

# Franchot - Gov.

## 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

The State of Maryland

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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?

I have received the endorsements of over 120 current and former elected officials from across the state, including all of Maryland's counties. Additionally, I have been endorsed by LiUNA, Teamsters Joint Council 55, IBT, and The International Longshoremen.

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

Yes. MD-State Delegate, District 20

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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?

In this answer and throughout the questionnaire, I am committed to providing you with answers that I will hold to concretely as governor, rather than saying yes to everything only to backtrack once in office. No other candidate has demonstrated the same consistent and unequivocal candor in their public conduct as I have, and that should give you the assurance that these answers are offered in good faith.

In that spirit, I am running for Governor because:

First, I want to have greater agency to improve the quality of life for all Marylanders. Throughout my career in public service, and my role as the state's Comptroller, I have been guided by three pillars of customer service - respect, responsiveness, and results. As such the Maryland Comptroller's Office has become our nation's most effective and efficient tax administration agency. I want to bring that same insight into the Governor's Office so that Maryland can become the leading state in our nation- known by all as a bastion of economic and social fairness, as a state where all of its residents share in its prosperity.

Second, I want to level the playing field. I believe that all Marylanders should have an opportunity to share in the prosperity of the state. As the Chief Financial Officer of the state, I have seen the economic barriers that communities on the margins face and I want to make Maryland a more equitable state in which generational wealth and opportunity become hallmarks.

Finally, I believe that I can win. I am results-driven and I am the only candidate in this race with a demonstrated ability to prevent Democratic voters from considering Republican candidates, and I also win a substantial percentage of unaffiliated voters. If I win the primary campaign, I will win the general election.

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

No

## Questions on Worker Rights

3. 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. In my campaign pledges, available on my website, I make a firm commitment to supporting ALL public employees in securing their right to organize. I also believe supportive legislation like requiring master contracts can be important steps in the right direction.

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 believe organized labor should shift its focus to negotiating a wage indexed to inflation rather than a rolling dollar figure, and settle the question with more finality. Every year I hear the same arguments from the private sector about workers wanting to be paid too much, and every year I hear the same arguments from workers about employers refusing to offer a living wage. Changing the argument to one oriented around inflation would offer businesses more predictability from which to set prices and plan overhead, and workers would have a more certain baseline in their quality of life. Moreover, doing so would orient the question around a more objective economic measure for what fair pay is relative to the 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. I believe that it is important to require timely resolution and the use of a neutral arbitrator if no timely resolution is reached. I also would support the appointing of members from school district, city, county, and state employees to be a part of a council that could serve as good-faith partners during arbitration to organized labor.

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?

On Day One as governor, I will sign an executive order forming a commission to review the State Employee Salary Schedule, and introduce its recommendations as legislation to address the state government's non-competitive salaries.

The commission would be charged with reviewing the grade scale used by the Maryland State Employee Salary Schedule, to better reflect the sophisticated technology and problem-solving skills that many of the state's jobs require. Many of these positions require higher levels of training as each year passes, and should be attached to higher grades than they have historically been associated with. The job classes and salary grades have not been updated to accommodate the actual jobs and skills that are in demand today. The classes are a legacy of the 1980s and are simply unworkable.

The State Employee Salary Schedule also does not enable rewarding and retention incentives for high-performing employees. Capping salary increases at 14% limits Maryland's ability to counter-offer higher pay, when appropriate, to retain high-performing employees. This should change.

The State Employee Salary Schedule, despite receiving incremental increases when fiscal situations allow, has not kept pace with inflation. Economists believe the Schedule has actually lost value over time, meaning that state employees -- compared to their local and federal counterparts -- are getting paid less over time. This too must change.

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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 such legislation. My office is known for advocating for transparency and best practices to ensure proper allocation of funding and reduce fraud. I also predicted and fought a similar funding bait and switch that the state government pulled for years with casino revenue that was not actually used to better fund education. I believe employees deserve complete transparency on and benefits from their healthcare coverage

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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?

As the Chair of the State Retirement and Pension System Board of Trustees, I recognize the nuance of this issue. I do believe that defined-benefit plans offer the most security to employees. Therefore, I support keeping defined-benefit retirement plans as an option. Though if an employee would prefer to opt into another option rather than utilize a defined benefit plan, and if the employee has received adequate education on their options, I am not opposed to offering alternative plans to employees who choose to opt into them. I also would call for the expansion of the new Maryland Saves retirement program to allow opt-in for those who may not qualify under the current rubric, such as the self-employed or independent contractors.

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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 believe that the State should maintain its commitment to provide retiree prescription drug benefits. To ensure that the state has the resources to fulfill its commitment, as governor I would call for an expansion of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board to ensure that much-needed medication is provided at a fair rate. Additionally, I do support full health benefits for retirees, including prescription drug benefits. And on healthcare more broadly, I have consistently championed the expansion of Medicare/Medicaid to provide greater access to affordable quality healthcare. I do not support a reduction in benefits for retirees.

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?

Yes, I believe vacancies need to be filled in order to ensure that all staff are able to perform their jobs as outlined without taking on the work of other vacant staff positions. Functionally combining roles in this manner has a tendency to increase the workload of existing employees while leading to less efficient, effective delivery of government services for the taxpayers. That said, if you are also recommending new positions beyond filling vacancies, I would have to look at any recommended new positions more closely before making a carte blanche commitment to all of them. In principle, I believe that our staffing must be adequate to meet the taxpayers' needs without leading to staff burnout or a backlog of work.

**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?

I have consistently advocated for education reform in the state of Maryland. Our education system can be one of our greatest tools for leveling the socio-economic playing field and equipping every Marylander, irrespective of zip code, with the tools they need to live a fulfilling, secure life. Unfortunately, Maryland's students experience significantly different outcomes from our education system. Moreover, COVID-19 has not only exacerbated many of the existing known issues, but exposed issues such as the discrepancy in resources and increased burnout amongst teachers and students. I believe the three biggest challenges facing our public schools include:

1)The joy of teaching has been stripped from our teachers as they are not sufficiently empowered in the classroom and are undercut by unhelpful bureaucracy and excessive standardized testing.

2)High school graduation does not sufficiently provide connectivity to vocational training or college opportunities, and the high school curriculum lacks the appropriate focus on certain real-world skills. When students are engaged in the classroom and know that their knowledge will lead to a family-supporting job you can reduce issues such as absenteeism.

Money and the prospect of debt are significant barriers to higher education. As a result, many students do not see the purpose of going to school given that the prospect of higher education is too high.

3) Maryland's school facilities offer dramatically variable physical infrastructure, including undrinkable water, classrooms without climate control, and mold.

I will solve these problems by:

1) Augmenting Maryland's education system to provide a more comprehensive, fully-resourced model that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence they need to thrive in the modern economy. This effort will include piloting innovative approaches to equipping high school students with real-world skills, such as a case-based curriculum that centers experiential learning and connectivity with union-partnered training and trade placement, and other job placement opportunities.

2)I will reduce standardized testing, support legislation allowing teachers to collectively bargain on classroom size, and push for fully elected local school boards.

3)Finally, as we seek to modernize the state, I am committed to ensuring no school building suffers from mold, undrinkable water, or classrooms without climate control.

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?

I support the Blueprint and will enforce the law on the books. My greatest concern surrounding the Blueprint has always been about its long-term funding, not its goals. I have seen firsthand the type of budgeting practices that required the creation of an education lockbox, after I was vocal in my belief that casino revenue would be a bait and switch revenue stream. I watched firsthand the broken promises of Thorton. I will be an education-oriented governor, and work hand-in-hand with organized labor to center the policies they need in the classroom in order to create the best environment possible for our children. When it comes to creating new revenue streams that will fund those policies, it is imperative that Maryland get more young persons into its tax base, as we have a rapidly aging taxbase that creates a concerning long term outlook for our financial strength. I've proposed paying off the student loans for graduates who move or remain in Maryland so long as they live, work, and pay taxes here for 5 years after graduation. I believe that this will be a significant draw for graduates that rapidly and significantly expands our tax base, creating more stable revenue streams for priorities like our education system. with the appropriate organizational bodies to develop sustainable funding for the Blueprint.

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?

Yes. Paraprofessionals and PSRPs are critical to ensure that all students have access to quality education. I believe that Kirwan Commission must determine consistent funding that accounts for inflation. As governor, this would be a priority for my administration. Please refer to my answer on a commission to review and update the Maryland State Salary Schedule for a comprehensive response on how I believe that PSRPs and all other public employees should have their salaries improved so as to allow for more competitive compensation.

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 first explore establishing a dedicated fund to address urgent issues such as mold and undrinkable water. I will look to utilize both state and federal funding to ensure that school maintenance is included in each fiscal year, and set-aside funding from the state's current \$6 billion surplus that can be used to provide emergency assistance to our education programs, especially for cases in which schools have to shift to virtual learning, so that there will be adequate resources for full digital connectivity.

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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?

I believe that charter school teachers should be considered employees of the local school board to ensure the best employment protection for our teachers and accountability measures. I do not believe that oversight for these schools should be weakened.

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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?

I do not believe the state should give public dollars to students to attend a private school if the student's family demonstrates an ability to pay for the school without state help. Moreover, I do not believe public dollars should go to an institution that is not open to all students and beliefs. Someone should not pay taxes into a system only to have those dollars support an institution that discriminates against them. My primary goal is to improve the quality of education in our public school offerings.

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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 will work to ensure that the school district follows the law to ensure best hiring practices. Additionally, I would advocate for the school boards to oversee hiring practices. I believe that all employees must have proper credentials when employed by public schools in the State, and that all public employees should have the right to organize.

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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?

I believe that offering teachers the opportunity to collectively bargain on classroom size will allow them not just to create a more sustainable and beneficial classroom environment for student and teacher alike, but that it will also provide them a degree of leverage in negotiation that allows them to better advocate for other needs that will help with retention and recruitment.

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?

I will always advocate for fully elected school boards as I believe this provides the greatest accountability to our students, teachers, and parents.

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 am the only candidate to date that has called for the reduction of standardized tests. I'd end it altogether if I could do so without jeopardizing federal funding. The joy of teaching and learning has been diluted with the plethora of standardized tests. As governor, I will immediately look to reduce these tests, and will collaborate with teachers to ensure we are only keeping tests that are important to ensure that all classrooms are receiving access to equal quality education.

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## 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?

I believe that Governor Hogan should have not canceled the Red Line rail project. I am committed to investing in areas of the state that do not currently have high-quality public transportation, especially high-quality rail. In the Baltimore region, for example, only 9% of jobs are accessible by public transit in an hour or less, and the system needs a generation's worth of sustained investment to catch up to its East Coast peers. Better connections between our state's two largest economic centers, Baltimore and the Washington region, will lead to greater economic growth. We need more investment in WMATA, and new mass transportation options in places like Frederick, as well as Western Maryland, Southern Maryland, and the Eastern Shore, to unify our state with world-class transit. This will provide greater access for employers to regional talent pools, while providing a parity of public infrastructure in areas of the state that are underserved, giving them access to the services they deserve. And we can improve on our current bus systems by creating more convenient stops with more regular circulation of buses along the routes, and improve technology in order to create better predictability via apps, better payment systems, and to cut down on issues like bus clumping when one buses fall behind and as such off schedule.

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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. As comptroller, I have been committed to a more fair tax system, in which those who have the most contribute a proportionate share of their wealth as the share that we expect from those who have the least. My office has recovered over \$8 billion from wealthy tax dodgers who have shirked their tax obligations to the state. My office has been recognized as one of the most effective and efficient state financial agencies in the nation. I believe that cracking down on wealthy tax dodgers, ending predatory fraud in sectors like Medicaid reimbursement (this does not mean going after patients who commit good faith errors, but rather, predatory actors who take advantage of stolen information in order to falsely bill the state), has an opportunity to generate billions of dollars for the state by better administering our existing structure in order to ensure the wealthy pay their fair share and that bad actors do not profit from taxpayer dollars.

I believe we can expand government services in ways that have tangible impacts on a significant share of the state's population. For example, my pledges outline the State of Maryland providing a proposed tax bill to taxpayers who have simple tax obligations to the state, in order to eliminate the cost, time, and anxiety of preparing their own tax filings. I am uniquely equipped with the skills and knowledge to hit the ground running as governor to ensure best practices are in place to make our state tax codes more equitable.

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 have a long track record as a supporter of Project Labor Agreements and Community Benefits Agreements. Moreover, the entire office of the Comptroller is organized, and I believe it has been a tremendous asset in improving communication and outcomes across the workforce. I will protect public employees, and oppose them losing their jobs or their right to organize whether through an attempted restructuring of services or some other event that might jeopardize their status.

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?

By 2030, I am committed to every Marylander being within a 15-minute commute of a Federally Qualified Health Center or a comparable primary care option that offers a controlled pricing structure modeled on existing community-based providers. Closing existing regional hospitals only hinders this goal, and as such, I do not support the closing of the facilities and outsourcing the state/county/city operations.

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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?

Yes. I will expand access to quality health care, which includes increasing private and public resources for mental health providers and addiction crisis centers. I am also committed to treating addiction as a public health crisis and will seek to pilot a statewide, pre-arrest diversion program for those taken into custody who suffer from addiction.

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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?

Science has shown that receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to be protected against the virus. I believe unions play a vital role in communicating this message and providing resources for their members to get vaccinated. Strategies such as becoming a verified organization to certify when employees are fully vaccinated are important steps that unions and management can take to address the virus. If there is one thing I've learned through leading an agency with an organized workforce, it is that the union can be quite capable when it comes to surfacing its members' needs and bottlenecks in addressing those needs. It's incumbent on management to hear and be responsive to those needs, and to partner with labor in communicating to its membership. I will continue my advocacy for a more healthy, safe, and equitable post-COVID environment for our workers, building on incremental progress that was made by the Maryland General Assembly in response to the pandemic.

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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