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## 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

Maryland General Assembly

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Party affiliation

Democratic

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

Yes, numerous - MSEA, AFSCME, SEIU, UFCW, LIUNA, etc (different locals within each)

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

Yes. State Delegate since 2007.

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?

Over my 14 years in the Maryland Legislature, I have been a strong advocate for labor and collective bargaining issues. I have supported and directly contributed to the expansion of education opportunities, and as the current Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Social Services, worked to expand access to care, lift up numerous healthcare professions.

It is my goal in the next term to continue expanding access to affordable healthcare, improve our educational system (at the primary, secondary, and higher education levels), and continue to stand up for the workers in those areas with better pay, benefits, and their right to collectively bargain for their working conditions.

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

I have not. My professions outside of the legislature have not been traditionally unionized, but I have been a strong supporter of labor and will continue to be.

### 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?

I have supported and continue to support the expansion of collective bargaining rights across all aspects of public (and private employment). I'm proud to have supported numerous expansion of bargaining rights during my time as a legislator (community colleges, most recently), but we have a long way to go and I plan to stand with you all along the way.

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 was very pleased that we were able to get minimum wage raised to \$15 per hour. However, like with any legislation, we didn't get everything we wanted. In my opinion, the timeline was too slow and the lack of indexing means we will need to take the issue up again in the next couple of years.

As costs are rising, it is without a doubt that we will need to address minimum wage yet again, and indexing it to inflation is the most sensible way to accomplish it. I fully support indexing and will be there to support the effort.

#### 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 fully support binding arbitration as a neutral way to take collective bargaining stalemates out of the political process. We are considering such a bill this year, sponsored by Delegate Marc Korman, and it is my hope we can get it done this term. However, if we cannot or it is vetoed, I will be there to support it for as long as necessary until it is passed.

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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?

The staffing shortages have wrecked havoc on the functioning of state government, and pay as well as working conditions and overall support for state employees from the administration, have significantly contributed to that shortage.

The first step is, frankly, to allow every state employee to be a member of a union and allowed to collectively bargain for pay, benefits, and working conditions. I trust unions to negotiate on behalf of their members best interests and gain the appropriate salary increases and other market comparable benefits.

But I also believe that government needs to be an honest partner to unions and the members they represent. Government should regularly undertake compensation studies to make sure we are offering the best that we can, require prevailing wages on government contracts, and require project labor agreements.

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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?

Self-funded insurance plans (ERISA plans) are almost exclusively the purview of federal law, but there are ways that a State Legislature can still have a significant effect on the actions of employers utilizing ERISA plans.

Public bodies utilizing ERISA plans are, obviously, much more open to our control. I would, of course, need to look further into these surpluses, but if there is a way to lower rates or refund premiums to employees, than I am happy to explore that possibility.

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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?

I do support keeping retirement plans as defined benefit.

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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?

Until the lawsuit is resolved, nothing in prescription drug benefits have changed for the retired state employees. I support providing as much benefit to employees as possible given the constraints of budgeting. Whether we are returned to the existing system or a comparable system is put in place is a matter of significant discussion, but only once the law suit is resolved.

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?

Absolutely, and we are doing that now to the extent possible under the Hogan Administration. It is a travesty to watch what is happening to state government with the dissemination of the workforce. I fully support filling all vacant positions and undertaking an immediate review to determine if those staffing levels are adequate or not.

## 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?

I am absolutely committed to fully funding the Blueprint through its entirety. We currently have, as a result of the existing budget surplus, the revenue necessary to fully fund the Blueprint, and we need to reserve enough of that funding to make sure that it is used for that purpose. Failing to do so, I am committed to finding an appropriate funding source.

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?

Absolutely. I have already had discussions with organizations representing paraprofessionals and other school related professions, specially school psychologists and mental health professionals. We must absolutely appropriately compensate the other staff within the school who are essentially to the functioning of the school and the education of our children.

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



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?

Absolutely. Charter schools teacher and other employees should be employed by the school system, overseen by the local school board, and be allowed to join the local teachers' union. Under no circumstances should these oversights be weakened.

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 have never been a fan of the BOOST program and strongly disagree with its funding. I have worked, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, to limit its impact to the extent possible. Now, with a recent court ruling that private schools who are recipients of BOOST are able to continue to discriminate in opposition to our budget directives. It is time to re-think BOOST entirely once Governor Hogan leaves office.

As far as efforts to allow corporations to get tax breaks for funding private schools, the short answer is absolutely not. Most private schools are already nonprofit organizations, and any contributions can already be deducted on federal tax returns, the adjusted income is then reflected on state returns. Allowing an additional deduction or credit off of the state return is a double dip on the same contribution and should be strongly discouraged.

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?

This is news to me and incredibly discouraging. Every school system and every administrators in it must follow the law. There are no circumstances that I can currently foresee that would make it acceptable to hire uncredentialed employees. We, obviously, cannot make an individual join a union, so if they chose to remain non-unionized that is unfortunate, but no one should ever be discouraged or prohibited from joining.

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?

Obviously, offering the best pay and benefits is an obvious first choice. However, there are other things that can be done as well. Utilizing Loan Assistance Repayment Programs (LARP) to deal with student loan debt, and additional opportunities for training improvement skills or allow for advancement are also critical.

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

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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?

Several years ago, we passed legislation that restricted standardizing testing and testing prep to, I believe, a maximum of 5% of classroom time. Obviously, we cannot completely do away with standardized testing, as significant federal funding is contingent on it. However, if the existing law is either insufficient or not being followed, then I am open to additional changes to better reflect the needs of the teachers and students in the classroom.

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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?

As a non-Baltimore City legislator, I do not have firsthand knowledge of the regional bus lines, but in speaking to my colleagues, it is my understanding that it is in no way comparable to the Red Line. Transit is critically important and must be a transportation priority for us in the next term. I was so pleased to see Senators Cardin and Van Hollen worked new Red Line funding into the 2021 federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Acts. It means that we will have another opportunity, under a new Governor, to restore the Red Line and provide Baltimore City real transit solutions.

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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. This is a discussion we have had for a number of years and it's time we close these loopholes. We are only one of a handful of states that still allowed combined reporting. If these corporations can manage in most of the country, they can do it in Maryland too.

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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?

In many cases, government needs to procure out work to the private sector to accomplish various tasks. For example, the government does not build a road or a school - a private construction company does. Most health care services are provided by nonprofit contractors or service providers. Making sure that they procurements are done fairly and efficiently has been a large part of my legislative work.

However, privatization is a different story. That is when government secedes one of its core functions - education, public safety, etc. to a private entity to make money off of the public directly. That is absolutely unacceptable and not something I would ever support.

Regardless of the nature of the work, all employees whether public or private must be allowed to unionize and must be paid fair, prevailing wages and benefits.

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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?

I have been working very closely with AFSCME 3 to make sure that the functions of these two facilities are maintained. The facilities themselves are extremely large (too large for the existing patient population) and very dilapidated. How we resolve this issue is still unsure, but I strongly believe is intend to fight for making sure that the state continues to service this population and that the employees in these facilities are able to remain government employees with union membership.

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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 have been, as the Chair of the Health and Social Services Subcommittee on Appropriations, and will continue to do so. We need new rates to be set to better reflect the cost of treating and caring for the BHA population, and we need more and better facilities to reflect both their needs and their dignity.

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

The state should offer vaccines to all residents (not just employees of the state), which we have been doing. It has made Maryland one of the most vaccinated states in the country and that has been reflected in our hospitalization and death rates in a positive way. I strongly believe that the vaccine should be given to everyone, no different that the way kids are required to receive a series of vaccines to go to school or members of the military are required to get vaccinated from a number of potential ailments. I would like to see unions encourage their membership to get the vaccine and will work with unions to see what incentives or support they need from State government in that effort.

**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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