

AFT-Maryland

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 and city 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.

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. Right now, even though a number of state employees and public school employees in Maryland have collective bargaining, many still do not. For example, state workers in the judiciary branch; higher education workers like grad students, adjuncts, and tenure-track faculty in the University of Maryland System; and teachers and staff at the Maryland School for the Deaf and at the SEED School; all do not currently enjoy the right to bargain collectively. If elected, will you sponsor legislation to grant these public employees the right to engage in collective bargaining with their employer?

Yes, I would support future 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. Most recently, during the 2017 session I co-sponsored legislation establishing collective bargaining rights for community college employees.

4. The Fight for \$15. Many municipalities in Maryland and across the county have introduced ordinances that would raise the minimum wage in that jurisdiction to \$15 per hour. Yet legislation was introduced in Annapolis last year to block local counties and the city from raising the minimum wage above the state level. Should the state bar municipalities from raising their own minimum wage? If so, would you sponsor legislation to raise the state minimum wage to \$15 per hour, indexed to inflation?

I was a co-sponsor of HB1416 (2017) that would increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour and will do so again this session. I support a \$15/hour minimum wage for Maryland, and I would cast my vote to override a veto of any legislation enacting a \$15/hour minimum wage.

State service/public employee issues and rights

5. Interest binding arbitration. In 2010 Baltimore County Citizens overwhelmingly agreed that it is important to keep government employees focused on their jobs and not in labor contract disputes (especially Public Safety Employees), so they voted to pass a referendum question supporting interest binding arbitration for all County Employees. Baltimore County employees subsequently won the right to have interest binding arbitration to settle disputes or impasses in contract negotiations but those rights were unnecessarily limited through legislation to wages. According to this process, when during the negotiations process, labor or management declare an impasse and cannot agree to certain provisions of the contract, a neutral, 3rd party professional arbitrator will be called into resolve the dispute. Both the union and management agree that the decision of this arbitrator is binding and final.

Do you support interest binding arbitration for contract negotiations for city, county, state, and federal employees? As an elected official, would you support strengthening those rights for the public employees that fall under your jurisdiction?

Yes, and I would support any legislation in the future that reduces the amount of time public sector employees are locked in labor contract disputes.

6. Health Insurance Transparency. Disputes have arisen around employer's self-insured employee healthcare programs. Audits and budget analysis appear to suggest some governments are running for-profit healthcare programs and healthcare surplus funds are being diverted for use in unrelated areas. This clearly suggests that employees are therefore paying much higher than their negotiated healthcare splits for employer self-insured healthcare coverage.

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.

7. Retirement for state workers: defined benefit versus defined contribution. Last session, legislation was introduced that would move state employees retirement from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan (401K). Do you support such a plan? Why or why not?

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 in which they were compensated while working.

8. Appropriate staffing levels. This past fall, numerous news reports confirmed what many state employees have already known: that staffing levels in a number of state agencies have fallen to levels such that both the safety of the individual workers and the ability of these workers to carry out their duties has been compromised. Recent examples of nurses being assaulted at numerous state hospitals (<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/investigations/bs-md-spring-grove-assaults-20171003-story.html>), or of reports from the Department of Legislative Services to the state's Spending Affordability Committee (<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/politics/bs-md-state-understaffed-report-20171116-story.html>) speak to this. What more can the state do to assure that Maryland agencies and facilities are appropriately staffed?

We must make state government an attractive place for people with a personal commitment to public service. I have enacted programs which provide financial assistance for people who want to pursue such careers. (Janet Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program and the Walter Sondheim Public Service Internship Program) These programs should receive more funding and be broadened in scope to attract people to government service.

Public Education

9. General: What do you think are some of the biggest problems facing public education—both in Baltimore City and in the rest of the state—today? If elected, how would you help solve these problems?

The Kirwan Commission report will be the means to fix the problems of funding and accountability. More resources are needed for students with the greatest need. With that comes accountability – via appropriate means of measuring performance.

10. Community Schools: Baltimore City now has 51 of its public schools serving as designated community schools. A community school is a public school that partners with some entity (UM-Baltimore or the Baltimore YMCA, just to name a few examples) to provide either after-school academic or social services to both students and members of the community. How can state government work to expand the community school strategy in Baltimore and the rest of Maryland?

The state funding formula needs to take into account the additional needs of children living in poverty. This most certainly includes the additional needs for after-school academic and/or social services vital to the success of young people in impoverished communities around Maryland.

11. Public charter schools and local oversight. There are just over 40 public charter schools in the state of Maryland, and the vast majority of them reside in Baltimore City. The large, out-of-state charter operators would like to weaken state law to make teachers and staff employees of the charter board, rather than employees of Baltimore City Public Schools. This would remove all protections that teachers and staff have under the collective bargaining agreement between the teachers union and the school board. This would also limit oversight of these privately run public schools by taking them out from under the purview of BCPS, as well as giving these charters 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?

Charter schools should continue to be held accountable for the student outcomes they have agreed to in their charters. Oversight of these schools should not be weakened. In addition, teachers and staff should be covered by the collective bargaining agreement between the teachers union and the school board. I remain open to working with KIPP and the BTU, if necessary, upon the expiration of their existing ten-year agreement.

12. Charter School funding. There has been a long-running dispute between certain charter school operators and Baltimore Public Schools over appropriate funding. As a feature of being a public charter school in Baltimore, the charters are largely given cash—calculated on a per-pupil basis—from the district, in lieu of the services that the central administration provides neighborhood schools. Most recently, the system presented a per pupil funding formula that mandated funds intended for students living in poverty or who are English language learners actually receive those funds. Some charter operators have countered with a lawsuit, arguing that those special funds for high-poverty students or ESOL be distributed to every student equally, regardless of need. How do you think BCPS should calculate its charter school per pupil funding model?

Charter schools' funding should be based on pupil need and operational costs that are not met by the Baltimore Public Schools.

13. School vouchers. Should government give out vouchers (either a tax credit, or even a tax rebate) to parents who want to send their children to a private school? Please explain your answer.

I support the BOOST program that provides for the needs of children who are FARM eligible and increased state funding for pre-K-12 public schools. We can do both.

14. Education Funding, state contribution. The state is currently studying revisions to the formula that determines the amount of aid given to a local school system from Annapolis. Over the past few decades, the number of Maryland public school students living in poverty has more than doubled, going from 22% in 1990 to 45% statewide today. In Baltimore City alone, well over 90% of our public school students live in poverty. What can the state—and the funding formula—do in order to be sure these students living in poverty get the best education we can give them? If the answer is more funding for public schools, from where is that money to come?

As I mentioned in my answer to question 10, the state funding formula should take into account the additional needs of students living in poverty, both educational and social. If we are to raise more money for public schools, I would support a more progressive way of raising the money than the current reliance on lottery or slots revenues.

15. Education funding, local contribution. For the past three years in a row, the Baltimore City Public Schools System had dealt with a reduction in state aid to its schools. Some in Annapolis have argued that the city should be contributing more to public schools, as property values (especially in and around the Inner Harbor area) have rapidly increased. Do you agree with this assessment?

The compromise funding package last session included more funding from Baltimore City for the school system. I support this principle, consistent with the City's financial resources.

16. School Staffing. Due to a lack of funding, a number of specialized services our students need are being staffed by employees who are not trained properly to administer those services. For example, Due to the limited number of certified nurses in Baltimore City Public Schools, administrators and/or staff are forced to administer medication to students, share nurses between multiple school locations, and utilize part-time nurses. And in other cases, students who have experienced extremely traumatic events do not have access to social workers trained to help them through these times. How would you help solve this staffing crisis?

This is a funding question. The Kirwan funding formula should take into account the need for these services.

17. Violence and trauma in the city schools. Far too often, children in the Baltimore City public school system witness very traumatizing events, and indeed may also be victims to those events—either in the classrooms or outside the walls of the schools after the dismissal bell has rung. What do you think is the best strategy to assure that our school buildings are safe and

welcoming environments for children, teachers, and other education professionals in Baltimore City? How can we work to minimize the impact of traumatizing events on our school children?

Safe streets means safe schools. We must address the short-term problem with improved policing and post-school educational and recreational opportunities for children. We must address the long-term problem with a school system funded at levels consistent with the Kirwan Commission recommendations.

Vision for Baltimore Metropolitan Area and Maryland in General

18. 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 Baltimore's citizens?

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.

19. Privatization. Many rumors have been circulating that the city has been looking into privatizing water services. This comes at a time when the Maryland has been quietly attempting to privatize a number of state services—like closing many state hospitals or turning them over to private companies. When, if ever, do you feel it is appropriate to privatize public services or to sell off or privatize city-owned resources?

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

20. State's opioid crisis. This summer, Governor Hogan declared a state of emergency in Maryland in response to the opioid crisis, calling it a "rapidly escalating" threat. Yet, even as opioid overdoses and death rates continue to climb, the state is actively de-funding, privatizing, or, as in the case of several Maryland health departments {can we name any of them here?} actively shutting down numerous institutions designed to treat this crisis. What can you do as a legislator to assure Maryland gives its citizens safe and affordable access to addition resources?

The General Assembly enacted the Heroin and Opioid Prevention Effort (HOPE) and Treatment Act of 2017. It should be adequately funded by the Governor in his budget, and the General Assembly should fulfill its oversight obligation with regard to implementation.

21. Earned Sick Leave. In the 2017 session, the state legislature passed a bill greatly expanding the expanding the requirement that employers provide earned sick leave to their employees, but Governor Hogan vetoed this bill. Do you support the legislative effort to override the governor's veto on paid sick leave?

I voted to override the Governor's veto. Paid sick leave enables working families to address an illness without jeopardizing their employment.