefits as a temporary cost saving measure that would allow for full-coverage again.

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10. Appropriate staffing levels. This past fall, numerous news reports confirmed what many state employees have already known: that staffing in a number of state agencies have fallen to levels that the safety of workers and the ability to carry out their duties has been compromised. For example, the Maryland Department of Health has not been able to admit court-ordered patients to state mental health facilities in accordance with the law due to the lack of staff. Likewise, the State Investment Park Commission found that park ranger staffing levels are too low to meet the demand of Maryland Residents wanting to visit our state's parks. The most recent state analysis shows nearly every state agency has at least a 10% vacancy rate, with some of the larger agencies having a vacancy rate over 15%! Would you support efforts to increase recruitment and retention of qualified state, county and city employees? Would you make funding of additional staff a priority?

I would support efforts to increase recruitment and retention of qualified state, county, and city employees. I would support certainly make funding of additional staff a priority!

### Public Education in Baltimore City

11. General [for candidates running for Governor, Comptroller, or for office in Baltimore City legislative districts only]: What do you think are the three biggest problems facing Baltimore City public schools? If elected, how will you solve these problems?

The biggest three problems facing Baltimore City public schools, besides funding, are aging and inadequate school building, class size and technology, and poverty. In the General Assembly we passed the Blue Print for Maryland's Future, a robust educational package that highlights our biggest challenges including concentration of poverty and the need to allow more resources in areas with high concentrations of poverty.

12. Education funding. The state has enacted the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, an ambitious plan developed by bipartisan education experts and stakeholders. The Blueprint will provide a world-class education our students need. Despite hand-wringing from the current governor, the state has the funding to pay for the Blueprint through Fiscal Year 2026. Beginning in FY 2027, the state will have to make decisions regarding revenues to continue to provide every student in the state the education they need. If elected, how would you propose the state fund the Blueprint? How will you advocate for these necessary revenues?

Thankfully the pandemic has provided a great amount of federal funding (COVID, American Rescue Plan Act, Build Back Better) for the state to leverage and fully fund the Blue Print in this bill budget indefinitely.

13. Living Wage for Paraprofessionals. One element that was unfortunately unresolved by the Kirwan Commission recommendations was the pay for Paraprofessionals and School Related Personnel (PSRPs). For too many PSRPs throughout the state, their compensation levels are not enough to be considered a living wage. Will PSRP compensation be a high priority for you if you are elected to office? How can the state better show its appreciation to PSRPs working in our state's public schools?

The state can show its appreciation to PSRPs working in our state schools by finally professionalizing their work and paying them a competitive salary on par with the region. The average is \$10k - \$95K with states like NY, Mass, Vermont, Minnesota, and Ohio paying the highest. We can pay our people at the minimum \$45k.

14. Public School Construction and Renovation [for candidates running for Governor, Comptroller, or for office in Baltimore City legislative districts only]. In 2013, the state passed the 21st Century Schools Program, which allowed the Baltimore Public School System and the Maryland Stadium Authority to leverage bonds to renovate roughly 25 public school buildings. While a good start, Baltimore city still has the largest portfolio of aging and obsolete school buildings in the state; therefore, the program needs to be expanded. If elected, what will your administration do to assure more aging school buildings in Baltimore city will be eligible for renovations?

If re-elected, I would support and advocate with the City and State to expand the program to schools that are next on the list (next tier) of renovations. The city's first set of schools consisted of the worse buildings as well as those schools in communities that where historically there has been redlining and disinvestment.



15. Public charter schools and local oversight. There are over 50 public charter schools in the state of Maryland, and the vast majority of them reside in Baltimore city. Private, out-of-state charter school operators have previously wished to weaken the state law overseeing charter schools to make teachers and staff employees of the charter board rather than employees of the local school district. This would remove all protections that teachers and staff have under their collective bargaining agreements. It would limit oversight of these privately run public charter schools by taking them out from under the purview of the local school boards. It would also give the private operators a "blank check waiver" from any local school board policy. Should charter school teachers and staff be considered employees of the charter school or of the local school board? Should oversight of these schools be weakened?

Charter Schools teachers and staff should be considered employees of the local school board. Oversight should not be weakened considering charters schools receive public school fund and therefore should fall under those state provisions.

16. School vouchers and the BOOST program. Maryland is a state that diverts public funding to send students to private schools - the BOOST school voucher program. While the program is not codified in law, the governor's budget every year has re-directed millions of dollars of public funds to these private schools, many of which discriminate against students and families who don't adhere to that school's beliefs such as gay marriage. If elected to office, what will be your plan regarding Maryland's BOOST school voucher program? Should the state ever give public dollars to students to attend a private school? Would you support tax breaks to corporations that fund student scholarships for private k-12 schools?

If re-elected, my plan regarding Maryland BOOST school voucher would be what the general assembly has done in the last four years: begin phasing it out and ensuring those who are currently using the program continue to receive the funding for the remainder of their school time as well as for their siblings. The state should NEVER give public dollars to students to attend private schools. Public education funding belongs to children that attend public schools. Children in Baltimore City have school choice. I do not support. I am not 100% sure how giving a tax break to corporations that fund private school scholarships assist public education.

17. School Staffing. In too many of our public schools, administrators are not following the law and are hiring people who are employees of non-profit organizations, some of whom are uncredentialed and untrained. Because they are not direct hires of the school district, they are not covered by the collective bargaining contract, nor are they held to the same accountability standards as certificated employees. If elected, will you work to ensure that school districts follow the law to prevent public schools from hiring employees from nonprofit organizations, circumventing the collective bargaining agreement? Under any circumstances is it acceptable to you for a school to hire an uncredentialed and non-unionized employee to be involved in the education of Maryland students?

If re-elected I will work to ensure that school districts follow the law to prevent public schools from hiring employees from non-profit organizations. I would say if the uncredentialed individuals need an internship to gain experience, I believe that is the only exception. Its a temporary situation for which the intern would need to follow school law and protocols.

18. Teacher recruitment and retention. The global pandemic has exacerbated the increasingly challenging problem of teacher retention and recruitment. Far too often, experienced, successful educators are made to leave our school systems. Newly hired teachers in some alternative teacher education programs stay in the classroom for an average of 3 years. How can the state enact legislation to support the retention of the highest quality educators, and recruit more to their ranks?

The state can build on the budget - Teacher Development and Career Ladder - by continuing to distribute awards to teachers for outstanding performance as well as continue to provide funding for their national certification fees. Assistance with seminar outside of the school board and state as well as recruiting beyond Maryland would be helpful

19. Elected versus an appointed school board [for candidates running for Governor, Comptroller, or for office in Baltimore City legislative districts only]. In 2022, the citizens of Baltimore city will finally be allowed to elect 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?

If re-elected I would continue to support what we have now. The legislation just passed and I am anxious to see if there is an actual difference before deciding we need more elected members. Being transparent, I believe a hybrid may be best for Baltimore City. While other jurisdictions have a full elected school board, I personally haven't come across information stating that it is best. I would love for the City work to find what is best for us. If we discover a hybrid is best, I support it. If we discover that an all elected board is best and beneficial, I would support that. If we discover appointments are best but need change in procedure in how we appoint, I too would support that. I just want what's best for Baltimore City which is a much more complex school district than an other in the state.

20. Standardized testing in the schools. In our state's public school system, instruction time in our classrooms is often pushed aside so that students may prepare for and take a plethora of standardized tests. What is your view on standardized testing in our state's public schools? If elected, what policy positions would you take regarding the number of standardized tests required of our students?

Standardized testing does nothing to ensure our students are actually competent (reading, writing, reasoning, arithmetic, etc.). If re-elected I would love to work with advocates and the school system to use a testing system that actually measures competencies and skills beyond standardized test that tend to be biased. Children learn in so many different ways and standardized test do not take into account how students learn and how they show what they know. Coming from adult education, we tested adults at the beginning of the semester and then at the end. The test measure what students knew and how much of it they knew. The end of semester test then measured their gains because we had specific data on each student's strengths and challenges. I see testing more on this level rather than a measurement of the schools for funding.

21. Transportation. When Governor Hogan cancelled the Red Line rail project, he replaced it with a revision of the MTA regional bus lines and renamed the system the Baltimore Link. How effective do you believe this new bus plan has been? How can the state improve the transportation needs of its residents?

The Baltimore Links has in my opinion as well as my constituents been worse not better. The buses do not take into account where riders are coming from and where they are going which I thought the routes would consider. It does not. Transportation needs to be funded fully, with routes that take residents to the places they are going to and from. The MTA as needs a robust training and recruitment of drivers as they have been losing drivers and therefore do not have the means to be effective.

22. Revenues and closing unfair tax loopholes. In order for the state, county, city, and local school system to continue to provide the services to Maryland residents that they deserve, do you believe the state must work to close loopholes in our tax structure? From things like instituting combined reporting (where out-of-state corporations no longer avoid paying taxes on the revenues they generate in Maryland) or a carried interest tax (where wealthy hedge fund managers pay the same income rate that the rest of Maryland residents pay), would you introduce and/or support legislation that would make our state tax code more fair?

I would be interested in learning more and working with team and support making our state tax code more fair. I am not savvy in tax code but do understand that their is a disparity and hardship on Marylanders that must be addressed.

23. Privatization, General. As public employees, each of our members works for an entity that is directly accountable to the residents we serve. Far too often, when jurisdictions and school districts choose to contract out or privatize those services, the level of accountability changes with those services. A private company or nonprofit is accountable to its board of directors or shareholders, and not necessarily to the residents that rely on its services. In addition, their employees are seldom unionized. If elected, would you support any plans to privatize and/or farm out work to a private company or nonprofit in our state and local governments or local school systems? If so, why?

If re-elected, I would not support privatize and/or farm out work to private companies or nonprofits in our state and local government and school systems especially if they cannot be accountable, fully, to state law and the people we serve. This creates confusion in the work and mission of each entity. I unfortunately had this experience when I was in nonprofit. We hired a person for the schools, and it was always a fight for who the person worked for and for what mission. I argued that once we hired this person, they belong to the school, its mission, its rules at it relates to the schools needs, goals, and mission. It always created conflict for the employee because they never knew where to take direction from. It was a debacle that I experienced first hand.

24. Privatization, specific. On September 2, 2021, the Maryland Department of Health announced the Facilities Master Plan, which includes plans to close Western Maryland Hospital Center in Hagerstown and Deer's Head Hospital in Salisbury within the next 5 years by transferring patients to private facilities. In many cases, these facilities offer the only long-term care options for Maryland residents on dialysis or who are dealing with chronic respiratory problems. If elected, would you support the plan to close these state facilities? Would you support outsourcing state, county or city operations?

If re-elected I support a plan to continue assessing the current hospital buildings for space to house both the hospital and beds/services for mental illness and long-term care. I would work to temporarily stop the closure by petitioning the governors office and health department to provide the data to justify the closing and determine the impact of closures as he plan as done, however there is so much need of services for our residents. The pandemic has heightened this need. The strategic partnerships in the plan won't work well if the community cannot access the resources in a new location, or if the services needed are not in one contained unit. Outsourcing is tricky because it should ONLY every be used when the state does not have the service at all in the public sector or state. We have public operators to manage this need.

25. State's mental health and addiction crisis. The need for mental health and addiction services has increased during the pandemic. Mental health beds in the state hospital system are filled with court ordered patients. If elected, would you support increasing private and public resources for treatment to be sure all Maryland residents have access to the care they need?

If re-elected I would support increasing all resources needed for treatment to be sure ALL Maryland residents have access to the care they desperately need.

26. Vaccines and working with unions to return to work. The COVID-19 pandemic has of course been a challenge for the safety of Maryland residents and our members who have been returning to work. While we hope that the worst of the pandemic is behind us, we know from past experiences with mutations of this novel virus, recovery and a return to normalcy may not be linear. Vaccines must be a part of a comprehensive strategy to get past the pandemic, as well as an important tool for fighting public health threats in the future. What role do you believe unions and management have in constructing a plan to vaccinate their workforce? What in your mind is the way unions and management can work together to make sure represented employees are offered a COVID-19 vaccine?

The role I believe unions and management have in constructing a plan to vaccinate their workforce is a leading role. Unions and management know their people best and can tailor a plan based on this knowledge. In my mind the best way to work together is to work together to come up with uniform policy and requirements for testing and vaccination sites.

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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