

Solomon - 18 - House

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.



Candidate Information

Please note the AFT-Maryland plans to make these questionnaires public. However, personal information will be redacted.

Employer

State of Maryland

Party affiliation

Democrat

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

MCEA, SEIU 32BJ, Montgomery County Career Firefighters, UFCW Local 1994 - All in 2018 during the last campaign.

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

Currently a member of the House of Delegates - first elected in 2018.

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?

I believe you should support my campaign because of my record from my first term as well as the goals and priorities I hope to fight for in a second term in the General Assembly. I started my career as a high school social studies teacher at Northwestern High School in Baltimore and playing a small role in getting the Blueprint for Maryland's Future across the finish line was incredible. One of my top priorities when first running in 2017 was the Blueprint, and being appointed to a leadership role on the Appropriations Committee in only my second year was a dream come true. Another achievement I am proud of playing a role in was helping to pass a significant and historic expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit for undocumented individuals. This will make such a difference in supporting families in my community who have been hard hit by Covid and will help us raise thousands of Maryland families and children out of poverty.

As for individual legislation I am particularly proud of passing the Safe School Drinking Water Act (HB 636) in 2021, with the support of the Baltimore Teacher's Union (BTU), which lowers the level of lead considered safe in Maryland's school drinking water. Working closely with BTU, MSEA, and other stakeholders, we were able to get this bill across the finish line after 3 years. Another bill I am proud of is the First Step for MARC Commuter Act (HB1236) that I passed in 2020 and then in 2021 overrode Governor Hogan's veto. This is the first legislation in years to expand MARC rail service and will eventually help to enable MARC run-through service from Maryland into Virginia and Delaware as well as better connections between the Penn and Camden Lines in Baltimore. I am a strong believer in investing in high quality public transit and worked closely with organized labor to pass the bill. Finally, last session after three years of working closely with AFSCME Maryland, we passed a once in a generation bill (HB486/SB9) to strengthen and redefine the collective bargaining relationship between 6,000 public employees and the University System of Maryland.

If I'm reelected, the first priority I want to fight for is universal child care and a greatly improved child care delivery system. One that is not only affordable, accessible, and high quality, but one that actually supports and values its workforce. Child care is the workforce behind the workforce and for far too long, we've underinvested and treated our workforce as disposable. We need to raise pay, provide health insurance and retirement benefits, improve systems, and lower the cost of care for families across the state. It's clear that the status quo for many families in Maryland is not working.

The second priority that motivates me is improving access to college for low income and first-generation Maryland students. I have passed several pieces of legislation supporting community colleges and improving the transfer process as well as a major improvement in the financial aid process. In the 2022 session, I plan on introducing several pieces of legislation that will further streamline the process. Next term, I hope to significantly improve our state financial aid process by streamlining it down to a simple equation: If you graduate from a Maryland high school and you go to college in Maryland and your income is a certain amount, your education should be free.

Finally, the third priority that motivates me is expanding access to public transit. Like the MARC rail

expansion legislation I mentioned earlier in the next session and hopefully the next term, I will continue to fight for rail expansion that will benefit every corner of Maryland and investments in public transit, and legislation incentivizing complete street and walkable and bikeable communities. Better access to transit and pedestrian safety is about ensuring that every Marylander has equitable access to jobs, opportunity, and a healthy community.

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

Baltimore Teacher's Union - 2007 through 2009

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 would absolutely support or sponsor legislation granting any workers the right to collectively bargain. I'm proud to have lead a bill with AFSCME Maryland to consolidate collective bargaining and strengthen protections for our state university employees. As a member of the Appropriations Personnel Subcommittee, I'm also proud to have played a small role in working with SEIU 500 in helping to finally move the community college collective bargaining bill. However, it shouldn't take years for these bills to pass or for workers to get the rights they deserve.

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 indexing the minimum wage to inflation and also expediting the implementation of a \$15 minimum wage so it doesn't have to take until 2025. As many businesses move to increase wages to attract talent this is a logical next step to ensure all workers can benefit from the current economic conditions. And indexing to inflation is also critical to ensure that the power of a wage increase is not eroded.

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 binding arbitration. We have seen instances of the state not bargaining in good faith with some of its public employee unions and this should not be repeated. Binding arbitration is a fair and equitable process to ensure that the system works for all parties.

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?

First and foremost, we need to compensate our state employees fairly and provide benefits on par with or better than the private sector. While our pay levels may never be exactly identical, we need to protect our pension system and long term retirement benefits because that deferred compensation is often a critical piece of the compensation package for state employees. I'm proud to have worked for three years with AFSCME Maryland to pass legislation that will dramatically improve and protect the rights of employees at our University System of Maryland schools. I'm also proud to have helped pass budgets that have allocated significant compensation increases to our state employees. Finally AFSCME Maryland is getting what they deserve in their new, soon to be ratified contract with the state and I will work to ensure that contract is appropriately funded.

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?

Surplus funds should either be refunded back to the members or reinvested back into the insurance trust so no matter what, members would be save money. I would support legislation to require this policy.

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 keeping defined benefit/pension plans. I believe this a critical piece of a compensation package for the state and a commitment we make to our 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?

I support full health benefits for retirees and I support honoring the commitment we've made to retirees.

10. Appropriate staffing levels. This past fall, numerous news reports confirmed what many state employees have already known: that staffing in a number of state agencies have fallen to levels that the safety of workers and the ability to carry out their duties has been compromised. For example, the Maryland Department of Health has not been able to admit court-ordered patients to state mental health facilities in accordance with the law due to the lack of staff. Likewise, the State Investment Park Commission found that park ranger staffing levels are too low to meet the demand of Maryland Residents wanting to visit our state's parks. The most recent state analysis shows nearly every state agency has at least a 10% vacancy rate, with some of the larger agencies having a vacancy rate over 15%! Would you support efforts to increase recruitment and retention of qualified state, county and city employees? Would you make funding of additional staff a priority?

First and foremost, we need to properly fund our agencies so we can hire and properly compensate the needed workforce. The Hogan Administration has systematically disinvested in our state workforce, with vacancy rates beyond reasonable expectation in nearly every agency. We have worked this term to rectify this situation, but beginning in 2023, with new budget authority, we need to make rebuilding and appropriately paying our state workforce a top priority. My track record with AFSCME Maryland in support of our state workforce is clear.

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?

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?

Passing the Blueprint was a tremendous victory for students and educators across Maryland. Right now the current funding for the Blueprint runs until 2027. Given our strong budget situation with a surplus over \$3 billion, a top priority should be funding the remainder of the Blueprint during the 2022 legislative session. We could place the money in the Education Trust Fund and clear any remaining fiscal issues. In many districts, there is an incorrect belief that "money for the Blueprint will never materialize." Despite already existing funding, being able to say the "Blueprint is fully funded" would go a long way to help dispel this myth. In addition to simply funding the remaining pieces of the Blueprint from the surplus, we also need a more fair and equitable tax code in Maryland that will provide revenue to fund the programs that support our most vulnerable community members. We have to ensure that large corporations and the wealthiest Marylanders pay their fair share. This includes passing things like combined reporting, ending unnecessary and ineffective subsidies, and capital gains surtaxes. I'm proud to have supported and cosponsored many of the changes that have been supported by the Fair Funding Coalition.

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?

One of my biggest disappointments in working on the Blueprint was that we were unable to provide salary increases for Paraprofessionals and School Related Personnel. During negotiations in the 2020 session, I worked closely with SEIU, MSEA, and AFT to try and resolve this issue but we were ultimately unsuccessful. As critical members of our educator family, it's so important that they are paid appropriately and not left out. This is an issue we must address, particularly with our budget surplus.

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?

15. Public charter schools and local oversight. There are over 50 public charter schools in the state of Maryland, and the vast majority of them reside in Baltimore city. Private, out-of-state charter school operators have previously wished to weaken the state law overseeing charter schools to make teachers and staff employees of the charter board rather than employees of the local school district. This would remove all protections that teachers and staff have under their collective bargaining agreements. It would limit oversight of these privately run public charter schools by taking them out from under the purview of the local school boards. It would also give the private operators a “blank check waiver” from any local school board policy. Should charter school teachers and staff be considered employees of the charter school or of the local school board? Should oversight of these schools be weakened?

I support AFT’s policy statement with regards to charter schools. Having taught in Baltimore City and worked in DC Public Schools, I have personally seen the benefits from our state’s well-regulated and strongly managed charter sector and I have also seen the terrible downsides from weak charter oversight in the District of Columbia. Oversight should absolutely not be weakened and school teachers and staff should remain employees of the local school board.

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 been continually disappointed that we fund the BOOST program and will remain a strong advocate for winding the program down. I absolutely do not support giving tax breaks to corporations that fund scholarships for private k-12 schools.

17. School Staffing. In too many of our public schools, administrators are not following the law and are hiring people who are employees of non-profit organizations, some of whom are uncredentialed and untrained. Because they are not direct hires of the school district, they are not covered by the collective bargaining contract, nor are they held to the same accountability standards as certificated employees. If elected, will you work to ensure that school districts follow the law to prevent public schools from hiring employees from nonprofit organizations, circumventing the collective bargaining agreement? Under any circumstances is it acceptable to you for a school to hire an uncredentialed and non-unionized employee to be involved in the education of Maryland students?

It's not acceptable that school systems are circumventing the law and hiring uncredentialed untrained employees that are outside the collective bargaining scheme. With regards to the higher education area, where schools will also similarly workaroud labor protections by hiring contract workers, I have pushed with my colleagues to change this policy. We have been particularly successful with getting Morgan State to convert their employees to full time with full protection and the legislation I got passed with AFSCME will dramatically improve the situation at USM institutions.

18. Teacher recruitment and retention. The global pandemic has exacerbated the increasingly challenging problem of teacher retention and recruitment. Far too often, experienced, successful educators are made to leave our school systems. Newly hired teachers in some alternative teacher education programs stay in the classroom for an average of 3 years. How can the state enact legislation to support the retention of the highest quality educators, and recruit more to their ranks?

I think we need to have a serious conversation with the higher education system in Maryland about dramatically improving the pipeline for teachers and boosting our teacher training programs. In particular, our state Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) need to be engaged. We also need to look at expanding innovative residency programs that partner with our community colleges - like Montgomery College where Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is trying to "grow their own" by providing pathways for MCPS students to get their degree and teacher certification and then a job in the school system. Rather than trying to import more and more teachers, we should be doing all we can to train Maryland students to become Maryland teachers.

In addition to the longer-term pipeline issues, we need to have a serious conversation about providing additional funding for teacher pay and benefits now. While the Blueprint will dramatically increase teacher pay over the course of implementation, we have to do something now, before we lose even more teachers and support staff. That means perhaps providing additional retention bonuses or other forms of compensation to show educators just how important they are. It also means increasing the pay of support staff so that additional hires can be made, hopefully lessening the burden on teachers. Finally, we need to push MSDE and districts to think creatively about perhaps waving some type of testing or mandate requirements this year to help lessen stress that both educators and students are feeling. I'm not sure exactly what that looks like but would be interested in working collectively to figure out the ask. This would be something similar to the way MCPS decided that Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving, would be a day off rather than a half day, for a mental health break. We should be thinking about something similar as our educators and students try to recover from the pandemic.

Finally, I believe we need creative thinking about capturing many people who are interested in career switching to a more meaningful job in education. With the appropriate certification programs in place, this could be another way to help address some of the staffing gaps as well.

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?

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?

As a policy advisor working for U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), I was a lead negotiator on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization and worked closely with the American Federation of Teachers and Philadelphia Federation of Teachers to make sure that new sets of indicators for measurement were holistic, locally focused, and less reliant on standardized testing. I continue to be a strong supporter of this approach as a Delegate and advocate for these policies in Maryland. In particular, I am strong believer in performance based assessments (PBAs). There is so much that cannot be measured by a standardized test and so much more that a student can learn from completing a PBA. They are infinitely more beneficial for students and I hope that we can use more and more of them in our schools.

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?

Supporting expansion and investments for public transportation has been one of my top priorities since I was elected in 2018 and should be a priority over road and highway expansion. Representing a district with five metro stations, three MARC Brunswick line stations, future purple line stations, and future bus rapid transit lines -- investing in reliable transit is critical to my constituents and all Maryland residents. First it has been crucial to properly invest in our current public transit system, particularly Metro in the DC metro area and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), which runs buses, light rail, and para-transit in the Baltimore region. In the budget, we have prioritized guaranteed and dedicated funding and fought for the end to Red-Line turn backs. These have made a major difference but as we emerge from the pandemic, we have to make sure support and investment remains strong. We should be prioritizing restoration of late-night service and reducing the price of a Metro ride to encourage more use. For both Metro and service lines managed and run by the MTA, the benefits of transit use should never be measured in "farebox recovery."

As for investments in MTA services, the passage of the Transit Safety and Investment Act is a crucial step in ensuring that the all lines are operating at a state of good repair. I'm proud to have been a cosponsor of this legislation and I'm proud of the work the Appropriations Committee did to advance and pass it. It's unfortunate that we had to override the Governor's veto, but I'm glad that we did. As this funding rolls out, we must improve bus service in Baltimore City and the Baltimore region. It was a terrible policy decision to cancel the redline and the current Baltimore Link has been a completely inadequate replacement.

We must also must move forward on improving and expanding other MTA services like MARC. MARC rail expansion has been a top priority of mine this term. As I mentioned earlier, in 2020, I was proud that we passed my First Step for MARC Commuter Act (HB 1236) and then in 2021 overrode the Governor's veto of that legislation. Next session, I will be introducing additional legislation with my colleagues to further advance specific investments and plans for MARC expansion including improvements on the Penn, Brunswick, and Camden Lines, as well as a focus on Transit Oriented Development. Since 2020, I have had the pleasure of being part of the Greater Washington Partnership's long-term planning group working on collaborative plans for regional rail expansion. I believe we're poised for major steps forward in the next few years.

As a leader in the General Assembly's Transit Caucus, in the next session and hopefully the next term, I will continue to fight for rail expansion, investments in public transit, and legislation incentivizing complete street and walkable and bikeable communities. Better access to transit and pedestrian safety is about ensuring that every Marylander has equitable access to jobs, opportunity, and a healthy community.

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?

As I stated earlier, we need a more fair and equitable tax code in Maryland that will provide revenue to fund the programs that support our most vulnerable community members. We have to ensure that large corporations and the wealthiest Marylanders pay their fair share. This includes passing things like combined reporting, ending unnecessary and ineffective subsidies, capital gains surtaxes, and closing egregious loopholes. I'm proud to have supported and cosponsored many of the changes that have been supported by the Fair Funding Coalition. Last session, I worked with my colleagues to pass a significant and historic expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit for undocumented individuals. That expansion is temporary and slated to expire in three years. In 2024, we must make that expansion permanent. Last session we also passed the Local Tax Relief for Working Families Act (HB 319), which would enable counties to make their local income taxes progressive. This bill was vetoed and I'm proud we overrode the veto in December. We must prioritize these measures so we can have the resources to properly invest in education, pay our public employees a living wage, and maintain a safety net that lifts families across Maryland out of poverty.

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?

No, I would not support privatization of state or local government or school system 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?

While I am not overly familiar with the plan to close these two facilities, I am generally opposed to eliminating public resources - particularly in rural communities - to replace them with private facilities. It's unlikely I would support the closing of these state facilities, particularly in the middle of a pandemic when many private facilities have had a very mixed record.

25. State's mental health and addiction crisis. The need for mental health and addiction services has increased during the pandemic. Mental health beds in the state hospital system are filled with court ordered patients. If elected, would you support increasing private and public resources for treatment to be sure all Maryland residents have access to the care they need?

We are in the midst of a mental health crisis exacerbated by the pandemic. We absolutely need to increase resources available for in patient and out patient treatment in every region of Maryland.

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?

Management and labor must absolutely work together in ensuring employees are vaccinated. As our state and public workforce is incredibly diverse, a one size fits all approach can't be our default. I believe bonuses, paid time off, and other incentives are absolutely appropriate policy levers. Public employees, particularly those in high risk and public facing roles, should also be prioritized for any new booster vaccinations, protective equipment, or testing protocol that may become available in the future. Since the vaccines were released, I have worked closely with organized labor to ensure that our child care workforce, public school educators, and state employees received the necessary dosages and protection they deserve.

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 treyolds@aftmd.org.



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