2024 ACEA

Allegany County Board of Education

Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE: Max Green

OFFICE SOUGHT: Allegany County Board of Education

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

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: ___ *Max Green* ___ DATE SUBMITTED: 06/19/2024

*Candidates: 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 clearly indicate the questions(s) to which you refer. **Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to** ACEA.*

Education Funding

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 Board of Education will have a significant impact on implementation of the Blueprint, including future funding and success of Allegany County schools. The Blueprint is landmark legislation, but there is a continued need for investment in Allegany County 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 how the county can address the unmet needs facing our schools. Detail how you would prioritize available state and county resources in your budget deliberations.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is critical to addressing years of divestment in public education and addressing disparities in key areas among localities, such as educator pay and diversity, early childhood services, per pupil funding, and accountability. My experience as graduate of Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS), my work experiences in community mental health and as a professional staff member in the U.S. Senate, and exposure to classroom teaching through my wife's 8 years of work as a classroom teacher in Baltimore City Public Schools, have given me a unique vantage point regarding the issues impacting ACPS, Maryland, and our country. In general, my conclusion is that increased spending on education leads to better student outcomes, especially when focused on evidence-based interventions such as high-quality early childhood education, quality teachers, and exposure to rigorous curriculum – and data supports this. In short, I would prioritize these efforts above other spending, such as

administration/overhead and non-critical capital investments, and encourage Board Members, the Superintendent, and other Blueprint staff to balance system-level feedback with best practices and lessons learned from other LEAs and research to ensure the ACPS implementation plan is the best possible plan for students, teachers, and our community. I expand on some more specific examples and risks that we face below, which I hope will provide additional context on my thoughts and priorities.

One major issue we face is more general and community centric: Much of the public discourse and even public comments from our local elected officials (Allegany County Commissioners, Sen. McKay, and Del. Buckel) related to the Blueprint have focused on the burden that this will put on local government and taxpayers; not the tremendous return on investment a well-executed implementation plan, spearheaded by a competent, collaborative, and engaged Board of Education and competent central office staff, can result in. In some cases, this speaks to an ideological divide in perspectives on education funding and priorities or even an inability to consider the longer-term returns that we will see in our students and communities. More broadly, and importantly, it evidences a lack of understanding and awareness of the goals of the Blueprint, which falls primarily on the Board of Education and Superintendent. Evangelizing and socializing the return on investment and what this will mean for students, families, and educators is critical to successful implementation – just as much as funding. Moreover, this lack of socialization fails to engage teachers, administrators, and the larger community in this implementation. Despite the lack of meaningful public engagement around the Blueprint, I do believe that the current ACPS Board of Education has taken the Blueprint seriously and made progress in some areas regarding their plan, but more work remains.

Reviewing the [May 2024 Blueprint Implementation Plan](#), the County's response focused on system goals related to eliminating academic achievement gaps between students with and without disabilities and between economically disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers. These goals align with my perspective and evidence, underscoring that equity – equal access to core academic services – is critical. The root causes that ACPS points to (lack of planning time; disparities in teacher's training and expertise in meeting diverse student needs; lack of targeted support for students experiencing difficulties; and a lack of consistent and effective user of professional learning) are not surprising and, in many cases, evidence root causes that should have been identified and addressed long before the Blueprint's implementation. In some cases, it can be argued that addressing these root causes is less about funding and more about proper planning and prioritization. They also lay bare some of the reasons ACPS has had difficulty attracting qualified candidates in recent years.

For example, there is a stark contrast between how districts/LEAs like Baltimore City structure professional development (PD), achievement units (AUs), and associated raises. The ACTA agreement only provides salary increases for COLAs, longevity, and credit hours (generally, those credit hours that result in a degree). While I lack insight into ACPS/ACTAs agreements on PD structure, I do see that Baltimore and other LEAs

make concentrated efforts to (1) incentivize professional development through tying it to a raise structure and (2) encourages teachers, paraeducators, social workers, administration, psychologists, and guidance counselors to become experts in their areas and leverage that expertise to develop staff-led professional development for their colleagues and peers. Regrettably, the implementation plan fails to outline the specific nature of proposed professional development improvements.

Another example is my personal experience with ACPS leadership and school board engagement in committees and advisory councils. In the May 2024 Implementation Plan, ACPS outlines how they communicate and solicit feedback and, in many ways, it fails to accurately reflect the realities of teacher, student, and community engagement. Personally, I have served on the Local Advisory Council for Career and Technical Education *(which the plan refers to as "Local Advisory Council for Higher Education and Career/Technical Education on page 4)* for the last year. I have attended all meetings except the May 2024 occurrence and not a single elected Board member nor ACPS leadership team member, including the superintendent, has attended these meetings. I have even specifically asked the general body why no one has attended, despite the expectation existing in our by-laws and the requirement for us to report lack of attendance to partners. The goal of this LAC is to develop and continuously improve the CTE programs offered in schools to ensure that they align with the needs and expectations of the business community, support state and local economic priorities, and utilize community resources to foster student achievement. Given the lack of meaningful engagement with ACPS leadership and elected members, it is difficult to attain these goals and effectively show community stakeholders that their participation and feedback is valuable. Further, despite being mentioned in this implementation plan, the LAC general body has not been contacted regarding our feedback on CTE program alignment with the Blueprint implementation plan – and I doubt this is the only instance of the prescribed feedback loops being non-existent or fundamentally flawed.

In summary, I believe that prioritization and funding is only one piece of this puzzle and will always drive some level of enhanced student achievement, but unless we address the real root causes of these issues – lack of meaningful engagement with staff; incongruence between public policies and real-life execution; and a lack of robust student support services/wraparound services through schools – we will not maximize the historic investment that the Blueprint represents.

2. There is considerable room for improvement in addressing educator recruitment and retention. Class sizes have increased because of cost-cutting measures and/or due to 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 additional educators to provide more individualized attention to students. How will you address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention?

As mentioned in my Blueprint response, I believe ACPS falls short in educator recruitment and retention, specifically as it relates to pay and benefits, planning time, professional development, providing adequate student support services, and ensuring teachers are empowered and listened to – whether in classroom management and discipline or policy creation, implementation, and iteration. In some cases, additional funding will help, but in other cases, outdated approaches to policy and teacher engagement must change dramatically. Broadly, I think about this in four critical, related areas: teacher empowerment; salary/benefits and teacher support; classroom management improvements; and professional development.

First and foremost, we must empower our teachers and strengthen the relationship between the teachers' union and the Board. A first step to achieve this goal is scheduling quarterly listening sessions/town halls with union members, ACPS leadership, and the Board. These sessions should be as accessible and convenient to teachers as possible. Further, they could work in conjunction with opt-in, anonymous surveys of teachers on areas including classroom management, planning time, professional development, student support, and other key areas. Eliminating fears of reciprocity and encouraging the most open and honest feedback from educators is paramount in empowering them. This would also provide the Board and leadership the opportunity to have direct conversations about these issues, develop action items, and realistically set expectations on what is achievable. This would develop a discourse where the union and the Board understand the issues facing all stakeholders and encourage compromise, iterative improvement, and consensus around major policies and issues, such as the Blueprint implementation plan. More generally, I will advocate for enriching teacher feedback to ensure we have a realistic and direct view into the challenges they face and overcome them together.

Second, we must reimagine salary structures, merit increases, and other paths for teachers to increase their earning potential. We must also consider the broader range of experiences and support services that drive teacher burnout and how we can address them. Put simply, if other localities are [paying qualified teachers $10-30k more](#), provide better professional development, and provide better student support services, we will continue to struggle to attract and retain teachers. Professional development should be central to these improvements in salary structure, which I will expand on later in this response. In terms of student supports that improve teacher and student outcomes, we must ensure that we leverage Blueprint plans and funding and existing school resources to better support teachers and their students with IEPs, 504 plans, and behavior intervention plans. This may include more paraprofessionals and other

resources to support changes in scheduling, materials, instruction, and how students demonstrate knowledge. In terms of services, we must ensure that students have equitable access to resources, services, and supplementary aides including school health services, counseling, screening, assistive technology, and adapted tools and materials. This is a huge undertaking, but much work can be done to conduct a gap analysis based on observations, parent feedback and other tools to update the root cause analysis in the May 2024 Implementation Plan with more accurate and actionable data – and identify solutions and mitigations.

Third, classroom management must improve. As you all know, the pandemic only exacerbated behavioral issues. The ACTA agreement for 2022-2026 covers some elements of classroom discipline, but I believe there is significant room for improvement. Many other LEAs in the state and across the country have comprehensive student codes of conduct and disciplinary response policies that are revised each year, with feedback sessions that engage district staff, students, teachers, community, families, and administrators. These are typically scheduled toward the end of the academic year, which are facilitated by the Board and provide direct feedback to a committee responsible for updating and overseeing the policy. Not only do they provide these broader feedback opportunities, but they also have policies that are simple to understand. In contrast, I have not seen any level of stakeholder engagement in updating discipline policies and codes of conduct in ACPS. In fact, some policies have not been updated since 1993, with no evidence of regular review or recertification by the elected Board. Further, policies are not readily accessible and incredibly difficult to navigate (example: J-Students policies). The ACPS Local Code of Discipline and included matrix evidence these deficiencies – they are not built for students, teachers, or families as the primary audience. In some cases, using plain language, building quick cards or other reference guides, and providing regular refresher courses to teachers and administrators are sufficient to bridge this gap. Policy is only one part of this problem. More importantly, we must ensure access to the supports and services mentioned previously that can assess and identify behavioral issues and properly address them.

Fourth, I would advocate for new, innovative approaches for professional development that are more valuable to educators. As mentioned previously, witnessing the success of such approaches in other LEAs has drastically changed my view of the role and value of PDs and ways that LEAs can incentivize useful, impactful professional development outside of core content areas, such as classroom management, behavioral interventions, culture and climate, building relationships with students and parents, data-driven instruction, instructional innovation, and others. They also reiterate the importance of tuition reimbursement programs and proactively supporting educators in learning about and seeking public student loan forgiveness programs, especially with the rising cost of education. In the case of instructional innovation, I want to take a moment to talk about generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) and how it will be critical moving forward. I work in information technology in the U.S. Senate

and have a keen understanding of the impacts that AI will have on our society and education. Despite the many risks and harms that it poses, just as social media, I believe that it has the capacity to do more good than harm. I have personally leveraged AI to help create classroom resources (e.g., early finisher activities, discussion questions, etc.) that align with U.S. Common Core and other national and state standards for teacher resource platforms. [Research from Stanford](#) and other entities also underscores AI's potential for enhancing personalized support for teachers at scale (student simulation, real time feedback and suggestions, post-teaching feedback, etc.), drive student creativity and ambition over mastery of proficiency, support learners' self-confidence, and improving learning and assessment quality. Even at a more basic level, AI can help to automate and improve repetitive, manual tasks and draft scalable, personalized communications with parents. As this technology evolves, I believe that Allegany County can distinguish itself as a center of innovation for 21st century education and improve student achievement and outcomes while doing so.

Public Funding for Private Schools

3. As a Board member, are you in favor of allocating public funding to home and privately schooled students?

_____ Support   X   **Oppose**

Additional Comments:

ACEA's perspective is more than a belief – it is a fact supported by volumes of research. The Economic Policy Institute and other think-tanks and non-profits are clear: school vouchers are a failed policy. Florida's program, among the largest in the nation, has created a crisis where school systems now face the possibility of public schools closing. More importantly, data shows that these programs disproportionately benefit wealthy families and leave many children behind.

Evaluations and Less Testing, More Learning

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

X   **Support**   _____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Local autonomy is key to successfully implementing state and federal mandates. This flexibility ensures that classroom instruction and testing accommodate all students, are culturally responsive, and adaptive to the unique needs of schools and LEAs. This policy implementation strategy does not lessen the importance of state and national standards for student achievement and instruction nor rigorous and relevant professional development and accreditation/certification requirements. It simply helps to ensure these standards are adaptable and achievable. In cases where policies overstep and eliminate this autonomy, I will be the first to speak up and advocate for our students and teachers.

5. 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   **X**   **Oppose**

Additional Comments:

My exposure to educator evaluations through my wife's years of work in the Baltimore City Public Schools System and my conversations with local educators underscore the importance of mutually agreed upon, statutorily compliant evaluation models and the role of LEAs in fighting back against one-size-fits-all models, which are unrealistic. Further, it is critical that all details of evaluations and expectations are clearly communicated by the Board, ACPS, administrators, and team leads. It is also critical that teachers are empowered to stand-up for themselves and have allies when these evaluation models are ill-conceived or improperly administered at the school level. Their should also be continuous feedback and iterative improvement of these and other evaluation models at the student, school, or district levels.

6. As an elected Board of Education member, how will you work with ACPS, ACEA to implement the Less Testing, More Learning Act?

X   **Support**   _____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

I have been an advocate for the Less Testing, More Learning Act since it was first discussed at the state level and have observed its success in other states. My experiences as a student prior to the Act's ratification and my wife's experiences as a teacher have furthered my understanding and support of this model. I still think we have too much standardized testing in Maryland and we need to do more assessments to address those. As an elected member, I would advocate for the Act and similar policy initiatives and always ensure robust student, teacher, and community feedback in balance evidence-based assessments. Broadly, I see three general benefits of standardized testing that most can agree on, all of which carry downsides: curriculum support, accountability, and, in the most minimal since, standardization, or at least clear minimum expectations for student outcomes. Teachers tend to have more pre-made, compliant curriculum for use, which can reduce planning and other work, but that material is generally not culturally responsive nor accommodating or adapted for the range of students that teachers instruct. It provides accountability in an evaluation perspective for individual teachers, school, and LEAs, but that accountability can be misguided or fail to tell the full story of student outcomes and experiences and teacher quality. On standardization, I believe there is a role for some level of LEA, state, or federal minimum standards, but those quickly overreach leading to the adaptability issues previously mentioned.

Collective Bargaining

Background Points

- ACEA 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.

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7. Do you support or oppose public education employees' rights to bargain collectively?

X   Support   _____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

My wife is a proud Baltimore Teachers Union (American Federation of Teachers Local 340) member (remote/currently on extended leave). Many of my family members are current or former union members – my brother-in-law and sister-in-law were also teachers in Allegany County and members of ACEA. In my previous work with the Democratic Party at the local and state level, I worked with previous MSEA staff such as Evan West and the late John Reuschlein, who also taught my sister and I at points at Northeast Elementary, closely. I understand the importance of collective bargaining and labor unions. More importantly, I have a consistent track record of supporting and publicly advocating for public education employees' rights to bargain collectively, studied collective bargaining extensively in my undergrad and graduate degrees, and am proudly pro-union. I have also supported unionization for federal legislative branch employees where I currently work.

8. How familiar are you with the ACEA contracts?

X   Familiar   _____ Unfamiliar

Additional Comments:

I studied local examples of union contracts while in college, have extensive coursework in labor relations and collective bargaining, and have always kept up on ACEA and other education union contracts across the state. I've also had exposure to related legislation and national policies during my time working in the U.S. Senate. In planning to run for office and as I complete this questionnaire, I continue to carefully review these contracts. I have also spoken to many current and former teachers and

former elected Board members about them and collective bargaining in the county, more generally.

9. What changes, if any, would you like to see? And how would you honor the negotiated agreement, especially in tight fiscal times?

In general, I am going to support any enhancements to the agreement and ACPS policies that drive teacher recruitment and retention, as I believe qualified, supported teachers are the most critical piece of addressing achievement gaps and overall student success. I will always advocate for pay, benefits, and accommodations that further this goal, even in tight fiscal times. As mentioned at various points in this questionnaire, I think there is significant room for improvement in the influence and protections and benefits afforded by ACEA agreement. Several of the changes I'd like to see are related to the application of the contract and empowerment of teachers or Board policies and are far simpler to implement.

First, the Blueprint Implementation Plan highlights issues with teacher planning time, classroom management/discipline, and achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged students and their non-economically disadvantaged peers as well as disabled students and their non-disabled peers. Planning time seems to be robust based on the contact, so hearing these issues identified could mean that administrators are not enforcing the contract as negotiated at the school level and teachers are potentially unwilling to file grievances related to these breaches of contract. Similarly, classroom discipline and associated policies, whether in the ACEA agreement *or* existing policies need revisited to ensure simplification, understanding, and equitable enforcement. As mentioned previously, this process and associated policies should begin with targeted feedback from teachers, families, students, and all other stakeholders. Smaller accommodations, such as meaningfully incorporating educator feedback on academic schedules can help to ensure that we maximize both professional development and time off for teachers during the school year. The achievement gaps discussed may also related to existing policy more so than the ACEA agreement. Specifically, we lack the supports, services, staff, and interventions to help teachers overcome these gaps. Of course, all of these issues are interconnected and an evidence-based, teacher-informed approach to any one issue can benefit others, including educator recruitment and retention. I have many more ideas related to the contract, but want to speak to teachers during my campaign to ensure that they are valid and represent the full scope of concerns that they have.

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.

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10. How will you address increased needs for mental health support for students and educators in the wake of the pandemic?

We cannot afford to ignore or improperly [address the national emergency in child and adolescent mental health that our country is facing](). Above all else, I believe in evidence-based policies and interventions to this crisis. This requires a monumental reimaging of the services and models of care that we offer to students, especially in areas like ours. While schools play an important role in this crisis, they cannot fix this problem alone. With that said, the school system can implement school-based mental health programs and I will actively fight for this if elected. In fact, there is almost no better setting for universal mental health screening and intervention than our schools. I believe that we do not have to reinvent the wheel on this issue, either. Many school-based programs already exist and are included in the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's guide (https://pg.casel.org/review-programs/). We also need professional development and training that can enhance teachers' and counselors' ability to identify and respond to students who need mental health and behavioral support. We should also leverage virtual care in our community to overcome any local mental health resource deficiencies and ensure students have access to telehealth services and supporting technology wherever possible. We should also consider new service models that focus on integrated youth service hubs, in collaboration with community partners, to ensure that we can triage, assess, and treat the totality of health and safety issues that our students face. This would also go a long way in freeing up time and energy for teachers to teach. Put simply, we expect too much from our educators and continuously fail to provide students (and teachers) the services and supports that they need to succeed. Our inability to provide wraparound services (mental health, food pantries, social services, etc.) in schools most often means that students simply do not receive them. If they do, it is often because an educator or school staff member see this gap and does everything in their power to try

to help that student, but they cannot help every student and still be successful in managing their classrooms, preparing all students to be successful, and completing the myriad of other responsibilities that we push onto them. Below, I expand on this response further in the context of my own personal experiences.

I want to take a moment to talk about my personal experience growing up and going to school in Allegany County because I feel it is something too many students experience today. It also speaks to the issues that students were already facing before the pandemic and larger economic crises exacerbated these issues. I was primarily raised by my grandmother growing up. My parents were never married and separated in my teenage years. My home life was dysfunctional, and my siblings and I all suffered the effects of those experiences and trauma. We relied on public programs such as food stamps and energy assistance to try to make ends meet. When I was very young until I was in middle school, I suffered from a speech impediment and if not for speech therapy services through ACPS and my love of reading and learning, I may have had a very different path. I received free and reduced lunch every year I was in school, which was critical to providing my sister and I some level of food security. My family struggled to cover necessities like utilities, clothing, and school supplies. I started working at 14 to mitigate these issues. I received financial assistance to cover my SAT and AP tests. I was always the student to miss out on paid field trips and other experiences. Moreover, I regularly felt the divide between myself and non-economically disadvantaged peers. If not for a few teachers and school staff (Katherine Loughrie, Mary Jane O'Rourke, and Laura Holland, to name a few), my life may be very different than what is today. Those teachers believed in me, cared about my success, and did everything in their power to support me. In retrospect, especially in discussing my family and friends' experiences as teachers, I do not know how these incredible individuals found the time and energy to have this impact in my life, but I am eternally grateful that they did. In contrast, I also encountered teachers who failed to understand how my home life impacted my academics and school life, likely because they saw that I was making good grades, involved in extracurricular activities, took AP courses, was in gifted and talented programs, was in the "1800 Club", and other unreliable markers of a non-economically disadvantaged student with a "normal" family and homelife. They failed to understand why I needed to work 20+ hours a week or why I sometimes struggled to meet deadlines on assignments. Then, and even now, I find myself thinking about how those educators viewed other economically disadvantaged students who were not as involved or academically successful – whether they understood the stress, trauma, and mental health challenges that these students faced or were willing to help. This continuous experience, from kindergarten through graduation, shapes students' perceptions about educators and our education system. It also isolates them and, in so many ways, traps them in generational poverty or leaves them unable to achieve academic success.

In the example of Katherine Loughrie, she not only served as a major mentor in the classroom, student government, and mock trial during my years at Fort Hill, but also

helped to ensure that I was able to attend college. Like many other first generation college students who lack stability and guidance in their home lives, the possibility of attending college, no matter your level of academic achievement, can seem impossible. Lack of support and guidance to apply for financial aid and submit applications, fear about the financial burden of moving away and paying for school, a lack of confidence and sense of belonging in higher education, where it is difficult to identify peers who look like them or have their lived experience, and mental health challenges can all contribute to this experience. Mrs. Loughrie's guidance and assistance were critical to my success in high school, my growth as an individual, and my ability to attend college. None of this should have been her job. I should have had academic support services through my counselors and other staff. I would have benefited from mental health screening and services and from wraparound social services.

I was lucky to receive financial aid and several academic scholarships to attend and graduate from Frostburg State University with less than $10,000 of debt, which was still a substantial burden for myself and my wife. We lived and worked together throughout college to make ends meet. I was lucky to apply for and be awarded a scholarship and internship in the U.S. Senate through the J. Glenn Beall Institute for Public Affairs at FSU, where I now serve on the board of directors. That experience led to the job that I now have. After undergraduate, I also spent nearly 3 years working in community mental health in Allegany County and across the state as a psychiatric rehabilitation program coordinator. In this role, I worked directly with at-risk adolescents and adults in Allegany County suffering from mental health issues and living in poverty. In many instances, my caseload included whole family - siblings and parents. This experience gave me firsthand knowledge and experience about the challenges our students face. I personally attended IEP and other meetings to assist with advocating for students and families and was often stunned at the lack of supports and services, empathy, proactive education for parents and families about these programs, and accommodations that I witnessed in Allegany County.

In short, I have personally lived the experience that some of our students face and, in many cases, I also had a level of privilege – whether due to having at least one parental figure that cared about me; my race; my perceived socio-economic class; or my academic aptitude – that many more students do not have in our county, state, or country. Until we provide services that address these systemic inequities and the reality of this crisis, we will continue to fail students, families, and educators.

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?

As an information technology professional, I have unique insight and perspective on the digital divide and what can be done to eliminate it. Broadly, there are three areas that we must continue to focus on:

1. Ensuring access to technology resources to students and teachers;
2. Developing students' technology proficiency and skills to prepare them for the modern workforce and increasingly digital nature of our society; and
3. Implementing and training teachers on technology that will improve student outcomes and lead to more efficient and effective work.

Ensuring Access: Affordable, high-speed internet in homes remains a critical, unmet need for many families. With federal programs expiring earlier this year, localities that have still not made strides in this area are now left on their own. I understand the school system had at least some personal hot spots available for students during and after the pandemic, but I have not seen public statistics on usage or the success of this program. Moreover, I believe local government must do everything possible to eliminate monopolies on local broadband access and bring down costs for families. While the BoE does not have jurisdiction in this area, data from the school system on Internet access should be collected and shared with the County Commissioners, city governments, and state government. Regarding access to computers, my understanding is that the school system has provided some students access to laptops to support remote learning during and after the pandemic. Regrettably, it is also seems that this has become a huge financial burden for some students who have lost or broken this equipment given to them by the schools. If students do not pay the associate fees, they do not receive equipment in the next school year, which just furthers that divide. I believe that a switch to laptops for classrooms may be a better, more reliable system, but still think we need to leverage local resources for students who do not have computers at home. Generally, I am not aware of specific policies for teachers being provided equipment (e.g. laptops) outside of the classroom, so I am unable to make comments on the current program, but I do believe that grading, lesson planning, and other demands mean that teachers must be provided the option for a school system-issued laptop and, where appropriate, personal hotspots. Moreover, I believe that teachers need access to better technologies to help them in their classroom. As previously mentioned, I would advocate for programs that provide teachers access to AI and other resources that can assist them with their workloads.

Developing Technology Proficiencies: With the exception of P-TECH programs, most students are not taught the skills needed to excel in the modern workplace. While word processing and online research are taught to students, students generally have limited exposure to other technologies, such as spreadsheets, data visualization, basic photo editing, digital presentations (e.g. PowerPoints) and artificial intelligence, to name a few. Some school systems have addressed this gap through incorporating these and other technologies as early as primary school across subject areas, while others have developed courses specific to these technologies. Regardless of the approach, it is paramount that the school system encourage these technologies being used in

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curricula and empower teachers to do so through professional development and access. Increasingly important, as well, is teaching children about responsible technology usage, whether in regard to social media and mental health, how to interact with others and remain safe online, or how to identify fake information or media made by artificial intelligence.

Training Teachers: As reiterated throughout this questionnaire, one of the most important elements of student success is well-equipped, qualified teachers who are at the cutting edge of pedagogy, technology, classroom management, and the other skills required in their roles. Technology is key to this – whether enabling teachers to work more efficiently by leveraging technology or giving them the tools, equipment, and resources to use technology effectively in the classroom and, in turn, teaching students to use technology proficiently and responsibly. I believe this is an often overlooked area of professional development and there is a specific role for the Board and central office staff to play in moving this forward.

Racial and Social Justice

Background Points

- ACEA unequivocally believe that our diversity makes us stronger. We fundamentally believe that schools should be safe, 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

12. ACEA 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?

_X_ **Support** _____Oppose

Additional Comments:

I agree with the facts and perspectives in the racial and social justice section background. I recall an experience in my senior year of high school when I was tasked as the student executive director of the U.S. Department of Justice S.P.I.R.I.T. Program for ACPS at Fort Hill. This U.S. DoJ initiative was implemented following a series of racist incidents at Fort Hill, including students flying the Confederate flags on their trucks and in the school on clothing and racial epitaphs being used on the football field. As a trained peer mediator carrying out this program, I recall facilitating a conversation between a local Rabbi and a student I had known since middle school. During this discussion, the student lifted his shirt and exposed a Nazi swastika tattoo, arguing that it wasn't a symbol of hate. While an extreme example, this underscores the failure of our school system to teach the truth about our nation's history and the world. My experiences and education in Allegany County lacked diverse perspectives and exposure to the cultures, people, and experiences that are the very fabric of our nation and democracy. My independent studies, my decade in Baltimore City, and exposure to my wife's work in Teach for America, her graduate degree, and career in teaching in Baltimore City were critical to exposing these failings and have made me a better person. On a similar note, I do not support book bans or other actions that seek to limit student's exposure to diverse perspectives and those things that are not always taught in our classrooms. Such bans rob our children of the truth, the critical thinking skills that they need to face the almost insurmountable global and local economic, climate, and societal issues that they must overcome, and a sense of belonging, security, and value during a critical period in their development.

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

Equitable access to opportunities, resources, and supports is non-negotiable. Regardless of race, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or any other deeply personal and important characteristic, all people deserve equitable access, safety, and to feel that they belong, whether in our schools, our country, or the broader world. I am deeply troubled by the rise of anti-LGBTQ laws and policies in our education system and the country at large, just as I am by systemic racism that has persisted since our nation's founding. I believe that every student has a right to a safe and inclusive classroom and that political and social pressures should not supersede that right. Broadly, I will advocate for gap analysis to identify where curriculum, supports, services, or policies are disproportionately impacting the academic success of all students, with a focus on identifying correlations related to discrimination. Further, I believe that the broader approach to mental health services outlined in my prior response will provide critical services to all students, including those dealing with issues related to discrimination, bullying, or other issues due to personal identity. I will also support policies that respect children's and family's personal decisions outside of the classroom regarding sexuality and gender identity. Examples would include building student and teacher relationships to ensure that students pronouns and nicknames are equally

respected for all students. I will also support policies that result in culturally responsive curricula; more positive relationships being built between students and teachers; clear expectations on mutual respect, responsibility, and accountability; appropriate discipline action for students using language or committing acts that promote hate or threaten the safety of other students; celebrate diversity and inclusion; and address bias and stereotypes.

Community Schools

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, In 2022, 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).

- ACEA supports the establishment of community schools. We recognize that community schools can be transformative if done right—that is if they involve the community in a meaningful and ongoing way and are more than wrap-around services at a school.

- 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 obstacles 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.

- ACEA supports equitable and adequate resources to provide every student with an opportunity to learn in a safe and non-disruptive environment. Establishing and funding community schools is a research-based strategy for closing opportunity gaps and building strong communities.

9. Do you support or oppose local efforts to create and support community schools in areas of concentrated poverty? Do you support the transformative model of community schools or the wrap-around service model of community schools?

_X_   Support   ____   Oppose

Additional Comments:

I've personally witnessed the success and incredible impact of community schools as a community organizer/neighborhood association leader, elected official, and husband of a teacher at a community school. When my former neighborhood's school was renovated and expanded as part of the 21st Century Schools program and shifted to a more transformative community school model. The neighborhood association worked with city schools to identify upgrades to the surrounding infrastructure, we worked closely with the principal to develop community events, we hosted community meetings there, we had a food pantry, social services providers were always engaged and available for students, bi-lingual and international students had the services that they needed to succeed, and we had a deep, meaningful since of community and pride in the success of our school and students. I've personally not heard the distinction between "transformative" and "wrap-around services" model of community schools, but based on the context of the question, I support the transformative model that goes beyond wraparound services and builds our larger community with it.

Parental Involvement and Public Support

Background Points

- It is calculated that school age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school.

- Research shows that the most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parental involvement in schools and parental expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school.

- Additionally, research indicates there are three major factors that influence parental involvement in schools:

  o Parents' belief that they can impact what is important, necessary on behalf of their children school.

  o The extent to which parents believe that they can have a positive influence on their children's education; and

  o Parents' perceptions that their children and school want them to be involved.

14. As a Board member, what would you do to ensure that parents and families from all faiths and no matter where they're from are welcomed and supported in our schools?

Board members have a responsibility to ensure that policies that make students and families feel unwelcome or unsafe do not exist in our schools. Specifically, this means ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or other characteristics, are provided equal access to a high-quality education through culturally responsive curricula, diverse staff, diverse student populations, and accommodations or other resources to address deficiencies in these areas. This can only be achieved through a holistic approach that incorporates policies, professional development, and the coordination of resources in schools and in the larger community. Specific examples of policies, programs, and interventions that I would support if elected include ensuring teachers and parents have open lines of communication, that language on school forms and other communications are inclusive, that student's name are pronounced correctly, that student work that showcases both diversity and commonalities is displayed, diverse library and curricula resources (e.g., books, research sources, multimedia content), appropriate accommodations and resources, for ESL/bilingual learners, among others. While I could go on at great length about a variety of these policies, I want to instead reiterate that what matters most is the relationship between teachers, their students, and their students' families. Teachers must be taught how to build meaningful relationships with their students and students' families and provided the time and resources to maintain them. This requires that school leaders set the tone

of these interactions and the school, overall, to inspire participation, put family engagement at the forefront of policies and programming, and partner with the larger community, ideally in a community school model. Additionally, we must empower teachers to identify when these relationships need work and ensure that school counselors and other staff are ready and available to jump in and facilitate social-emotional learning. Another specific example that I want to mention is the importance of keeping religion, outside of academic study, out of the classroom. Examples of policies that fail to meet this standard, which I would oppose, include the push by some local board of education to require the Ten Commandments or other materials that give the appearance of placing a faith or specific religious beliefs above others in classrooms.

Privatization

15. As a Board member, are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

_____ Support   _X_   Oppose

Additional Comments:

As mentioned previously, I strongly believe in the community school model. A key tenant of that model is ensuring that students are surrounded by the highest quality staff in every element of their school day – from the classroom and cafeteria to the school bus and special education services. My belief is that privatization does not lead to attracting the highest quality staff. Instead, it tends to result in unfocused, undervalued staff who struggle to make ends meet and, thereby, lack the capacity to interact with and support students in the ways that they need and deserve. Additionally, and even more important, is the safety of students, which is undermined by potentially hiring staff who are unqualified or have not had a complete background check.

Essay Question

What are the top three things you would like to accomplish in the next four years if you are elected to the Board?

While I've covered a number of important and diverse topics in this questionnaire, there are three goals that I would have over the next four years if elected to the Board of Education: (1) implementing a community school pilot program with enhanced wraparound services; (2) working with teachers and ACPS leadership to revamp professional development; and (3) ensuring that ACPS successfully implements the Blueprint in these initial years so that we have a forward-looking and progressive foundation for continued success so that these critical investments are not wasted.

First, it is critical that Allegany County is not left behind the rest of the state – or country – in building modern, full-service community schools. Luckily, we do not have to reinvent the wheel to make this a reality. Through leveraging the work of MSEA's Office of Community School and Expanded Learning Time and the lessons learned by other localities across the state, I believe Allegany County can implement its first community school with wraparound services, whether elementary, middle, or high school, within the next four years. Moreover, these schools are a key focus of the Blueprint through the Concentration of Poverty Grant program. While Allegany County schools have received these grant funds since 2020, state audits show that 10-12% of funds for personnel grants were unused in 2021 and 2022, while 35% of per-pupil grant funds ($244,319) was unused in 2022 alone. Further, I have seen no independent data from ACPS on the success of these programs, nor any news articles or press releases related to any community schools in the county. My outside perspective is that these programs are not being implemented effectively and that a formalized pilot program that more effectively leverages these grants, incorporates feedback from families, community members, and stakeholders responsible for wraparound services, and focuses on iterative, incremental improvement and the long-term sustainability of the school and model is necessary. Once this model is established, it would enable us to more effectively leverage grant funding and implement community schools throughout the county at a rate that is sustainable and based on community engagement.

Second, as mentioned extensively in this questionnaire, ACPS is far behind many other LEAs in the state in the effectiveness of professional development. For example, there is a stark contrast between how districts/LEAs like Baltimore City structure professional development (PD), achievement units (AUs), and associated raises. The ACTA agreement only provides salary increases for COLAs, longevity, and credit hours (generally, those credit hours that result in a degree). While I lack insight into ACPS/ACTAs agreements on PD structure, I do see that Baltimore and other LEAs make concentrated efforts to (1) incentivize professional development through tying it to a

raise structure and (2) encourages teachers, paraeducators, social workers, administration, psychologists, and guidance counselors to become experts in their areas and leverage that expertise to develop staff-led professional development for their colleagues and peers. We must reimagine salary structures, merit increases, and other paths for teachers to increase their earning potential. Professional development should be central to these improvements in salary structure. I would advocate for new, innovative approaches for professional development that are more valuable to educators. As mentioned previously, witnessing the success of such approaches in other LEAs has drastically changed my view of the role and value of PDs and ways that LEAs can incentivize useful, impactful professional development outside of core content areas, such as classroom management, behavioral interventions, culture and climate, building relationships with students and parents, data-driven instruction, instructional innovation, and others. They also reiterate the importance of tuition reimbursement programs and proactively supporting educators in learning about and seeking public student loan forgiveness programs, especially with the rising cost of education.

Finally, as mentioned throughout my Blueprint-specific responses and other areas of this questionnaire, ensuring that ACPS successfully implements the Blueprint in these initial years so that we have a forward-looking and progressive foundation for continued success so that these critical investments are not wasted will be a key focus of my time on the Board of Education. I want to reiterate that I believe our current implementation plan is flawed in so far as it lacks meaningful feedback from students and families, fails to provide supporting data on a variety of existing programs, and inaccurately characterizes the reality of student, teacher, administrator, parent, and staff experiences in our schools. My personal experience serving on the Local Advisory Board for Career and Technical Education underscores this reality, having seen no engagement from ACPS leadership or elected Board members, despite the Blueprint plan making it seem like this board and other stakeholders have an active and meaningful role in policy and curriculum development. The mismanagement of these implementation plans by central office staff set us on a precarious course to ensuring that we meet the lofty goals outlined and maximize the return on investment for students and taxpayers, alike. I have tremendous fear that if the larger community is not engaged and elected Board members do not voice these concerns, the waste and ineffective management that we've seen in Concentration of Poverty Grants and other areas will only be exacerbated.