



## 2014 GENERAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATE: Andrew Platt

OFFICE SOUGHT: Delegate

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*I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking state office and I understand that MSEA reserves the right to share my responses with members and interested parties.*

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Andrew Platt

DATE SUBMITTED: January 15, 2014

*Candidates: In order to be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. **Clarifications, explanations, and other information may be attached, but please be certain to indicate clearly the questions(s) to which you refer.** Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to your MSEA local affiliate.*

*Local Affiliates: Return **ALL** completed questionnaires and your interview team worksheets to The MSEA Fund for Children and Public Education.*

## EDUCATION FUNDING

### **Thornton Funding – State Aid for Education**

#### *Background Points*

- In 2002, lawmakers passed the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act (also known as the Thornton Plan) based on the recommendations of the Thornton Commission. While this increased investment has helped Maryland’s public schools and students achieve outstanding results and develop a reputation as a national leader, many unmet needs remain. MSEA supports increasing the per pupil expenditure, offsetting the impact of continuing inflation and growth, full funding of programs mandated by the General Assembly and/or the State Board of Education, additional state funding to reduce class size, funding to provide state of the art technologies that promote student achievement, increased funding for the education of students receiving special education services, and legislation to support high-quality programs for all students at-risk.
- During challenging economic times, the General Assembly made changes to the Thornton Funding formula by slowing the growth of funding according to inflation. This resulted in \$718 million less in state funding than originally projected for 2014.
- The cost of educating students continues to increase. Over the last 10 years, Maryland has seen an increase in our Title 1 student population of 129 percent and limited English proficiency students of 88 percent. With year to year increases in special education needs, it is clear that the changing student population is a significant driver of costs.
- But the return on investment is incredible. In 2001, 49 percent of students were ready for school when entering kindergarten. In 2011, that number was 83 percent. In addition to being the number one public school system in the country for five straight years, Maryland is also #1 in student achievement growth (1992-2011); 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math improvement (proficient level); and AP performance (2008-2012). And Maryland’s graduation rate is at 87 percent – the highest ever.
- There is continued room for improvement in closing education gaps, expanding programs and services, and improving student achievement.
- There is also considerable room for improvement in addressing educator salaries (flat for the last four years) and reducing class sizes (layoffs/retirements have a direct impact on a slow and steady increase in the number of students per classroom).
- The changing expectations and uncertainty surrounding unproven and misaligned principal/teacher evaluations, standardized testing, and curriculum changes is a significant challenge in recruiting and retaining the high-quality educators we need.

1. What is your position on efforts to meet or exceed the goals of the Thornton Commission when it comes to state aid for education?

- Increase funding beyond Thornton formulas  
 Maintain funding at Thornton levels  
 Decrease funding

*Additional Comments:*

The FY2011 Bridge to Excellence subtotal funding was \$4.867 billion. The FY2012 Bridge to Excellence subtotal funding was \$4.758 billion. This equates to only a \$73 million increase, or 1.6 percent, which barely keeps up with real inflation. The 1 percent inflationary cap on per pupil spending is flat out wrong and the cap should be lifted to 5 percent. Keeping up with real inflation for education funding is the very bare minimum we should be doing. I've met with Bob Rankin, the Legislative Director for the MSEA, and we spoke about creating the political will in Annapolis to formulate a Thornton II, which would build off the successes of the original Thornton plan but would also make sure our school systems stop getting shortchanged. I will absolutely support all efforts to create Thornton II. I think the very first step in this should be to create a "Thornton-like Commission" to study education funding, recruitment and retention of educators, appropriate facilities, and student achievement in Maryland to determine the many factors and mandates impacting education since the passage of Thornton in 2002.

### Geographic Cost of Education Index

#### *Background Points*

- This grant program provides additional state funds to local school systems where costs for educational resources are higher than the state average. GCEI was an original component of the 2002 Thornton Plan; however, it was subsequently determined to be discretionary and funding was delayed. Full funding for the geographic cost of education index (GCEI) formula was provided in fiscal year 2009 for the first time.
- State funding for fiscal year 2014 to the thirteen eligible counties is \$130.8 million.
- In 2009 the GCEI index was updated as required by statute; however, to date the General Assembly has not adopted the new index into statute. The 2009 GCEI index would determine fourteen counties eligible and would increase state funding by an additional \$109 million per year.

2. Do you support or oppose mandating the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) as a part of the state aid for education formula?

Support  
 Oppose

#### *Additional Comments:*

I fully support mandating the GCEI as a part of the state aid for education formula. The GCEI should not held at the whim of legislators in Annapolis, who will not enforce it when economic times are tough or when we face budget shortfalls. The fact that it was first provided in 2009 is abysmal, considering we had a Democratic Governor and a Democratically controlled legislature beginning in January 2007, and Governor O'Malley [mandated funding the CGEI as part of his 2007 legislative package](#), to which a Montgomery County State Senator and then Vice Chairman of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, said "We're trying to put the brakes on anything even with the hint of additional spending." It proves that we need more Delegates and Senators in our County Delegation who will fight hard to mandate the GCEI, as it overwhelmingly benefits Montgomery County. The CGEI provides over \$30 million annually to Montgomery County. I will fight hard to mandate this funding for our schools.

3. Do you support or oppose the state adopting an updated GCEI index (current unfunded index is from 2009) that would increase aid through this formula from \$130 million to \$239 million in FY15?

Support  
 Oppose

*Additional Comments:*

I absolutely support the state adopting an updated GCEI index. Montgomery County's GCEI index is 1.034. This number is critical for how much money we get from the state for education, and if it was updated, we would be getting more money to help fund our school system. Given the basic formula of the index - FTE Enrollment x Per Pupil Foundation Amount x (GCEI value - 1.000), an updated GCEI could add tens of millions of dollars to our county's school system, which we drastically need.

## Maintenance of Effort

### *Background Points*

- MSEA supports adequate public funding for public schools, significant improvement in the state funding of public education through the state foundation formula including requiring the maintenance of effort by the local subdivisions, legislation to require local subdivisions to increase and/or maintain local education spending when given state funds, and requiring local subdivisions to account for this money in a report to the state.
- Prior to passage of the Thornton Plan in 2002, education funding was 7.4% Federal, 39.8% state, and 51.8% local. For 2013 education funding was 4.9% federal, 48.7% state, and 46.5% local. Education funding is a shared responsibility. Increases in state aid should not be supplanted by decreases in local aid.
- Significant statutory changes were passed in 2012 to the state's maintenance of effort (MOE) law, which requires every subdivision to maintain funding for their local school boards from one fiscal year to the next. Counties will be held accountable for meeting minimum school funding levels, while also enabling some counties to realize additional flexibility by applying to the State Board of Education for a broader one-year MOE waiver or two new types of MOE waivers now available under the new law.

4. Do you support or oppose Maryland's maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund at least the same per pupil allocation in local aid for education as the prior year unless a waiver is granted?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

I support Maryland's maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund at least the same per pupil allocation in local aid for education as the prior year unless a waiver is granted. SB 848 was the right fix to county governments using state educational supplemental funds to cut their own education budgets. The maintenance of effort law was absolutely necessary, and here's why: In 2011, numerous counties ignored the mandatory waiver process. This cut over \$240 million in school funding. These drastic cuts eliminated critical student services, increased class sizes, and slashed extracurricular activities. For school year 2011-12, Montgomery County Public Schools received \$71 million more in state education aid, yet the MCPS budget only increased by \$30 million. The county cut \$41 million in education funds, and used the state aid to try to cover it.

## School Construction

### *Background Points*

- MSEA supports funding for school construction and renovation necessary to ensure a high-quality teaching and learning environment, including construction to reduce class size, appropriate heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. MSEA supports legislation establishing and funding air quality and climatization assurance programs within the school construction and renovation programs, and legislation requiring the construction and maintenance of secure facilities to protect the health and safety of education employees in the performance of their duties.
- Under the O'Malley administration over \$2.876 billion of state funding has been provided for school construction including \$360 million for fiscal year 2014.
- In 2004, the Public School Facilities Act was passed which included the recommendation of the Kopp Commission establishing the intent of the state to contribute \$2 billion for school construction over the next eight years, averaging an expenditure of \$250 million per year. Every year the O'Malley/Brown administration exceeded the \$250 million recommendation and the Kopp Plan was met ahead of schedule.
- In 2005 the statewide average age of school building was 24 years old with eleven school systems averaging older than the state average; in 2012 the statewide average age of building was 27 years old with seven school systems averaging older than the state average. In 2002 there were 2,619 portable classrooms; in 2010 there are 3,124 portable classrooms, resulting in 9.5% of all students statewide being taught at least part of their school day in a portable classroom. Annually, each local education agency (LEA) submits a capital improvement program detailing its public school construction project needs for the budget year and the next five years to the Board of Public Works (BPW) – Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC). The existing capital improvement plans submitted by each local school system, indicates a need of state funding for school construction of over \$3 billion for the next five years.

5. Do you support or oppose increasing the school construction floor in the capital budget from \$250 million to \$500 million?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

The highest single year of school construction during Governor O'Malley's tenure is \$420 million, which means that a floor in the capital budget of \$500 million is achievable. An overwhelming majority of the schools in District 17 are overcrowded, and many schools in my district have portable classrooms. For instance, the newly constructed College Gardens Elementary School in Rockville was already over its peak capacity enrollment on its first day of being open. In Montgomery County, there are over 450 portable classrooms. In just the past school year, MCPS's student population grew by over 2,500, which is enough to fill 100 classrooms.

We've also got to make sure that our capital budget continues to guarantee funds to make sure our schools have proper HVAC systems so that our students are comfortable in the classroom.

The FY 2014 capital budget includes over \$300 million in General Obligation bonds for public school construction. \$25 million of that is restricted to fund projects that install air conditioning systems in schools that currently do not have centralized air condition systems, which will drastically reduce energy costs.

## Funding for Nonpublic Schools

### *Background Points*

- MSEA believes any education dollars spent outside of improving public schools makes it harder to make the progress necessary to provide a world-class education for every student.
- The FY14 state budget included new and record levels of funding for nonpublic schools. The nonpublic school textbook/technology program received \$6 million and a brand new school construction fund for nonpublic schools was created with \$3.5 million in public funds in the capital budget.
- Voucher and neo-voucher schemes like BOAST and other funding for programs in the budget for nonpublic schools such as textbooks, technology, and school construction reduce the state's General Fund revenue while subsidizing the cost of private education for a few students.
- The BOAST bill has been before the General Assembly in various forms since 2006. The legislation would create a new tax credit program and allow corporations to allocate a portion of their owed state taxes to organizations that collect and bundle tax dollars and then divert them into private school tax credit vouchers.
  - MSEA opposes this tax credit because it is a backdoor approach to providing vouchers to parents of children in private schools by subsidizing tuition at private schools with public tax dollars.
  - BOAST tax credit vouchers provide no restrictions regarding the use of public tax dollars.
  - Since private schools are independent, and the tax credit voucher program creates inefficient, complex scholarship organizations, there would be many barriers to instituting even the basic accountability measures required of other state programs.
- The Maryland State Department of Education requires a certificate of approval or registration for private schools; it does not accredit or license them. Private schools do not have to report or administer teacher qualifications, class sizes, adherence to Common Core State Standards, implementation of new teacher/principal evaluation systems, student retention rates, graduation rates, demographics, or discipline or suspension policies. Without these measures, it is impossible to ascertain the standards to evaluate any voucher or neo-voucher scheme.

6. Do you support or oppose draining funds from public schools by providing vouchers for private or religious schools, including through the neo-voucher tax credit program proposed and defeated over the last eight years commonly referred to as BOAST?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

I completely oppose any funds going to nonpublic schools or providing vouchers for private or religious schools, including through the neo-voucher tax credit program proposed and defeated over the last eight years commonly referred to as BOAST. As the proud product of Montgomery County Public Schools, I'll fight to make sure public funds only go to public schools.

Unfortunately, there are numerous corporate backed educational front groups trying to privatize public schools, and some of them are targeting Maryland. The Milton Friedman Foundation released an in-depth report advocating for BOAST, [Tax-Credit Scholarships in Maryland: Forecasting the Fiscal Impact](#). Over the next few years, we can expect to see similar efforts to try to tout the alleged benefits of things like BOAST and making it easier to use public

funds for private schools. We've got to start building a progressive coalition in the state to counteract the increasing presence of corporate backed educational groups who are trying to privatize our school system.

7. Do you support or oppose continuing state aid for private and religious schools through the nonpublic school textbook, technology, and school constructions programs?

Support  
 Oppose

*Additional Comments:*

We ought to cut all state aid for private and religious schools.

## **RETIREMENT SECURITY**

### *Background Points*

- MSEA believes that guaranteeing adequate income upon retirement, which is best accomplished through defined benefit plans, serves the interests of public education and all education employees by enhancing recruitment efforts, improving retention rates, and creating a high quality public education system. MSEA also believes that the state and local employers are obligated to fund the pension system sufficiently to provide a guaranteed adequate income at retirement.
- The Teachers' Retirement and Pension Systems currently serve approximately 106,000 active members. The Teacher System currently pays benefits to about 63,000 retirees. Retirees of the Teacher System receive an average monthly benefit of approximately \$2,100.
- Expenditures made by retirees of state and local government provide a steady economic stimulus to the state economy and Maryland communities. In 2009, 152,357 Maryland residents received a total of \$3.2 billion in pension benefits from state and local pension plans. Retirees' expenditures from these benefits supported a total of \$4.4 billion in total economic output in the state. Retiree spending from state and local pension benefits supported 32,000 jobs in the state and total income to state residents supported by pension benefit expenditures was \$1.5 billion.
- In 2011, the legislature reformed pension benefits for teachers and education employees, including an increase in the contribution rate of all employees from 5% to 7% and a reduction of the COLA calculation on all future years of service. Additionally, it made several changes for new employees that created a bifurcated benefit structure. New employees have a reduced benefit with a lower multiplier, longer vesting period, and changes in retirement age and benefit calculation. Consequently, the pension benefit for new employees is among the worst in the nation.
- In 2013, MSEA supported the General Assembly action that phased out the corridor funding method, established in 2002 to mitigate fluctuations in the annual contribution. The long-term phase out requires the state to incrementally reach the actuarially determined annual contribution over ten years, and includes a change in the amortization of all pension liabilities.
- As a result of the reform actions taken by the legislature over the past three years, the state retirement and pension systems are on a path to reach an 80% funded status in approximately 10 years, putting the system back on solid financial ground.

8. Do you support or oppose efforts to restore a unified benefit structure for all school employees in the pension system rather than the bifurcated benefit created by the 2011 reforms for new employees. ?

Support  
 Oppose

*Additional Comments:*

This is part of my larger argument I have been making to labor organizations and progressive groups in Maryland – we’ve got to start building a progressive infrastructure in Annapolis to help guard against the cognitive capture of our party. After the recession, Democrats completely bought into the conservative argument for austerity. In numerous states, teachers’ pensions were one of the first targets. Even right here in Maryland, a state controlled by Democrats at every level of the government, teachers’ pension benefits got shredded. This is an absolutely stunning display of complicity in elected officials calling themselves “progressive” and then turning around and voting to nearly destroy the retirement security of public servants.

This isn’t the first time something like this is going to happen. Corporate backed educational reform groups are recruiting, training, and funding candidates for state legislative offices with the clear intent to shred teachers unions and decimate retirement benefits. We can expect to see in the near future legislative pushes for Defined Contribution plans in Maryland. It will no doubt be coming from the education reform Democrats that these groups elect.

9. Do you support or oppose any action to diminish or threaten pension benefits such as further reductions in the retirement multiplier, further increases in employee contributions, or converting to a defined-contribution or hybrid-type pension plan for education employees?

Support  
 Oppose

If you support further benefit changes, what types of reforms do you propose?

## MARYLAND WORKING FAMILIES

### Collective Bargaining

#### *Background Points*

- MSEA supports efforts to protect and enhance the state’s collective bargaining laws.
- Collective bargaining is the negotiation of a contract – including wages, salary scale, benefits, and working conditions – between employers and employees. The items agreed to in a ratified collective bargaining agreement apply to all employees in a bargaining unit, providing a benefit to employees and employers in not having to negotiate thousands of individual contracts.
- MSEA opposes “right to work” laws. Such laws restrict freedom of association and weaken organized labor in Maryland. The strength of organized labor is critical to protecting workers, ensuring quality, and maintaining fairness, safety, and competitive wages in the workplace.

10. Do you support or oppose public education employees’ rights to bargain collectively?

Support  
 Oppose

#### *Additional Comments:*

As the son of a card-carrying member of the AFL-CIO, I understand the importance of unions and the right to collectively bargain and fully support such efforts. HB 667 in the past session, the fair share legislation for public school employees, was a good start.

As previously mentioned in my responses, I cannot stress enough the importance of creating a political and policy infrastructure to combat the coming internal civil war within the Democratic Party in Maryland. It will be waged between committed progressives who will fight for working families, and corporate friendly technocratic centrists. In places like Chicago and Washington, D.C., we have seen what happens when we’re not prepared to fight back. The MSEA needs more allies who serve in official legislative capacities to help build this infrastructure. I want to help lead that effort.

## Public School Labor Relations Board

### *Background Points*

- The Public School Labor Relations Board (PSLRB) was created by the General Assembly in 2010 by the Fairness in Negotiations Act. However, the Board was not appointed and constituted until spring 2011 and has only been operating for two years.
- The legislation included a sunset provision in the summer of 2015 that, if not removed, will dissolve the PSLRB.
- Over the last two years, the PSLRB has rendered decisions in the following matters:
  - Impasse Determinations – 4 requests
  - Duty of Fair Representation Cases – 15 cases
  - Scope of Bargaining – 1 case
  - Statutory Violations – 3 cases
- There have been no negotiations that have required arbitration by the PSLRB as all of them have been resolved in mediation.
- The existence of the PSLRB, as well as its decisions, have had the practical effect of bringing reasonableness to the bargaining table resulting in more productive conversations in most instances.
- MSEA opposes any attempt to eliminate or limit the PSLRB.

11. Do you support or oppose MSEA's efforts to remove the sunset for the Public School Labor Relations Board?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

I support MSEA's efforts to remove the sunset for the Public School Labor Relations Board. The bill that created the PSLRB IN 2010, HB 243 (cross-filed with SB 590), received a vote of 104-34 in the House of Delegates and 35-12 in the Senate. There's no reason our legislators can't come together to remove the sunset in the 2014 session. The legislative text of the bill states that the PSLRB ceases to exist on June 30, 2015. If elected, I would be happy to work hard in the 2015 session to guarantee that the PSLRB continues on and flourishes.

## Tax Policy

### *Background Points*

- MSEA supports a revenue structure that will provide a predictable, reliable, and stable source of sustained funding for education.
- MSEA supports an equitable means of maintaining and restoring revenue or of raising and obtaining a fair share of additional revenues that directly or indirectly benefit public education at all levels. Further, MSEA opposes any taxing or spending limitations that directly or indirectly have an adverse effect on public education.
- MSEA is a partner in a broad coalition of advocates that support a balanced approach toward solving budget problems by meeting the needs and services of the public with adequate resources. MSEA supported updating and revising the state income tax structure, the state sales tax, the transportation infrastructure package, and continues to support corporate tax reform to close loopholes and tax avoidance schemes.
- MSEA supports a proposal referred to as “combined reporting” which requires the combined income of all corporate entities functioning as a single business to become the starting point for tax calculations; then the income is apportioned to Maryland using the combined apportionment factors of all the members of the group. Combined reporting is necessary to ensure multi-state mega-sized corporations pay their fair share of corporate taxes instead of using creative bookkeeping to shift finances among multiple states and avoid paying taxes. Estimates indicate the passage of combined reporting would increase State revenues by \$50 million per year.

12. Do you support or oppose closing corporate tax loopholes, including the passage of Combined Reporting legislation that ensures multi-state companies cannot hide their Maryland profits in the tax returns from other states?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

I have met with Senator Paul Pinsky, who works for the MCEA, to discuss combined reporting and how to make sure big corporations are paying their fair share. Sadly, the combined reporting legislation in 2013, The Business Relief and Tax Fairness Act of 2013, had only 13 sponsors in the House of Delegates, less than even the Senate had, which had 17 sponsors. Of the entire 24 member Montgomery County Delegation to the House, only eight signed on to be sponsors. This is abysmal. It's pretty simple, not enacting combined reporting is a big, fat tax break for large corporations. 23 states already have combined reporting, and Maryland should, too.

## Increasing the Minimum Wage

### *Background Points*

- MSEA supports increasing Maryland's minimum wage as a policy that both aids working families and stimulates the economy through increased consumer spending.
- Maryland's minimum wage is currently \$7.25 per hour (\$15,000 per year for a full-time worker). Tipped workers earn a minimum wage of 50 percent of the full minimum wage, or \$3.63 per hour.
- 19 states, and the District of Columbia, have minimum wages that are higher than \$7.25.
- Ten states have adopted provisions to "index" their minimum wage so that it keeps pace with the rising cost of living and so that the wage does not fall in real value each year.
- Estimates from the Economic Policy Institute reflect that an increase in the minimum wage will raise pay for 536,000 working Marylanders. This raise will inject approximately \$492 million into Maryland's economy and create an estimated 4,280 jobs.

13. Do you support or oppose a proposal to raise Maryland's minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.00 per hour, in 3 steps over two years, while raising the minimum wage for tipped workers from 50% to 70% of the full minimum wage, and indexing both annually to keep pace with the cost of living?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

I know what it's like to be the child of a parent making minimum wage. My mother made minimum wage as a cashier at our local Blockbuster video store when I was growing up. The fact that Maryland's minimum wage is not already higher than the federal minimum wage is a perfect example of why we need to build organizational prowess among progressives in the House of Delegates. For a wealthy state controlled by Democrats at every level of the government, it's tragic that our minimum wage is not already higher than the federal minimum wage.

## Privatization

### *Background Points*

- MSEA opposes any effort to outsource or privatize education jobs that are part of a bargaining unit. MSEA maintains that any attempt to outsource or privatize jobs of public educators violates collective bargaining agreements because such an effort is in essence terminating or firing bargaining unit positions.
- Outsourcing and privatization efforts have threatened teacher and education support professional (ESP) jobs for years. Queen Anne’s County outsourced food service jobs before collective bargaining was extended to ESPs on the Eastern Shore in 2002.
- Prince George’s County contracted out driver education teachers back in 1985. The fights continue today, in places like Frederick County (privatizing custodial/maintenance services) and Kent County (privatizing custodial/maintenance services and teachers and assistants). Beyond those specific instances, efforts to privatize special education services are on a rise throughout the state.
- This practice of outsourcing public education jobs is illegal. A county board of education is statutorily obligated to carry out and maintain a uniform system of public schools “designed to provide quality education and equal educational opportunity for all children.” (Section 4-107 of the Education Article). In carrying out this obligation, a county board shall appoint and set the salaries of all principals, teachers, and other certificated and non-certificated personnel. (Section 4-103 of the Education Article). Moreover, the General Assembly has made it clear that a county board of education, and no other entity, is the employer for purposes of collective bargaining. (Section 6-401 of the Education Article). In sum, the General Assembly did not give a county board of education the power to abdicate its authority to carry out and perform educational functions to a private entity.
- When jobs are outsourced, quality control is diminished and safety is compromised. Public employees are subject to background checks that private employers often skip. After privatizing, local school boards lose control over the individuals working in schools and have little ability to provide input on job performance.
- Privateers often use “cost-savings” as a means of winning contracts. The amount is often misleading because they low-ball the first year operating costs. Ultimately, they reduced hours, health care coverage or just cut jobs. All of which leads to increased local unemployment and less overall money in the community.

14. Do you support or oppose contracting out to the private sector any services currently or traditionally provided by public school employees?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

The privatization of our public school systems is a growing trend pushed by powerful groups on Wall Street – groups that have a large financial interest in doing so. These corporate special interests are creating front groups to recruit, train, and finance candidates to run for local school board seats and state legislative offices. These groups are starting to come to Maryland, and

we've got to build a progressive alliance now to be able to fight back against these special interests. Big corporate groups like K-12, Inc. have lined the pockets of politicians and work with them to shut down and privatize public schools, and allow corporations to come in and manage. The profit incentives of these corporations coming in and managing schools means they slash wages, cut benefits, and do everything they can to turn a quick buck. The recent activity of some of these "education reform" groups certainly indicates that the corporate interests behind public school privatization might have their eyes next on Maryland. This is something I would particularly like to discuss in my interview, and I will bring supplemental materials for further discussion.

## CHARTER SCHOOLS

### *Background Points*

- MSEA supports Maryland’s current charter school law. It protects high standards, collective bargaining rights of employees, and the local autonomy and needs of a school system. The law also provides flexibility for charter providers and employees to reach agreements outside of a collective bargaining agreement that allows the school to meet the needs of its mission and students. This combination of protections and flexibility makes Maryland’s charter school law the best in the nation.
- Maryland’s law provides an opportunity for focused learning using innovative curricula and instructional methods with the goal of enhancing student achievement. Charter schools are important options with the potential to benefit the broader system by allowing it to explore innovative teaching and learning methods on a scalable, pilot basis. Maryland’s law strikes the right balance between local control, accountability, and innovative instruction.
- Maryland currently has 55 charter schools in 6 counties and Baltimore City, with the vast majority (39) located in Baltimore City serving almost 20,000 students. Because of the strong oversight and assistance provided to charter schools and the vigilance in the review of the each proposed charter school, the success rate of those approved here is much higher than any other state.
- Studies have consistently shown that although some charter schools may do well, on average, most perform about the same as or worse than traditional public schools.
- In recent legislative sessions charter advocates have championed legislation that would undermine local control of schools, lower standards and accountability, and circumvent certification requirements and collective bargaining rights. Our top-ranked schools depend on keeping our standards high and our charter school law strong. MSEA believes it is necessary to continue to reject efforts to overhaul a law that works and meets the needs of students, parents, school employees, school districts, and our state.

15. MSEA supports charter schools that are under the control of local school boards, require making enrollment open to all students, are held to the identical high standards as traditional schools, and protect collective bargaining rights of employees hired at the school. Do you support or oppose MSEA’s policy statement with regards to charter schools?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

Charter schools are not the silver bullet to our educational problems like some Democrats think they are. Michelle Rhee’s group, StudentsFirst, gave Maryland a “D+” with regards to its charter schools laws. Other groups are targeting Maryland to change its charter school laws to allow for more charter schools, and for deregulation. As Delegate, I’ll stand side-by-side with the MSEA to fight against these groups and the folks they try to get in office.

## DIGITAL LEARNING

### *Background Points*

- MSEA believes digital technologies create new opportunities for accelerating, expanding, and individualizing learning. Teaching and learning can now occur beyond traditional physical limitations and MSEA embraces this new environment and the tools to better prepare our students for college and 21<sup>st</sup> century careers.
- Digital learning initiatives should be viewed as opportunities to enhance and broaden instruction rather than simply a cost-cutting measure that eliminates professional education positions or diminishes teacher to student interaction.
- Digital learning programs must be aligned with the standards, curriculum, evaluations, and assessments.
- Educational programs and strategies designed to close the achievement and digital gaps must address equity issues related to broadband Internet access, software and technical support, and maintenance. Simply moving to a large scale use of technology in pre-k-12 will be more likely to widen achievement gaps among students than close them.
- All educators should have access to relevant, high-quality, and interactive professional development in the integration of digital learning and the use of technology into their instruction and practice.
- Educators and their local associations need support and assistance in vetting the quality of digital course materials and in developing or accessing trusted digital venues to share best practices and provide support.
- An environment that maximizes student learning will use a blended model of educator interaction and online learning. Every class will need a different blend, and professional educators are in the best position and must be directly involved in determining what blend works best in particular classes and with particular students.
- Assessment and accountability systems need to be carefully developed to ensure academic integrity and accurately measure the impact of digital learning on students. This includes developing strategies to ensure students are completing their own online assignments and taking the appropriate assessments.

16. MSEA believes in the collaborative development of digital learning plans that are living documents, changing as circumstances require. These plans should view technology as a tool to enhance and enrich student learning rather than a reform that usurps educators and the teaching profession. Expansion of digital learning requires equity for every student; support and enhanced professional development for all educators; and a blended approach of technology and traditional forms of delivering education for all students. Do you support or oppose MSEA's policy statement with regards to digital learning?

Support  
 Oppose

### *Additional Comments:*

I completely agree with MSEA's position on this. We have to be careful and cautious of the historical nature of the correlation between technological advancement and socioeconomic stratification of students. Technology can and should be used to assist in educating our students, but the "technology and data will solve everything" approach to education is

downright dangerous and lazy. This intellectually lazy argument often coincides with the dangerous belief that a child's education occurs solely inside the classroom, and is not influenced by external factors like parental guidance, home life, etc.

## TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATIONS

### *Background Points*

- MSEA believes that educator evaluation systems must be educator-informed, research-based, and collaboratively developed. Evaluation systems should be fair, transparent, timely, rigorous, valid, and designed to improve instruction by focusing on teaching and learning.
- In May of 2010, the General Assembly passed the Education Reform Act. In addition to providing early mentoring for teachers who may be at risk for failing to achieve tenure, the law mandated that student growth would be a “significant component” and “one of multiple measures” in a teacher’s evaluation. According to the law, no evaluation criterion could account for more than 35%. The law also mandated that evaluation systems must be mutually agreed upon at the local level.
- Each county has worked hard to ensure that their evaluation systems reflect provisions of the Education Reform Act. While revising the evaluation systems, educators are implementing the new Common Core State Standards, while the state is still waiting for new statewide assessments (PARCC) to be approved. In the meantime, students and educators will be evaluated based on MSA assessments that do not align with the new curriculum. PARCC assessments are not planned to be implemented until the 2014-15 school year.
- MSEA has serious concerns with the poorly planned timing, implementation, and misalignment between the evaluation system, Common Core, and PARCC assessments. As long as what our students learn is different from what they are tested on, teachers and principals are concerned that this misalignment can prove to be decisive in evaluations and some people could lose their jobs unfairly, based on useless data. This situation will also likely lead to confusion and frustration from students and parents.
- A key provision of the new evaluations was the requirement for local agreement between school boards, superintendents, and local associations. Such local development allows for the evaluation system to meet the unique needs of each district. But in the last 18 months, the U.S. Department of Education and Maryland State Department of Education have insisted on the uniform use of a more rigid state model.
- MSEA believes the continued push for high-stakes student assessments undermines educators’ creativity and their ability to respond to the needs of students. Instead of high-stakes assessments, MSEA supports high-quality assessments that support student learning from a rich curriculum and with room for educators’ voices in the development of curriculum and assessment.
- Additionally, MSEA supports rigorous and relevant professional development through the continued alignment of evaluation systems, Common Core, and PARCC assessments. Today, most teachers report that the necessary high-quality professional development has not been provided, yet the 2013-2014 school year is when implementation begins.

17. Do you support or oppose local autonomy to develop evaluation systems in compliance with statute and regulation?

Support  
 Oppose

*Additional Comments:*

Montgomery County's nationally recognized evaluation process, Peer Assistance Review (PAR), is a model for how teachers should be evaluated and is essential to professional growth for our teachers. We shouldn't let our proven system be replaced just because Arne Duncan and the Department of Education hold money over our heads.

18. Do you support or oppose efforts to overturn school districts' mutually agreed upon, statutorily compliant evaluation models in pursuit of one-size-fits-all models developed by federal and state agencies rather than local education agencies?

Support  
 Oppose

*Additional Comments:*

19. Do you support or oppose efforts to provide educators with sufficient professional development to ensure that they can deliver high-quality instruction aligned with the new Common Core State Standards, and ensure that any student assessments that influence an educator's evaluation are well aligned with the curriculum?

Support  
 Oppose

*Additional Comments:*

I also support Delegate Eric Luedtke's legislation this session relating to the MSA test. It is ridiculous to evaluate a teacher based on a test for which the curriculum does not apply.

## SCHOOL BOARD AUTONOMY

### *Background Points*

- MSEA supports full school board autonomy, including the ability to select the superintendent and establish curriculum and develop policy around student achievement and parent and community engagement. Further, MSEA supports the right of the school system to negotiate contracts and carry out collective bargaining responsibilities in good faith. The local board's ability to fulfill these responsibilities should be free from interference or usurpation by agents of county governments and remain separate and apart from other competing political and budgetary priorities. A completely autonomous school board should be able to make decisions that are free from political considerations and in the best interests of the students and education employees
- Legislation passed in 2013 makes the Prince George's County School Board the only board in the state with absolutely no power or input in the selection of the local superintendent. This significantly restricts the authority of the board and is a troubling precedent that threatens the checks and balances of local boards and county governments across the state.
- The final version of the Prince George's bill gives the new superintendent, selected by the county executive, authority over the day-to-day operations of the schools system, including overall system administration, daily fiscal affairs including administration, instructional salaries, textbooks, special education, food service, transportation, capital planning and expenditures, development and implementation of curriculum, among other major responsibilities.
- This reorganization completely usurps the authority and responsibilities of the board, except in a few instances, and vest nearly all authority in a superintendent who serves at the pleasure of the executive.

20. Do you support or oppose efforts from county governments (County Executives or County Commissioners) to usurp the role of local school boards in the selection of local school superintendents or to infringe on their budget autonomy?

Support

Oppose

This was a dangerous move by the General Assembly: it voted to allow Prince George's County to become the first county in the nation to provide the chief executive authority to appoint a superintendent and school board members. The legislature should not be giving such dictatorial powers to any County Executive. Unfortunately, a good number of Montgomery County Delegates voted for HB 1107, the bill that gave Rushern Baker near total power over the Prince George's County public school systems. Only seven Montgomery County Delegates voted against the bill.

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

- A. Please share what you consider to be your most significant achievements.

My most significant achievement is being the first in my family to graduate college. As the son of a mailman and a woman who made minimum wage, the brother of someone who dropped out of high school in the tenth grade, and having grown up in a neighborhood where many people dropped out of high school and few made it to college, I consider this to be my most significant achievement. It's why I value public education so much. My teachers in high school saw what they considered to be a gifted student from a disadvantaged background and helped me achieve things that I would have otherwise not been able to do. I would literally not be where I am today without my teachers – teachers like Karen Wassman, Elaine Bernstein, John Lubenetski, Mike Lanahan, and many others. My parents are the products of Montgomery County Public Schools, and so am I. I owe everything I've got to the teachers who helped me get here.

Other achievements I am proud include working for Donna Brazile, the Vice Chair of the Democratic National Committee, the House Democratic Caucus on Capitol Hill and fighting back against the conservative argument for austerity, and working for former Maryland State Senator Rob Garagiola.

I am also proud of the work I did for MCEA in 2012, for which I organized and staffed teacher phone banks to create a “teachers to neighbor” letter in support of the DREAM Act, marriage equality, and MCEA recommended candidates. The letter was delivered to tens of thousands of voters.

- B. Please outline your top three public education priorities and how you would measure and achieve success on each.
- 1) Bringing Universal Pre-Kindergarten to Maryland. Right now, only 37 percent of four-year olds in Maryland are enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten. I will consider it a failure on my part if we haven't passed a bill to bring Universal Pre-Kindergarten to Maryland by the end of my first term. This might be an ambitious goal, but I'm running for Delegate to pass bills and get things done, not watch time pass until it's time to run for reelection.
  - 2) Closing the Achievement Gap in our public schools. This isn't just a moral obligation, it's an economic imperative. Studies have shown that the Achievement Gap in the U.S. has the economic effect of a permanent national recession. It's not enough for politicians to just pay lip service to this issue. Educational equity is one of the biggest challenges facing policymakers today. In Montgomery County Public Schools, there is a 45.4 percent gap between African-American students and White and Asian students for advanced scores on the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Maryland State Assessment test. For Latino students, that same gap is 46.5 percent. Only 81.3 percent of our African-American students and 75.3 percent of Latino students in MCPS graduate high school. Increasing the number of Judy Centers in Maryland is one way to start closing the Achievement Gap. Judy Centers are state grant and locally-funded family learning centers that provide comprehensive early childhood services for children from birth through age five. There are 25 Judy Centers throughout Maryland. The Judy Centers were established to honor the

memory of Judith P. Hoyer, an early childhood educator, advocate, and the late wife of Congressman Steny Hoyer. Closing the Achievement Gap isn't going to happen in one year, but I will closely monitor the statistics to measure our success.

- 3) Making sure our schools stay strong by making sure our teachers union remains strong. There is a national trend, and it is starting to enter Maryland, of corporate backed groups creating organizations to dismantle teachers unions, privatize our public schools, and try to make a quick buck through privatization. I want to help build a progressive alliance in Annapolis and across the state to fight back against the efforts of these groups trying to enter Maryland. If they succeed, it will be disastrous for our students and our teachers. Success on this will be measured by the question of attaining a critical mass of third party groups to support this progressive organization to fight back against things like privatization. If I can't do that, I will consider it a failure on my part.

- C. Please explain how you would work with your state and local education association when faced with potential legislation relating to education issues (i.e. discipline, suspension, school safety, special education, teacher certification).

I plan on being very open in my communications with the MCEA and MSEA and will be in constant contact with both organizations to discuss potential legislation. When elected, I plan to create a teachers advisory board so I can get constant feedback from teachers about what they think is working and what isn't. At the state level, I have already had productive conversations with Sean Johnson and Bob Rankin about education policy. At the local level, I have met with Doug Prouty, and Tom Israel and Barbara Hueter numerous times to discuss potential legislation and policy ideas.

- D. Please explain how, as a member of the General Assembly, you would specifically build respect for the education profession in order to help attract and retain the highest quality educators in pre-k through secondary education.

I would work to make sure politicians stop using teachers and teachers unions as political punching bags. To build respect for teachers, we've got respect their pensions and salaries and work hard to make sure that they aren't held accountable for forces outside of their ability to educate a student in the classroom.

I plan on shadowing a teacher for a full school day before my interview with the MCEA so that I can try to really understand what a teachers goes through on a given day. Every Delegate and Senator ought to do the same thing. This would help build respect for the teaching profession.

