2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATE: Ashley Emerick CAMPAIGN State Senate District 1

ADDRESS: 18617 Woodlawn Dr. Rawlings, MD 21557 POINT OF CONTACT: Ashley Emerick

PHONE

NUMBER(S):_240-288-9522_____

EMAIL:

ashleyemerickforsenate@gmail.com_____

WEBSITE: www.ashleyemerickforsenate.com The website is currently under construction.

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: Ashley Emerick

DATE SUBMITTED: _____03/08/2026_____

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 MSEA.

1. Please share why you want to run for the Maryland General Assembly.

I'm running for the Maryland General Assembly to protect Western MD residents during my term as senator. I will work with down-state democrats to help them understand our struggles with affordability and lack of jobs. I plan to do everything I can to keep data centers out of our area and protect our water resources. I will work directly with county commissioners and residents to make sure our budgetary needs are met and not cut.

2. Please outline your top three public education priorities, how you will engage educators, and how you would achieve and measure success on each.

1. Prevent Budget Cuts- I will discuss our budgetary needs with my fellow senators and delegates. I'd also vote against any proposed cuts to education.
2. Transportation- I intend to make sure we're hiring qualified bus drivers as quickly as possible and that we are paying them a liveable wage. In order to retain bus drivers, we need to set reasonable expectations for their schedules. If we aren't providing them full-time work, then we need to make sure that they have available working hours for another job. If we are choosing to provide them with full-time work, we need to make sure they are paid accordingly. Many of our students don't have another way to get to school. I intend to make sure that transportation is not a barrier to education in our area.
3. Retaining Teachers- I plan on collecting input from educators across the area for suggestions on how to best accomplish this goal. There is no education without educators. We have outstanding educators in our community and I want them to stay in their positions. I'd like to host meetings with local educators and members of the Board of Education to see how we can work together and meet the needs of the teachers. I'll record educators' needs and see how I can support them by proposing legislation and supporting legislation that benefits them.

3. Please explain how you would work with your state and local education association when faced with potential legislation relating to education issues (i.e., adequate funding, employee rights, special education, teacher certification, curriculum development, union rights, student discipline).

When faced with legislation regarding education issues, I'll reach out directly to the teacher's unions for guidance. I'd also reach out to Board of Education members for their recommendations. I want to work with teachers as much as possible on education issues.

4. Please provide your general and specific thoughts on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Also discuss how you would prioritize state aid for public education (K-12 and community college) when helping to craft the state budget or voting on it.

I like how comprehensive the Blueprint for Maryland's Future program is. Pillar 1 aims to get kids ready for Kindergarten and then Pillar 3 focuses on career readiness. Pillar 3 reminds me of several European models for Secondary Education due to emphasis on choice between entering a trade or pursuing a specific college degree. One of my top priorities when crafting the state budget is education. This program is exactly what I'd like to see implemented for our students. I would point out all of the benefits of this program to my fellow legislators to make sure they also prioritize education in the state budget.

5. With any large piece of legislation like the Blueprint, adjustments and amendments will be needed throughout implementation. Do you commit to work with MSEA when developing any amendment proposals to the Blueprint law?

Yes, I Agree

6. MSEA not only represents certificated teachers, but many other educators in the school buildings. These folks are typically called Education Support Professionals (ESPs) and are made up of nine career categories: Clerical Services, Custodial and Maintenance Services, Food Services, Health and Student Services, Paraeducators, Security Services, Skilled Trades, Technical Services, and Transportation Services.

Too many ESPs need to work second jobs and struggle to provide for their families, buy homes, save for their futures, and afford community or four-year college tuition for their children to learn a trade and plan a career. The looming threats of privatization by school districts, which would import even lower-paid workers from outside areas, risk the stability of schools and communities and further undermine the value of ESPs and their jobs.

ESPs across the state are organizing to build presence, strength, and power in a campaign focused on a bill of rights that defines the issues long nagging these dedicated employees and now threatening not only the recruitment of new employees but the retention of dedicated veteran employees. You can read about the ESP Bill of Rights here.

Do you support the ESP Bill of Rights?

I support it.

Please share policy priorities/initiatives that will help make the ESP Bill of Rights a reality in Maryland:

My policy priorities include access to education and labor rights. As we increase wages in the state, we can introduce the ESP Bill of Rights.

7. How have you and how will you continue to use your position to protect Maryland educators, students, and residents in the face of threats from the federal government, including the recent rollback of rights for immigrants, the LGBTQIA community, and other marginalized communities?

I have been a proud supporter of the local LGBTQIA community by donating and participating in the Cumberland Pride Festival and their related events like Drag Bingo and Proms. I will continue to support these events and other organized events that local LGBTQIA people put on to create support networks for the LGBTQIA community. I have also used Cumberland City Council Meetings to urge the council and community members to withhold support for ICE and to know your rights. I've been encouraging community members to protect their neighbors if we are raided by ICE agents. One of my main priorities is to protect all of our community members from ICE. I will support bills that limit their heinous behavior as much as we possibly can.

8. Mental and behavioral health continue to be a serious issue for students and educators. Research shows that an increase in mental health supports for students results in better academic performance, better attendance, and reduced disciplinary issues. How do you believe we can increase mental health supports for school populations, including educators?

We need to make sure that students are being referred to the school counselors when needed. Those counselors need to refer individuals in the school to mental health counselors when necessary. The school counselor should be following up with those individuals to make sure they are seeking help as advised. We can provide mental health questionnaires to all members of the school population as a way to check on everyone. Ensuring that everyone has access to resources is key here.

9. Safe and affordable housing is necessary for students and educators to succeed. What is your position on affordable housing and how it relates to education?

Safe and affordable housing is necessary for everyone. Students and educators need it to survive.

PRIVATE 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 vast majority of students in Maryland are served by the public schools.

- Private 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 indicate that most 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.

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

I would elect to eliminate funding for private schools . <-

Additional Comments: I agree that we should focus state funding on public education.

11. Do you support requiring any school (public or private) 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?

I support this statement.

Additional Comments: If private schools receive state funding, they should be required to follow state standards.

HEALTHY AND SAFE LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIROMENTS

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.

- 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.

12. How would you use your position in the General Assembly to make a difference in supporting a healthy working and learning environment for educators and students?

I'll use my position to ensure the schools in my district receive proper funding to teach and learn in a safe environment.

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

I support it.

Additional Comments:

RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Background Points

- 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. Unfortunately Maryland is no stranger to the politicized attacks from extremist activists seeking to ban books and deny students access to resources.

- 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.

14. To encourage critical thinking within our classrooms, we believe educators should have professional autonomy on how to implement curriculum to meet the needs of our students. Do you support or oppose this position?

I support it.

Additional Comments:

15. What specific policy goals and objectives will you pursue aimed at addressing racial and social justice?

I intend to ensure equitable housing and education access for all.

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.

- 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 past 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.

16. 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?

    I support it.

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.

17. What reforms to the pension system do you believe could help attract and retain more educators?

    I am open to learning how I can help on this issue. I currently don't have any ideas.

18. Do you support or oppose any action to diminish or threaten pension benefits such as reducing employer contributions or increasing required employee contributions?

Oppose

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.

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

I support it.

20. Please indicate your support or opposition for these proposals to expand collective bargaining rights for educators:

- Making the right to strike for public employees, including educators, legal in Maryland.

  Support

- Giving educators the right to negotiate over class size.

  Support

- Giving employees at 4-year public institutions of higher education the right to collectively bargain.

  Support

- Enacting arbitration reform through binding interest arbitration so state employees have efficient and reliable dispute resolution process when collective bargaining negotiations reach impasse

Support

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 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.

21. 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

Additional Comments: I do not support an increase in taxes. I would revise the income tax structure and/or close corporate tax loopholes.

22. Please discuss how you would update the tax code to promote fairness and equity

I look forward to going over the tax code to find an equitable solution. I have not explored our options, yet. .

23. Please discuss any ideas you have for giving local governments more flexibility in how they can raise revenue to fund services like public schools.

I currently do not have any ideas, but intend to work on it.