2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATE: Seth Funk

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

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Seth N Funk

DATE SUBMITTED: 03/06/2026

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.

   Western Maryland deserves a choice. Our current representation does not fight for the investment and attention that we need. Our roads, utility, and infrastructure need attention. Our schools lack resources given to other areas of the State. There is little opportunity, quality jobs, or job training in the area. I want to make us a powerhouse of the state again, in energy generation and economic production. I want to make our community a place where people can build a family and their children can stay here, with plenty of opportunity.

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

   Blueprint for Maryland was a start. We need more. I want to further increase teacher pay, make sure our students have access to the highest quality of education, and that our classrooms are a reasonable size for better learning outcomes. My top three priorities would be:
   1. Protect public school institutions and funding against calls for privatization.
   2. Expanding programs for teachers to teach in low-income and rural schools for loan forgiveness and education grants in order to fill vacancies
   3. Expand access to trade school and college to offer avenues for students from all backgrounds.
   I support public education fully. I am open to more conversation about the specific needs for the public education system and our educators in order to support them in their essential work.

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).
   Educators and their associations will have first say in any legislation brought before me as for their support, opposition, and amendments. I will do everything in my power to support their needs and protect our public schools. I will work closely with these groups to maintain that relationship.

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.
   A good start that should be expanded. I understand budget issues have threatened some of the more ambitious goals, but I don't think they should be abandoned. The state must generate more revenue to support this plan.

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?

■ Agree
☐ Disagree

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?

   ■ Support
   ☐ Oppose

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

   My wife is a para-educator. I fully support the ESP Bill of Rights. Supporting the teachers union in their collective bargaining, putting in policies for expanded leave, and passing right-to-strike and collective bargaining rights in the state would be key priorities. I would also support expanding tax write-offs for teachers supplies. Again, I am open to further input on what I can do in my position.

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 will do anything in my power to protect LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities. I have worked with groups like the Immigrant Rights Collective and Rapid Response groups in my area in order to protect local immigrants, and I will use my position to support them in this office to the utmost. Solidarity is necessary with the threats that we face.

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?
I would support legislation to increase funding for this purpose and focus on access. All students should have access to quality mental health support in schools.

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?

   I am in support of affordable housing, especially community housing placed in direct control of town council or county governments. This ensures that revenues go to the local residents and there is a level of control over the housing, rather than placed in the hands of private developers.

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?

    ☐ Increase funding for private schools
    ■ Maintain funding at current levels for private schools
    ☐ Decrease funding for private schools
    ☐ Eliminate funding for private schools

Additional Comments: I don't feel educated enough on this subject to speak on this extensively. I would not support increasing funding for private schools. I don't believe that public tax dollars should be spent on private school systems, especially at the expense of public school systems.

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?

    ■ Support
    ☐ Oppose

    Additional Comments:
    If a school receives public funds, it must abide by the same standards as our public schools.

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 support passing legislation that increases training for teachers, continues to fill gaps in teacher shortages, and decreases class sizes. I went to a public college that had a 1-10 teacher to student ratio, and the education experience was amazing. I would support efforts to accomplish this in all public schools.

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

■ Support
☐ Oppose

Additional Comments: I always support better wages, benefits, and protections for workers.

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?

■ Support
☐ Oppose

Additional Comments: If students are never shown opposing viewpoints, how can they learn to critically analyze their own opinions? Everyone is entitled to their beliefs, but refusing to examine alternatives leads to individuals who don't know how to critically examine points for pros and cons.

15. What specific policy goals and objectives will you pursue aimed at addressing racial and social justice? I am not sure of any specific policies that are not implemented, but we must ensure equal opportunity and access to our schools, regardless of racial or economic circumstance.

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?

    ☐ Support
    ■ Oppose

    Additional Comments: I SUPPORT this statement as a minimum acceptance. I would prefer all schools be fully public, not charter schools. I would not support the expansion of charter schools in Maryland. That is my only area of opposition - that I support public schools to the point that I would go beyond opposing expansion, but believe in reduction of charter schools in most or all circumstances. I am open to further education on this subject.

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?
    We need to ensure our pension system remains functional. As a state employee with the pension system, this is also important to me. I am open to hear any support or reforms that are needed to ensure this.

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

    ☐ Support
    ■ 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?

    ■ Support
    ☐ Oppose

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
    ☐ Oppose

- Giving educators the right to negotiate over class size.

    ■ Support
    ☐ Oppose

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

    ■ Support
    ☐ Oppose

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

    ■ Support
    ☐ Oppose

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
    ☐ Oppose

    Additional Comments: I would oppose broadening the state sales tax as I believe this negatively impacts working families, but otherwise I support restructuring revenue streams to target corporations and top earners to solve budget crisis.

22. Please discuss how you would update the tax code to promote fairness and equity.
    My view is to target top earners and corporations, protect working families from over taxation, and develop alternative revenue streams.

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.
    Part of my platform focuses on power generation directly controlled by county or municipal governments. This gives additional revenue to these bodies that can be used to support services like public education. A single county in Arkansas was able to give their public school teachers a $15,00 yearly raise with this method.