

Burns- 46- House

## 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

Thurgood Marshall College Fund

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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?

No

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

No

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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?

As an experienced government relations liaison in the non-profit sector, attorney and former congressional and gubernatorial senior staff member, I bring a wealth of experience, competence, and a real track record of delivering results. I believe in the power of organized labor. As a delegate I will be a strong advocate for union rights, whether public or private.

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

No

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### 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?

As a delegate, I will support expanding the right to collective bargaining for employees. Without access to full collective bargaining rights, workers are not able to unlock the full potential of their employees, inhibiting their ability to fairly negotiate with their employer to improve their working conditions and their lives.

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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?

While I applaud Maryland raising its minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2025, there is still more to do. As the cost of living in Maryland continues to rise, we must ensure the minimum wage is reflective of these increases and provide a livable wage to all working Marylanders.

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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?

I support the right for all workers to collectively bargain for arbitration of labor disputes through a neutral arbitrator. Arbitration clauses should not be unilaterally imposed by employers; I am a strong believer that workers and unions should be able to collectively bargain for any arbitration clauses that cover their contract disputes. I believe this is the best method for workers to resolve their differences in a neutral manner and support strengthening these rights for public employees.

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?

As a delegate, I will work to establish a budget that reallocates additional funding towards providing competitive compensation packages for state, county, and municipal employees. I believe if we want to keep the most qualified and talented individuals in public positions it's imperative our state workers feel supported and appropriately compensated for the imperative work they perform daily.

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?

Money refunded to government for employees' health insurance programs should be used to help lower healthcare costs for employees. I will support legislation that will require government employers to be more transparent about costs, rebates, and other revenue or refunds that they receive.

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?

I support keeping employee retirement plans as defined benefit plans. I believe it is important public employees have a clear understanding of the benefits they will receive upon retirement. Any changes in plans should be collectively bargained and not unilaterally imposed. Also, benefits in most defined benefit plans are protected, within certain limitations, by federal insurance provided through the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) and provide more financial security for retiring public employees.

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 believe retired state employees should receive benefits based on the level of retirement benefits they were promised in exchange for their service. If retirees have fulfilled their commitment to the state, the state must also fulfill their promises to retirees.

If changes in benefits need to be made current employees should be notified immediately of the changes to their future retirement benefits.

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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 will support efforts to increase recruitment and retention of qualified state, county and city employees. We must fill these positions in order to properly serve the constituents of our great state. Providing appropriate funding will be key in attracting and retaining the most qualified individuals.

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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?

Teacher retention is currently a major challenge facing Maryland's public education. According to a survey by the Maryland State Education Association, a majority of educators reported they are more likely to retire early or leave the education profession due to staff shortages, large class sizes, and high stress levels.

The poll surveyed 4,746 public school employees between Jan. 14-24, 2022 and found 96% of educators reported that staff shortages are a serious or very serious concern.

As a delegate I will support legislation that increases teacher pay and compensation and focuses on research-based methods for teacher retention. I will also advocate for lowering the ratio of students to teachers.

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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?

As delegate, I will support fully funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Ensuring that our state's budget fully funds our schools will be a priority for me and I will be a strong advocate and partner with Baltimore City to ensure that it meets its local commitment to the Baltimore City Public School System.

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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?

I will support paying PSRPs a more equitable wage. Too often the hard work of PSRPs goes unrecognized. I understand the important role these professionals play in supporting our students, teachers, and administrators in our public schools, especially in Baltimore City. I also support creating a PSRP Appreciation week to highlight the impact PSRPs have in our state public schools.

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?

I will support legislation and other bond bills that will invest in City Schools' aging infrastructure. I consider 21st Century Schools Program as a starting point and baseline for investing in our City Schools infrastructure, but it is not the end of Maryland's obligation to support City Schools and their students.



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?

I believe we must ensure that all students in Maryland are receiving the best and most equitable education available. Weakening oversight of charter schools leaves the door open for uncertainty in the level of education and resources being provided to students in these schools. We must also protect charter school teachers and staff by guaranteeing they have access to protections provided under collective bargaining agreements.

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?

I do not support the continued disinvestment in our public schools through the use of voucher programs such as BOOST. We cannot continue to divert public funds to private schools that so often discriminate against our most vulnerable and underserved communities. I am a strong advocate for reinvesting in our public schools and ensuring they have the resources to best serve our communities.









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?

As a delegate I will work to ensure school districts follow the law and do not circumvent the collective bargaining agreement. Our students deserve the most qualified employees in their schools. We must guarantee all public-school employees have the appropriate training and credentials.

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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?

According to the National Education Association, approximately 50 percent of new teachers will leave the profession within their first five years. Teachers often report feeling unprepared, alone, and burned out in the classroom. As a delegate I will support legislation that provides funding for research-based recruitment and retention methods such as high-quality induction and mentoring programs, as well as programs geared towards providing positive school culture. I will also advocate for programs that focus on teacher and staff well-being such as wellness programs and mental health-focused professional learning opportunities.

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?

As delegate, I will support legislation that will allow the school board to transition to a structure that is has at least a majority of elected members. The Baltimore City School Board will benefit from a structure that will allow it to become more accountable to the residents of the city of Baltimore.

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?

While it is important to evaluate students' knowledge retention it is more important that students have adequate instruction time in the classroom. Some students do not test well and data gathered from standardized test are not always the best instrument for measuring success. As a delegate I will work with my colleagues to ensure school districts prioritize instruction time in the classrooms and not simply preparing students for standardized tests.

Vision for Maryland

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?

Baltimore Link was the first substantial change in Baltimore's bus system in 50 years. The revamped system was intended to provide more Baltimore residents access to jobs and to better connect low/medium income residents with opportunities. While the system has its faults, including poorly enforced dedicated bus lanes and lack of reliability, I believe we can build on these changes. As a delegate, I will support legislation that builds on the changes established through Baltimore Link to create an accessible and affordable public transportation system for all residents.

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 will support legislation designed to make Maryland state tax code more equitable and more transparent for all citizens.

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?

I believe that outsourcing in some public service sectors can be appropriate in limited circumstances, including during emergencies and when the government does not have the resources available to address an immediate need. However, I do not think this should be a common occurrence and I do not support the use of outsourcing or privatizing work as a way to undermine public sector unions and/or circumvent collectively bargained labor protections.



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?

As a delegate I would support legislation to evaluate the effects closing these state facilities would have on our most vulnerable constituents. I believe we should secure funding for our state, county, and city operations to improve their ability to serve the citizens in these areas.

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?

I would support increasing resources for treatments so all Maryland residents have access to the care they need during these unprecedented times.

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 health and safety of employees must be a top priority for unions and management. I believe it's important for unions and management to play a key role in ensuring the health and safety of their employees as we continue to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. Unions and management should make an effort to familiarize themselves with locations where employees can seek medical assistance, including receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this candidate questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact Todd Reynolds, AFT-Maryland Political Coordinator, at (410) 764-3030, or [treynolds@aftmd.org](mailto:treynolds@aftmd.org).



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