



2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATE: _____

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS: _____

POINT OF CONTACT: _____

PHONE NUMBER(S): _____

EMAIL: _____

WEBSITE: _____

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: _____

DATE SUBMITTED: _____

*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 question(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

Adequate Funding Formula – State and Local Aid for Education

Background Points

- With a critical need in closing education gaps, expanding programs and services, community schools, and improving student achievement, in 2016, lawmakers formed the Kirwan Commission to meet the challenges of a changing global economy and prepare Maryland students to be successful citizens in the 21st century.
- The Kirwan Commission’s recommendations evolved into The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, which originally passed in 2020, was vetoed by Governor Hogan, and had its veto overridden in 2021. The Blueprint revises the state’s school funding formula for the first time in nearly two decades. Over the next 13 years, the Blueprint calls for billions of dollars of new investment in Maryland schools that would expand career and technical education programs, community schools, and pre-k; provide more resources for students from backgrounds of poverty and students with special needs; increase educator pay; hire more educators and expand and diversify the educator pipeline; and create a new, more rigorous accountability system. These programs are designed to raise achievement and address Maryland’s economic inequality with programs to target concentrated poverty.
- The governor will have a significant impact on the future funding and success of Maryland schools. The Blueprint is landmark legislation, but there is a continued need for investment in Maryland schools to see that the Blueprint is successfully implemented, and in ensuring that educator voices are heard and respected throughout implementation.

1. Please provide your general and specific thoughts on the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. In your answer, please specify whether you believe additional revenue is needed to address our public education needs, and if so, how you will generate that additional revenue.

2. There is considerable need to improve educator recruitment and retention. Class sizes have increased because of cost-cutting measures and/or hiring freezes, layoffs, and retirements. Many support personnel positions have been eliminated. And Maryland is always challenged with filling educator jobs because we import nearly half of all certificated teachers from prep programs in other states. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these shortages. At the same time, the Blueprint calls for the hiring of 15,000 educators to address these issues and provide more individualized attention to students. How will you work in the General Assembly to address critical recruitment and retention, while being consistent with collective bargaining?

Funding for Non-Public Schools

Background Points

- MSEA believes any education dollars spent outside of improving public schools makes it harder to achieve the progress necessary to provide a world-class education for every student.
- The FY22 state budget unfortunately includes new and record levels of funding for non-public schools. The non-public school textbook/technology program receives \$6 million. Non-public schools also receive \$3.5 million in construction funding. The BOOST voucher program now receives \$10 million and continues to reward and fund private schools that have controversial discriminatory practices.
- Non-public school funding for programs in the budget such as textbooks, technology, school construction, and vouchers reduce the state's General Fund while subsidizing the cost of private education. Data from the first few years of the BOOST program indicated that more than 70% of voucher recipients already attended and paid for private school before receiving the voucher.
- 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 College and Career Readiness Standards, student retention rates, graduation rates, demographics, or discipline or suspension policies. Without these measures, it is impossible to effectively evaluate the programs funneling public tax dollars to private schools.

3. Do you support or oppose draining funds from public schools by providing vouchers for private or religious schools, including through the BOOST voucher program?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

4. How will you address state aid for private and religious schools through the nonpublic school textbook, technology, school construction, and voucher programs?

- Increase funding for nonpublic schools
- Maintain funding at current levels for nonpublic schools
- Decrease funding for nonpublic schools
- Eliminate funding for nonpublic schools

Additional Comments:

5. Do you support requiring any school (public or non-public) that receives public funding to adhere to policies regarding antidiscrimination, student achievement standards, school safety and discipline standards, certified teachers, employee protections, and student assessments?

- Support
- Oppose

Additional Comments:

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AND GREATER SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WHO NEED THE MOST HELP

Background Points

- Poverty dramatically and negatively affects the wellbeing of children, particularly in the areas of physical health, mental health, safe housing, access to technology, parental support, family planning services, nutrition, youth employment, and education. Each of these areas play a large role in whether students can learn and do well in school—making it imperative that these opportunity gaps be closed if we want to provide an equitable education in our communities. According to data collected by MSDE, 48% of Maryland public school students were enrolled for free and reduced-price meals this school year (meaning their family income level is at or below 185% of federal income poverty guidelines).
- MSEA supports the establishment of community schools which are designed to help close these opportunity gaps by making the school a hub for essential services that students in disadvantaged communities lack.
- Community schools generally have the following four components: (1) they serve a high concentration of students in poverty; (2) they employ a full-time coordinator to lead community school-related services; (3) they conduct a needs assessment to identify key road blocks to learning and the services needed to close the opportunity gaps; and (4) they work with community partners to bring those needed services into the school building or nearby locations to make them accessible to students and community members.
- The Blueprint phases in community schools beginning in FY20, starting with 219 schools with 80% or more of their students enrolled for free and reduced-price meals. Community schools will be added, phased in according to highest levels of poverty first, until FY27, when a predicted 557—nearly one-third of all schools in the state—are projected to become community schools. That makes this one of the largest scale expansions of community schools in the nation.
- The American Rescue Plan provided additional funding to assist with the expansion of small group instruction delineated in the Blueprint. Of these funds, at least 20% must be used to address pandemic-associated learning gaps through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs.

6. Beyond the continued formula support to fund community school coordinators and per pupil funding for community schools, how will you support the expansion of community schools in your role as a member of the General Assembly?

7. As Maryland uses federal funds from the American Rescue Plan to focus on tutoring as a solution for academic loss and the Blueprint continues the focus on small group instruction, what other legislative initiatives would you propose to support student learning for students who need the most help?

8. MSEA supports hiring community school coordinators as school district employees and requiring that all tutors and aides hired for small group instruction also be local school system employees and not privately provided employees or part of other county agencies. Being a school system employee will not only ensure adults in school buildings supporting students are colleagues and able to collaborate throughout the school day to meet unique needs but will also ensure these staff members are part of a bargaining unit. Do you support or oppose MSEA's position to have these coordinators and tutors/aides be school system employees?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Continuing Impact of the Pandemic

Background Points

- The pandemic has exacerbated a pre-existing, multifaceted housing crisis. Housing costs continue to rise, keeping some families out of the market entirely, while those whose incomes were slashed during the pandemic have fallen so far behind that the Census Bureau estimates 7 million households as of late June 2021 face eviction when the temporary moratorium on eviction enacted during the pandemic is lifted.
- The pandemic has also increased stresses, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), food insecurity, and digital divide issues for our students.
- The pandemic has exacerbated a pre-existing, multifaceted housing crisis. Housing costs continue to rise, keeping some families out of the market entirely, while those whose incomes were slashed during the pandemic have fallen so far behind that the National Equity Atlas estimates approximately 129,000 Maryland households, as of August 2021, are behind on rent and face possible eviction when the temporary moratorium on eviction enacted during the pandemic is lifted.

9. How will you address increased needs for mental health supports for students and educators in the wake of the pandemic?
10. Safe and affordable housing is necessary for all students to be able to succeed in school. What is your position on affordable housing and how it relates to education?
11. The pandemic further illuminated the immediate need for reliable, affordable access to technology for all students and educators in our state. How would you propose to eliminate the digital divide?

Virtual Learning

Background Points

- Statewide closures due to the pandemic forced educators and schools to implement virtual learning as an alternative to traditional in-person learning. The haste with which our schools, educators, and students were required to pivot was unprecedented and without advance planning. There is no doubt that the initial roll-out of virtual learning, coupled with the uncertainty of its duration, created significant challenges for all involved.
- While we believe that well-planned, goal-specific virtual learning options should be considered to meet the individual learning or course requirement needs of some of our students, MSEA opposes any effort to create permanent virtual schools. We believe that they do not best serve our students' learning needs nor our state's goal to provide a world-class education to all Maryland students. Research has shown that virtual schools—including virtual charter schools—produce poorer academic outcomes. Assuming healthy and safe learning environments, we know that students are better served by in-person instruction.
- While there are some things about teaching that remain the same regardless of the mode of instruction, virtual learning does require some significant revisions to instructional planning and implementation that are unique. As such, MSEA believes that if classroom teachers and instructional staff are required to operate using a virtual learning modality, they must be provided with the training, resources, and supports required to ensure that they can do so effectively. MSEA also believes that all employees for virtual instruction must be school system employees and not contracted employees.

12. While we believe that well-planned, goal-specific virtual learning options should be considered to meet the individual learning or course requirements needs of some of our students, MSEA opposes any effort to create permanent virtual schools. We believe that they do not best serve our students' learning needs nor our state's goal to provide a world-class education to all Maryland students. Research has shown that virtual schools—including virtual charter schools—produce poorer academic outcomes. Assuming healthy and safe learning environments, we know that students are better served by in-person instruction.

_____ Support
_____ Oppose

13. 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:

14. What allowances or guardrails would you like to see implemented related to virtual learning options?

Healthy and Safe Learning and Working Environments

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 and 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.
- With the override of the governor’s veto of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, the Built to Learn Act (HB 1, 2020) was triggered. The legislation will infuse \$2.2 billion in new construction and school renovation efforts across the state. This will create jobs and help meet the safe and healthy building conditions needed for learning and working.
- According to the Maryland Department of Labor, prevailing wage is defined as, “The hourly wage, usually benefits and overtime, normally paid to the majority of workers, laborers, and mechanics within a particular area.” Prevailing wages are established by regulatory agencies, such as government, for each public works trade and occupation, as well as by State Departments of Labor or their equals. Prevailing wage laws address shortages in skilled labor workforce by increasing apprenticeship opportunities, reducing injury rates, and increasing worker productivity. Because they ensure a stable, well-qualified workforce, prevailing wage laws produce good value for taxpayers.

15. Do you support or oppose protecting Maryland’s existing prevailing wage requirements for school construction projects?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Racial and Social Justice

Background Points

- MSEA unequivocally believes that our diversity makes us stronger. We fundamentally believe that schools should be welcoming and nurturing learning environments for students of all backgrounds and beliefs, and places where all our students see themselves in the lessons they learn and experiences they enjoy. While students of color made up approximately 64% of the student population across the state in school year 2019-2020, our state had only 29% teachers of color, 38% principals of color, and 45% assistant principals of color. MSEA was represented on the Kirwan Commission and a vocal advocate of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in part because of our support for training and developing high-quality teachers and education leaders, particularly those from diverse and historically underrepresented backgrounds.
- Every child, regardless of their background or zip code, deserves education justice and equitable access to opportunities, resources, and supports. We believe that the lives of our Black and Brown students matter and that all our students have a fundamental right to be educated in safe, healthy, and supportive learning communities and all our educators deserve safe, healthy, and supportive working environments.
- Maryland and U.S. history are far more diverse than is generally reflected in the content and courses currently taught in our public schools. Far too many Marylanders can progress through their formal primary and secondary education and rarely, if ever, see themselves reflected in the content they are learning or hear about themselves in the stories they read and are told. This lack of inclusivity negatively impacts not only our students' ownership of and agency in their learning, but it also adversely impacts their overall engagement in their learning and portrays a one-sided view of our history for all students. This disconnect is further exacerbated by the dearth of a more diverse field of educators in our schools and by the disproportionate (and sometime inaccurate) representations seen in society and in our culture that ultimately reinforces a sense of "otherness" for the people, communities, and cultures who have been rendered less relevant and less valuable. MSEA recognizes the vital importance of ensuring that all students learn about historical figures who not only had a tremendous impact on the forming of our state and our nation but whose actions and sacrifices laid the foundation upon which this nation's pledge of "liberty and justice for all" must be built.
- MSEA has a track record of being supportive of the Dream Act, Marriage Equality, and other social justice issues. We are proud to put our organizational power behind social justice issues at the state level.
- MSEA is committed to developing critical thinking skills in our students because we know that they enable them to better understand the problems our society faces and to develop collective solutions. To that end, we are abundantly clear that truth and honesty are fundamental components of teaching and learning, as are academic integrity and professional responsibility. Our essential mission is to prepare our students for college, career, and life and to play an active role in our democracy.

16. MSEA supports honesty in education. To encourage critical thinking, we believe educators should have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools, and districts. Do you support or oppose this position?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

17. How will you support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students throughout the state? What specific policies do you support whose goals are focused on providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

18. MSEA's promotion of Black and Brown voices and racial justice in our schools includes the recruitment and retention of educators of color. What is your plan to attract and retain more racially diverse educators?

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

Background Points

- The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) gives states greater authority for academic standards, school accountability, and education policy. ESSA prohibits the U.S. Department of Education, through regulatory or waiver processes, from setting national academic standards. ESSA prohibits the U.S. Department of Education from tying teacher evaluations to standardized test scores. ESSA reinforces collective bargaining protections and removes adequate yearly progress as a benchmark for school progress.
- Instead, each state must decide on its own state academic standards and assessments, and must develop its own accountability system for school success. Each school will receive a rating as determined by this accountability system, and based on these ratings, low-performing schools will be identified for a support and improvement process. Maryland's ESSA plan commits to the continued use of Common Core State Standards and the NEXT Generation Science Standards, as well as the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) assessment as its statewide math and English Language Arts assessment.
- In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly passed HB 978, the Protect Our Schools Act, and overrode Governor Hogan's veto to guide Maryland's implementation of ESSA. The Protect Our Schools Act defends local school board authority from an overreaching State Board of Education as the state plan is implemented. It ensures school ratings will rely on 65% academic indicators based on state test scores, graduation rates, and English-language learner proficiency and 35% school quality indicators, such as school climate, student attendance, and access to a well-rounded curriculum. This is the most balanced split between test and non-testing indicators in the country. It also prohibits the State Board of Education from privatizing schools during the support and improvement process for low-performing schools.
- The Maryland plan assigns a percentile ranking to each school, as required by the Protect Our School Act, but also ranks each school on a 1–5-star rating scale. MSEA opposes this because it is incredibly damaging to schools and school communities to label their schools as failing.

19. MSEA supports a state plan as envisioned by the Protect Our Schools Act that uses all required school quality indicators, limits the over-reliance on standardized testing, takes a holistic approach to evaluating schools rather than a labeling system, and prioritizes local autonomy in creating and implementing any interventions for low-performing schools. Do you support or oppose MSEA's priorities regarding ESSA implementation?

_____ Support
_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

20. Traditionally, performance-based assessments have measured students' ability to apply the skills and knowledge learned from units of study. Should Maryland seek innovative performance-based assessments rather standardized assessments?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Additional Comments:

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Background Points

- MSEA supports Maryland's current charter school law. It protects high standards, the 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 allow 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 currently has 51 charter schools in four counties and Baltimore City, with the vast majority (32) located in Baltimore City and serving approximately 25,000 students. Because of the strong oversight and assistance provided to charter schools and the vigilance in the review of 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, including creating a 25th school district, lowering standards and accountability, and circumventing certification requirements and collective bargaining rights. Our highly 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.

21. MSEA supports public charter schools that are under the control of local school boards, require making enrollment open to all students, require the hiring of certificated teachers, 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:

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 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 System currently serves approximately 109,000 active members. The teacher system currently pays benefits to about 73,000 retirees. Retirees of the teacher system receive an average monthly benefit of \$2,020.
- 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.
- As a result of the reform actions taken by the legislature over the past few years, the state retirement and pension systems are on a path to reach a 100% funded status by 2039, putting the system back on solid financial ground.
- Some have proposed eliminating employee defined benefit pension systems as a quick fix to reducing state expenditures; however, studies indicate that alternative plans such as a defined contribution or a hybrid-type plans result in severe cuts to employee accrued benefits and have a long-term negative impact on state costs.

22. Do you support or oppose any action to diminish or threaten pension benefits such as converting to a defined-contribution or hybrid-type pension plan for education employees?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

23. 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 scales, 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.

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

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Job 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 education employees violates collective bargaining agreements because such an effort is in essence terminating bargaining unit positions.
- Outsourcing and privatization efforts have threatened teacher and education support professional (ESP) jobs for years. In the last few years, Anne Arundel County has attempted to outsource teaching services for deaf and blind students, Talbot County has discussed privatizing transportation services, and Kent County has attempted to privatize custodial services. There have been multi-county efforts on the Eastern Shore to outsource the hiring of occupational therapists and physical therapists to work in the schools.
- When jobs are outsourced, quality control is diminished, and safety is compromised. Public employees are subject to background checks that private employers often do not require. After privatizing, local school boards lose control over the individuals working in schools and have little ability to provide input on job performance.
- Privatizers often use an argument of cost-savings as a means of winning contracts. The amount is often misleading because they intentionally underestimate first year operating costs. Ultimately, they reduce hours, health care coverage, or just cut jobs. All these steps lead to increase in local unemployment and less money in the community overall.

26. 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:

27. Do you support or oppose the creation of virtual schools that are controlled independently of local school boards of education?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Tax Policy

Background Points

- MSEA supports a revenue structure that will provide a predictable, reliable, progressive, and stable source of sustained funding for 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 supports updating and revising the state income tax structure, broadening the state sales tax to online sales, and targeting corporate tax reform by closing loopholes and tax avoidance schemes.
- 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.

28. Do you support or oppose a balanced approach toward solving budget problems and ensuring adequate resources for funding education such as updating and revising the state income tax structure, broadening the state sales tax, and closing corporate tax loopholes?

_____ Support
_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

29. Please identify whether you support or oppose the following revenue measures:

Increase personal income tax on earnings above \$500,000

_____ Support _____ Oppose

Increase corporate taxes

_____ Support _____ Oppose

Close corporate tax loopholes (combined reporting, throwback rule, etc.)

_____ Support _____ Oppose

Taxing income earned from wealth similarly as income earned from work

_____ Support _____ Oppose

Increase the estate and inheritance tax on millionaires

_____ Support _____ Oppose

Tax recreational marijuana sales, if legalized

_____ Support _____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Living Wage

Background Points

- MSEA has supported 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 \$11.75 per hour and is scheduled to increase on January 1, 2022, to \$12.50 per hour and to \$15.00 per hour starting in 2025.
- Many states have adopted provisions to index their minimum wage so that it keeps pace with the rising cost of living and so the wage does not fall in real value each year.
- Strong policies on living wage ensure dignity in wages to our lowest-wage workers. Living wage policy has the benefits of assisting in lower job turnover, better worker morale, and modest reductions in poverty.

30. Do you support or oppose a proposal for a uniform living wage across the state, indexing it annually to keep pace with the cost of living and apply it to hourly employees in Maryland public schools?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

