

# Fair - 3- Hour

## 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 January 7th, 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

Delegate Karen Lewis Young/The Frederick Center

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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?

I was appointed to the Democratic State Central Committee in 2013 and was immediately appointed Vice Chair, a capacity I served in until July 2014.

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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 the grandson and nephew of Montgomery County police officers (FOP Lodge 35), and great-grandson of a Pittsburg steelworker (USWA District 10 - Pittsburg), I can personally attest to the critical nature of strengthening the position of union representation in every facet of public life. I have witnessed how strong unions can create systems that lift all employees and create long-term industry growth.

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

No - My employment history has never given me the opportunity.

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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?

Collective bargaining is the most critical tool employees have to guarantee pay equity and justice. I want to help build on the great work of the 2021 legislature passing SB 746, expanding collective bargaining to over 2,000 community college employees. The results should not stop there. Employees in each public institution, including Full Time, Part-Time, and Full Time Equivalency, should have the right to negotiate with administrators, reasonable pay, working conditions, and benefits. I will support any legislation that expands those rights.

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. It was clear when it passed that the \$15 minimum wage was not going to have the intended effect of allowing people to work and manage a living in the state of Maryland. There needs to be a salary analysis with employee and employer stakeholders of living wages in Maryland and a multi-year plan to achieve that goal. That number will then be tied to inflation to guarantee that we do not have to have this process every few years. Employers will easily adjust each year to the cost of living standards instead of stressing each time the legislature chooses to review the minimum wage.

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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?

Generally, I support binding arbitration because collective bargaining loses its actual strength if the employer has no real stake in resolving areas of disagreement. I hesitate because I have seen countless binding arbitration contracts that inherently benefit the employer. I would want to see the final iteration of this legislation and ensure proper protection so the employer could not abuse existing protections, block discovery, or have a natural advantage at arbitration.

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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 state employee that has to work two jobs to meet my cost of living in Frederick County, I can attest that one of the first and most effective strategies is to offer more competitive wages for employees. However, that is just one of many strategies the state could employ to attract and retain workers over the private sector. Examples include utilizing state workforce development to create more robust campaigns to encourage employment.

As a small business employer for twenty years, I invested heavily in marketing and identifying the needs of employees beyond compensation, including hybrid work models, extended time off, sick leave, parental leave, daycare, flexible schedules, and special incentives to increase work productivity and satisfaction.

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?

The above description is a case where the government produces legislation for private businesses that it does not follow. Insurance companies must report how much money is used toward benefit claims versus other administrative needs each year. If the administrative money spent exceeds a certain percent, the insurance company must refund the difference to the subscriber. We should have a similar expectation for government employers with self-funded insurance programs.

This annual report can offer a thoroughly informative, transparent look at how the money paid into the healthcare systems, both from the individual and employer, is used to cover claims and administrative costs. Excess funds should be refunded to the individual.

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?

Yes. Employees deserve the right to have a stable and planned future.

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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?

If the prescription drug coverage was documented in the agreed-upon retirement plan contract for the employee, the state should do everything in its power to honor those commitments. If the state wants to change its prescription drug coverage plan, it should only do so on a forward path basis with new employees and not retroact the removal of any benefits from retired staff.

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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?

As mentioned above, I have extensive training and education in staff recruitment. I believe that the state has more tools at its disposal that could be used to help fill these gaps. For example, as Delegate Lewis Young's chief of staff, I worked with Frederick Health Hospital to identify entry-level, low requirement jobs. We take that list and contact our preexisting list of unemployment claims which have had trouble collecting their benefits. While we continue to advocate for the benefits from the Department of Labor, the employee can apply for a job that currently pays above minimum wage. This program could easily be replicated for the state employment shortfalls. I believe the job of elected officials is to connect resources and people. Additionally, I would support a funding increase for additional staff. Our state is in a unique financial position from the American Rescue Plan to afford such a program.

### 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?

N/A

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?

Understanding that one of the most critical issues facing our state and country is education, I believe the state must refocus its funding planning with education in mind. The current Blueprint utilizes many new tax revenue streams, including gaming, digital downloads, and tobacco. However, we cannot rely on building education on the backs of various community vices. Instead, I would propose legislation and challenge our governor's administration to identify and close the many tax loopholes in high-earning individuals and large corporations to ensure that each pays equitably with the rest of the public.

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?

Paraprofessionals and school-related personnel are vital to Maryland students' health and continuum of education care. I have witnessed many part-time PSRPs who have worked more than forty hours a week to provide guidance and support to individual students. When understaffed, students' educational value suffers, and academic outcomes decline. In addition to paying on-par with their level of engagement, Frederick County Public Schools years ago implemented a policy to increase pay of paraprofessionals to match the pay increase of FT, PT, and FTE employees. I would support taking that initiative statewide.



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?

N/A

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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?

Taxpayers utilize their taxes to fund positions in school systems. It is the responsibility of local school boards to have oversight for how tax dollars are spent in our school system. Public charter schools inherently remove the role of oversight and instead rely on private organizations to self-govern their systems. Without sufficient oversight, citizens are denied the ability to appeal decisions; and teachers and administrators are denied the natural protections that come from operating under a local school board. Therefore, I would not support any effort to weaken school systems or teacher rights by allowing schools to report to a charter system instead of a local school board.

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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?

Any time dollars are diverted from our public school system we further exacerbate the achievement gap for a vast majority of our students in Maryland. I believe that it is more critical than ever that we focus our financial resources on the education of our students in our public school system. After years of dismantling funding for public schools, many individuals now point at public schools and say they must send their children to private schools for a quality education. I believe it is the responsibility of the Maryland General Assembly to be a partner in the process of reversing that narrative so that people will want to and will receive the highest possible quality education in the Maryland public school system. Additionally, the role of government is not to prop up private business therefore, I would not support tax breaks to corporations that fund student scholarships for private k-12 schools.

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?

Yes, I believe it is important that all school systems follow the law. Educators and administrators in our school system have worked too hard to have their positions supplemented by unqualified professionals who are taking a position away from a qualified individual. No, there is no circumstance that is acceptable to hire an uncredentialed and non-unionized employee.

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?

As I've mentioned in previous answers there are numerous ways the state could be marketing, hiring, and retaining strong talent in our school system. Compensation is one of the most critical aspects that must be addressed by the Maryland General Assembly to ensure that educators are properly compensated for their expertise. Additionally, individual level management of teachers can help identify exactly what they need to maintain their passion for the industry and level of job satisfaction working in the Maryland public school system. For example, some teachers might find professional development to be critical whereas others may find workplace benefits to be more appealing. Understanding the needs of the teachers and giving the school system the flexibility to meet those needs can and will create a healthier and thriving workplace environment.

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?

N/A

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?

I do not support standardized testing as it is clear that these tests lead to lower educational outcomes, disengaged students, and demoralized educators. It is clear Maryland needs to invest in a series of pilot programs to understand what best alternative testing mechanisms can be used. In Frederick County public schools a pilot program has begun to study the impact of social and emotional learning (SEL). Anecdotally, it has produced some positive results thus far while still in the infancy of the program. Additionally, we can be "testing" via portfolio-based assessments that review bodies of work created over time. Lastly, we can use new technologies to measure subject competency by collecting that data over the school year instead of stopping and testing.

## 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?

Citizens of Baltimore have made it clear that the Governor's Baltimore Link program has created ineffective transportation, unreliable routes, and general anxiety amongst the community. The data on transportation could not be more definitive; mass transportation through light-rail is the most effective way to connect our urban populations and suburban and rural regions of Maryland. For my district I am a huge proponent for the extension of the Red Line to Frederick from Shady Grove to alleviate the increasing congestion on I-270. Expanding roads is not an effective solution to relieving traffic congestion and transportation issues. We need a comprehensive statewide transit plan that will identify potential effective mass transportation solutions, their cost and implementation timeline, and data on how those transportation systems will be a reliable source of transportation for the general public.

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?

Yes. For far too long the income inequality gap has been driven by the ability of the wealthiest Marylanders and out-of-state corporations to figure out how to avoid paying their share in local, state, and federal taxes. I would look to close the aforementioned loopholes, in addition to encouraging the Maryland General Assembly to identify other areas to create tax equity among the working-class Marylanders and the wealthy corporations in and out of state.

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?

The job of government is to support its citizens of the state. As mentioned in the premise of the question, government is the only entity that is responsible and answers to its citizens. No other private organization or non-profit has that charge. Therefore, I feel very passionately that we should not be utilizing for-profit or non-profit entities to operate state-based supports for our residents. For example, in Frederick, Montavue Nursing and Rehabilitation Center is a government run support center and nursing home. As such, it provides critical resources to our community regardless of income or other determining factors. Years ago, there was a movement to privatize this center and opposition by many members of the community, including myself, lead to the County Executive rescinding the private contract for this facility and keeping it in the hands of Frederick County government. This decision has been lauded for years as a prime example of how government run institutions provide effective services that answer only to its citizens and not to a set of stakeholders.

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?

No, I would not support closing these facilities for the reasons I outlined in the previous question. Additionally, no, I would not support outsourcing these facilities to for-profit or non-profit institutions. Maryland cannot act as if Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore do not exist as part of our state. Residents in those regions deserve equal access to affordable or free care from its government the same as urban areas do around our state. The privatization of these resources further removes residents in these regions from access to resources through their tax dollars that they pay into the state each year.

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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?

We are in a mental health pandemic that is equal to or greater than the COVID-19 pandemic. The long-term impact of this national crisis will reverberate for decades. We need a fully operational and funded plan for how to handle the overwhelming increase in mental health needs at our state level. To ignore this issue now will be of the greatest determinant to our community.

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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?

Unions have the ability to provide layers of education and requirements on their members which includes a vaccine requirement to be a member. The state should provide these vaccines for free in order to make them available to each member.

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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