

Lierman • Comptroller



AFT-Maryland Candidate Questionnaire for 2022 Candidates

AFT-Maryland is a federation of local unions of the AFT within the state, including the Baltimore Teachers Union and the City Union of Baltimore—whose members work for the city—as well as state employee members of the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT Healthcare-Maryland, 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 region and 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 Metropolitan Baltimore AFL-CIO Council and the Maryland and DC AFL-CIO State Federation; the council and state federation will announce its final endorsements in early 2022. However, because we are a large contingency within the Baltimore AFL-CIO, the unions of the AFT-Maryland have a heavy influence on who labor chooses as its candidates for endorsement.

Please take the time to complete this candidate questionnaire. It may be returned to

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Please return this completed questionnaire no later than January 7th, 2022. If you have any questions, please contact Todd Reynolds, AFT-Maryland Political Coordinator, at 410-764-3030.

2022 Candidate Questionnaire
AFT-Maryland

Candidate for: State Comptroller

Candidate's name: Brooke Lierman

Address:

Phon

Email

Occupation: Attorney / State Delegate Who is your employer? Brown, Goldstein & Levy

May we make your answers to our questionnaire public? Yes

Party affiliation (circle one):

Democrat Republican Independent Other (please specify) _____

Have you received an endorsement from a labor union? If so, which ones?

Yes. AFSCME Maryland (Local 3 and 67), IAFF Local 964, Insulators Local 24, IATSE Local 487 as well as others that have not been publicly announced.

Have you ever held elected office? When? Yes - State Delegate from 2015-2022

General

- 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?**

After serving on the Appropriations Committee, working as an attorney for working people and people with disabilities, and chairing the Oversight Committee on Pensions, I have a unique understanding of the powerful potential that exists in the Comptroller's office to drive positive change in Maryland and the ability to help ensure we realize that potential for the benefit of each and every Marylander, including your members. I am committed to being a partner to your

organizations and members, and to labor organizations across the state to ensure that on matters that the Comptroller can effect, this office is truly the people's advocate.

As a member of the Board of Public Works, I will be committed to ensuring that we are using our tax dollars - and the federal money coming to the state - to build generational wealth, support state employees and services, and build a state that is ready and resilient to meet future challenges head on. Because of my time in the General Assembly, I know and understand how the BPW works and will be ready to lead from day one on the Board as an advocate for our employees and the communities of Maryland.

Having served on the Joint Pension Committee for nearly eight years, I also know and understand the importance of the SRPS. I will be a partner to our retirees, ensuring that we are increasing transparency and reducing fees.

And finally, as an attorney, as a mom, and as a legislator, I understand the challenges that too many families in our state are experiencing - whether driven by the racial wealth divide or because they don't have access to high-speed affordable internet, or because they are not in a union. And I committed to improving the lives of all Marylanders - being a voice for equity and inclusion.

I am ready on day one to work with Marylanders to create an inclusive table to identify challenges and barriers - and craft creative solutions to overcome those challenges or remove those barriers. I know that together we can reimagine how the resources of the Comptroller's office can benefit the workers and communities of Maryland.

2. Have you ever been a member of a union? If yes, please give the union name, local number, and dates active.

I have not ever personally had the honor of being a member of a union.

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 Comptroller, I will continue to actively support the expansion of workers' rights and the ability of workers to organize. My voting record as a State legislator represents my devotion to the expansion of these important issues. Most recently, in the 2021 session, I supported and voted for House Bill 894, which extended collective bargaining rights to certain employees at our important community colleges. Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed this legislation, but I voted to override the veto during the 2021 Special Session. Additionally, on a number of other occasions, I have voted to extend collective bargaining to a number of other entities.

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?

I support tying the minimum wage to the rate of inflation to ensure wages keep pace and to provide additional transparency to workers and businesses. As a State legislator, I cosponsored legislation that would have provided a drastically increased minimum wage indexed to inflation. In 2019, I voted to increase the minimum wage. In a number of instances, I have supported budget provisions that trigger raises for State workers if the State meets certain revenue projections.

As Comptroller, I will continue to advocate on behalf of all of Maryland's workers both in the public and private sector. If the Governor and the Department of Budget and Management continue to fail to appropriately compensate our State employees and continue to lag in pay increases that keep pace with our cost of living, I will utilize my platform as Comptroller to prioritize wage increases.

State service/public employee issues and rights

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 support objective binding arbitration for contract negotiations. As previously stated, I have advocated for and supported efforts to strengthen the rights for all public employees in the State of Maryland.

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?

In 2023 the Maryland General Assembly will have the constitutional authority to add to the operating budget. This significant change is one that I championed as a member of the House of Appropriations Committee, and a major reason for this new constitutional authority was to ensure that we can provide competitive compensation for our State workforce.

In a number of other instances, I have supported budget provisions that trigger raises for State workers if the State meets certain revenue projections. The Governor, however, has never been willing to provide these raises in accordance with General Assembly direction and intent.

As Comptroller, I will continue to advocate on behalf of all government workers - and be a partner with our own agency employees. It is essential that we have the ability to pay people competitive salaries to attract and retain the best talent so that we can better serve the people of Maryland. If the Governor and the Department of Budget and Management fail to appropriately compensate, and continue to lag in awarding annual salary increases, I will utilize my platform as Comptroller to prioritize salary increases so that we are financially competitive.

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 cost of healthcare is a serious concern and as Comptroller, working to control costs and advocating for improved healthcare coverage will be some of my top priorities. One critical element will be increasing transparency on insurance rates and employer contributions. Marylanders must be able to understand precisely what coverage and quality of care they can expect to receive when they elect a health insurance, dental insurance, or prescription plan.

While the Comptroller cannot sponsor legislation, the Comptroller is a Member of the Board of Public Works. As a Member of the Board of Public Works, I would scrutinize the contracts brought before the Board between the State and the health insurance providers to ensure fair costs and coverage for all State workers.

Regarding what should be done with money refunded to employees' health insurance programs - refunds should be used to benefit the employee. This can occur by providing health insurance holidays to keep money in the pockets of employees, or by allowing it to accrue to the program and help lower premiums in subsequent years.

Additionally, I would actively seek out feedback from state retirees about systems and vendors to understand what changes need to be made and how to best improve the systems that we rely on to deliver quality, affordable healthcare to Marylanders.

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 believe that we should have - and maintain - a defined benefit plan. While providing defined contribution plans for our State workers is an option for offering supplemental retirement options, it should never be the only option for our State workforce.

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?

Pursuant to the U.S. District Court's recent ruling, all employees who retired before the end of 2018 have a contractual right to state-subsidized prescription benefits. Only those individuals who retired after the end of 2018 and individuals who are actively employed by the State of Maryland will transition to Medicare Part D. The court, however, has yet to opine on whether the most recent legislative alterations are adequate. As a State legislator, I cosponsored legislation (House Bill 629 in 2018 and House Bill 1042 in 2020) that sought to protect access to the State's prescription drug benefit plans.

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?

Building a well-compensated and robust team at the Comptroller's office is one of my top priorities - and I will be a voice for ensuring that happens in every state agency.

I will take all necessary steps to not only ensure appropriate staffing and resources are in place to deliver services to Marylanders but also to ensure that the individuals delivering those services are provided the level of compensation, benefits, and respect that they deserve. The State cannot be a good steward of its citizens by being reactive to vacancies - it must be proactive by providing its employees with salaries and benefits that actually reflect the services they render and the skills they use on a regular basis.

As the elected CFO of the state, the Comptroller serves as a leader on several influential government bodies, including the Board of Revenue Estimates, the Board of Trustees of the State Retirement and Pension System, and the powerful Board of Public Works, which oversees the State's capital projects and procurement contracts. As Comptroller who serves as a member on those boards, I would be vigilant in reviewing agency vacancy data. Specifically, I would:

- Hold the Governor and cabinet secretaries accountable for vacancies and ensure that appropriate action is taken to fill State positions expeditiously;
- Scrutinize state contracts that appear before the Board of Public Works (BPW) to ensure that functions typically executed by State workers are not outsourced to private entities; and,
- Advocate for higher wages and benefits to attract, recruit, and retain our the best employees.

Public Education

11. General: What do you think are the major challenges facing Maryland's public education today? If elected, how would you help solve these problems?

There are many challenges currently facing Maryland's education system, including stagnant wages that have stifled recruitment and retention and aging infrastructure that has impeded learning. Most recently, it became readily apparent that Maryland's digital divide is deep - with students unable to access computers or a broadband internet connection. For years I worked with all of you and many others to help champion the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and I believe that the Blueprint will address many of the challenges we face once it is fully implemented. Therefore, the task ahead is to ensure full implementation.

My campaign platform also includes the following tenets:

- Forcefully Supporting Equitable Funding & Investment in Public Education;
- Ensuring Equity Through Education Infrastructure Investments;
- Expanding College & Education Access;
- Having A Great Teacher for Every Classroom;
- Ensuring a Smart Start for Maryland's Children;
- Improving Affordability of Higher Education; and
- Educating Students on Financial Issues.

More information regarding these tenets can be found on my campaign website at <https://www.brookelerman.com/policy-agenda/an-excellent-education-for-every-student/>.

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 am a strong supporter of The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and have been involved in many discussions, rallies, and meetings over the years, pushing for the strongest bill. I co-authored one of the initial five pieces of legislation (in 2018) that became the \$35 million package that kickstarted several of the Blueprint reforms while the commission was still finalizing recommendations. I applaud the work of the General Assembly to fully fund the Blueprint. State general fund transfers and the enactment of the digital downloads sales tax have shored up the Blueprint for the immediate future. The Comptroller plays an integral role as a steward of the State's finances. The solvency of the State's general and special funds are of the utmost importance. As Comptroller, I will ensure that all of the State's funding mechanisms for the Blueprint are fiscally sound so that we maintain our promises to our teachers, parents, and children.

First and foremost, we must ensure that we close the tax gap in Maryland. Nationally, the IRS estimates there are \$600bn in unpaid taxes nationally annually. Maryland is not immune from this tax gap and there are an assortment of new technologies we should be using to ensure that we are collecting what is owed, including from all those companies who hire tax attorneys. Second, the state can look to implement tax reform measures that provide a more progressive, equitable, and fair system of taxation. Combined reporting is a perfect example of an untapped tax revenue source that should be pursued. In fact, I cosponsored the Small Business Fairness Act in a prior year that would have required the combined reporting method. Third, the legalization and taxation of adult-use recreational cannabis is another substantial revenue source that should have a significant portion of the revenue devoted to our State's education system, with the remainder going to repair the harm caused to families and communities from the war on drugs. I also recognize that additional federal resources are available now and, hopefully, will be coming to the state soon with passage of certain measures. It is imperative that we use these funds in a manner that benefits our state for the long term.

I look forward to working with partners in the General Assembly to provide them information from the Comptroller's office, as well as ideas on how to secure funding for The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and to providing accurate, timely, and transparent information on the Blueprint Fund through the Bureau of Revenue Estimates (because of legislation I sponsored last year, the BRE will now begin publishing an annual reporting on the status of the Blueprint Fund).

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?

No state or public employees should ever be paid anything less than a living wage. An indexed, uniform living wage is one of the best tools we have to fight the proliferation of poverty. As a State legislator, I cosponsored legislation that would have provided a drastically increased minimum wage indexed to inflation. In 2019, I voted to increase the minimum wage. In a number of instances, I have enthusiastically supported budget provisions that trigger raises for State workers if the State meets certain revenue projections.

As Comptroller, I will advocate on behalf of all of PSRPs and all of Maryland's workers both in the public and private sector. If the Governor and the Department of Budget and Management continue to fail to appropriately compensate our public school employees and continue to lag in pay increases that keep pace with our cost of living, I will utilize my platform as Comptroller to prioritize wage increases.

14. Public School Construction and Renovation.

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?

As a State legislator, I serve as the Education Subcommittee Chair for Baltimore City Delegation and I have a son who is a third-grader at a Baltimore City Public School. I know all too well about the infrastructure problems plaguing the Baltimore City Public School System and I have been a staunch advocate for years for City Schools, helping securing funding in creative ways sometimes to help build new schools and repair aging ones (including securing funding for playground equipment and working to secure a building into which one of my overcrowded schools can expand). All students deserve to learn in safe and innovative school buildings that demonstrate our commitment to their education. As Comptroller and a member of the Board of Public Works, I will be a loud and steady advocate to ensure that we are providing Baltimore City Public Schools the resources it needs to build and renovate old schools into truly 21st Century schools. I will ensure the equitable and targeted distribution of capital funding for those schools that are in the most need and do what I can to speed up the very bureaucratic process of funding approvals.

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?

No, oversight should not be weakened. Charter school teachers and staff should be considered employees of the local school district, not employees of the charter school.

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 believe that public funds should be used for public schools. I am a proud parent of a Maryland public school student, as well as a proud public school graduate, who believes that every child in Maryland not only has the right to an exceptional education, but needs this foundation to ensure that our state can grow and thrive in the future. I do not support tax breaks for corporations that fund student scholarships for private k-12 schools furthers these efforts.

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?

I will work to ensure that school districts cannot circumvent their collective bargaining agreements.

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?

One of the most influential factors on a student's academic achievement is access to high quality teachers. Every child deserves to have highly qualified teachers with diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. As previously stated, I fully support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which will ensure our teachers are paid competitive and attractive wages with meaningful opportunities for career advancement. As Comptroller, I will advocate for the expansion and reimagination of Maryland teacher training and preparation programs to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. It is imperative that Maryland's public school systems implement robust recruitment and retention practices to better diversify our education workforce.

19. Elected versus an appointed school board.

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?

It is important to acknowledge that this issue does not fall within the powers of the office of the State Comptroller and would not come before my office should I be elected. As a matter of practice, I would support legislation to increase the number of elected seats on the Baltimore City School Board to create a hybrid board with the majority of seats being elected members if done in a way that addresses concerns I have shared about compensation, politicization, and the costs of elections. The optimal structure of the Baltimore City School Board is the hybrid structure previously mentioned. This would allow for the transition to a more democratic board structure while preventing a significant disruption in the governing process for students, educators, and employees of the district.

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?

In 2017, I voted in favor of the More Learning, Less Testing Act (HB461) which limits standardized testing to 2.2% of student learning time per year. Standardized testing takes time away from classroom instruction, increases stress on students and teachers, and can be a reason to penalize teachers. This legislation was an important step forward but there is still more work to do to ensure we do not overburden students, families, and educators.

Vision for Baltimore Metropolitan Area and Maryland in General

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?

Before being elected to office, I was very involved in the Red Line effort, serving on my station area advisory committee and on the citywide Citizen's Council. Losing the Red Line was truly devastating to our City and region - and to so many people who spent years working on it and made investments based on its promise. The BaltimoreLink system was in no way a substitution for the Red Line. And, to be frank, the service that BaltimoreLink provides has been and continues to be woefully inadequate for the needs of the region, largely due to the anemic funding the current Administration has provided MTA.

It is critically important to enhance our transportation network in a manner that provides equitable, safe, and reliable transit in order to connect workers to the State's job centers. To do that, we have to find new sources of revenue for our Transportation Trust Fund.

My record in the State Legislature shows my commitment to provide equitable, safe and reliable transit. In 2021, I sponsored and successfully achieved the passage of House Bill 114 - the Transit Safety and Investment Act - which secured over \$3 billion in funding for the Maryland Transit Administration through fiscal year 2029. In 2018 I cosponsored the Maryland Metro Transit Funding Act, which provided a substantial increase in Maryland's share of operating and capital funds for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and required creation of a Regional Transit Plan for central Maryland - one that MTA recently released and will form the basis for federal asks for money and rewards. I also founded the Maryland Transit Caucus to ensure that the General Assembly had a voice for equitable and high quality transit throughout the state.

By focusing on transit and enhanced revenues, the State can substantially improve the transportation needs of its 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?

First and foremost we must close the tax gap that exists in our state. Updating and revising the State income tax structure, broadening the State sales tax, and closing corporate loopholes are all methods that the State could employ to provide solutions to funding gaps as well. As previously stated, I have voted to support combined reporting.

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 do not support the privatization of State or local government jobs and services.

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 stated above, I do not - and would not - support outsourcing State or local government operations. Retaining State facilities, especially health facilities in rural and underserved communities, is essential. As such, I would not support closing such facilities.

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.

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?

As soon as the COVID-19 vaccination became available, I used my platform as an elected official to provide COVID-19 updates and encourage people to get vaccinated. It is imperative that everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated receive it because it is our greatest defense against getting seriously sick and preventing more mutations/variants. Unions and management play a significant role in ensuring effective and honest communication with members and employees and should encourage everyone in the workforce who is eligible to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19. By providing co-branded educational materials, ensuring leave options to give sufficient time to get the vaccine, and assisting with enrollment in clinics, union and management can work together to meet employees where they are and provide them what they need to be able to be vaccinated. While CDC guidance and guidance issued by local health authorities is paramount, unions should be at the table and actively engaged throughout the development of policies and procedures regarding COVID-19.