

Rosenberg - 41 - House



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 Delegate, 41st District

Candidate's name Samuel I. "Sandy" Rosenberg

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Occupation Adjunct Professor Who is your employer? University of Maryland Law School,
University of Baltimore Law School

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 3, 1199 SEIU (2018)

Have you ever held elected office? When? Currently hold office.

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?

I am an effective legislator on behalf of liberal causes. The labor movement remains an essential element of the progressive coalition in Maryland and the nation. The essential role played by front-line workers during the pandemic must be recognized. I will also make sure that that the

Blueprint for Maryland's Future is fully funded and implemented for the benefit of students in schools in my district and throughout the state.

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

No

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, I would support efforts to protect the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining. I have an extensive history of supporting and sponsoring legislation protecting workers rights' to organize unions and engage in collective bargaining. I would support efforts to afford the benefits of collective bargaining to as many state and local government employees as possible.

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 would author and/or support such legislation to tie the minimum wage to the rate of inflation. This benefits all workers who receive an hourly wage.

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 follow. 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?

Since the prospect of binding arbitration often prompts both sides to reach a compromise, I would support such legislation.

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?

I am a vocal and effective advocate for incentives to encourage people to take public service jobs with the government and non-profits. Salary is an integral part of that. The current administration has overburdened the workforce by leaving too many positions vacant. I will be cross filing Senate President Ferguson's public service bill in the upcoming session.

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 support legislation to bring more transparency to government employer self-funded health insurance programs.

8. Retirement for public employees: defined benefit versus defined contribution.

Most Maryland public employees have **defined benefit** retirement plans like a pension. This allows employees to plan for their retirement because they know exactly how much income they will be receiving. With **defined contribution** retirement plans like a 401(k), employees contemplating retirement are never quite sure when the right time is to retire because of changes in their plan's investments. Do you support keeping public employee retirement plans as defined benefit/pension plans?

I support efforts to keep public employees on a defined benefit plan so that they can retire with dignity and security. Defined benefit plans ensure that public employees are compensated in retirement in the same manner that they were while working.

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?

The State should keep the promise it made regarding retiree prescription drug benefits.

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 and Yes. We must make state government an attractive place for people with a commitment to public service. I have enacted programs which provide financial assistance for people who want to pursue such careers. These programs should receive more funding and be broadened in scope to attract people to government service. Recently the Baltimore Sun highlighted an EPA study that Maryland does not have enough inspectors to ensure safe public drinking water. These vacancies will continue to plague Maryland unless we fund staff at an appropriate level.

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?

The biggest problems facing Maryland's public education system are funding and accountability. More resources are needed for students with the greatest needs. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future addresses these problems. It must be funded and implemented.

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?

This is not only a constitutional priority; it is also a legislative priority. The legislature is clearly committed to finding the appropriate resources to pay for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in an equitable manner. We need a Governor who shares those priorities. The legislature will find the funding necessary, and I will play a part in that effort. I have always been an advocate for improving the funding for schooling for Maryland's children, and I will continue to do so.

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?

A living wage is at the heart of what we have done by increasing the minimum wage in Maryland. As part of my commitment to public service, I would advocate for those PSRPs to be paid a living wage.

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?

The current program has been an unqualified success that we need to build upon. We must allocate the resources to finish the job.

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?

Oversight of these schools should be the same as for all other public schools. That includes oversight of employees. I helped bring about the compromise regarding overtime at the KIPP schools. Charter schools and the unions should be able to negotiate similar agreements in the future.

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 support both the BOOST program, which provides for the needs of children who are FARM eligible, and increased state funding for pre-K-12 public schools. Four years ago, this was my response. We have now passed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and I am fully committed to funding both the Blueprint and the BOOST program. Funding for the BOOST program must be consistent with the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. Contributions for scholarships to private k-12 schools should be treated like those for other 501 (c) (3) institutions.

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?

Maryland schools should hire only qualified and credentialed individuals to be involved in the education of Maryland students.

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?

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future seeks to address this concern by providing for salary increases for the best teachers. I will continue to advocate for this all important retention issue. I have always supported efforts like Teach for America to broaden recruitment and bring more highly qualified teachers into the system. TFA's five-year teacher retention data is on par or higher than the district average. More than 40% of its 2016 cohort completed five years teaching in the classroom last year (the most recent year with such data). TFA provides grants to Black TFA alumni teachers who stay in the classroom beyond their two-year commitment.

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?

No, this would politicize what should be a non-partisan operation of the Public School system. Recent efforts to limit the curriculum make this point. The current system works best because it strikes the appropriate balance between competing interests.

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?

We should never teach to the test, but standardized testing helps to evaluate students' abilities. These tests are valid indicators of student abilities. I would not legislate the number of tests. That is the decision for the professionals to make on local school boards, state school boards and within the schools themselves.

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?

I supported the Red Line project, and I would support similar projects in the future to increase rapid transportation options in and out of Baltimore City. People need a reliable, safe, and effective means to get to work. I will be introducing legislation to ensure community input on the Red Line so that it best serves the community it runs through.

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, I have been a consistent supporter of closing unfair tax loopholes.

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?

If privatization is to be considered, the existing agency providing the service must be given an opportunity to propose its means of delivering the service. The better option would then be chosen.

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 think the best answer is to have the existing agency propose how it would deliver the services, compare the options, and pick what is best for Maryland's citizens.

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 introduced legislation to improve and broaden the provision of mental health services in the past and will continue to introduce legislation that would provide better mental health treatment services to Maryland's citizens. The use of private and public resources for such treatment could be a model for the provision of other services.

26. Vaccines and working with unions to return to work.

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

Unions and management should come up with a plan together from a place of good faith bargaining to vaccinate their workforce. It is in the best interests of management and the union to have a healthy and safe workforce, and it should not be contentious.