

Greetings Gubernatorial Candidates,

As a broad-based coalition working to expand the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer opportunities available to Maryland's K-12 youth, the Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) Network invites you to answer the attached eight questions about important education policy issues. We will publish your responses on the MOST Network website, www.mostnetwork.org, and in our e- newsletter, which reaches about 4,000 subscribers statewide. The MOST Network is one of 50 State Afterschool Networks supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and serves as the Maryland affiliate of the National Afterschool Association. Please return your responses by Friday, June 3, 2022, to Ellie Mitchell at emitchell@mostnetwork.org

- Thank you in advance -

- 1. Maryland has consistently struggled to improve access to afterschool and summer programs despite high demand for such programs among the state's student population. How will your administration improve program availability for those who want to participate?**

Background information

- Youth who regularly participate in quality afterschool programs demonstrate gains in reading and math and improve their school attendance, work habits and school performance.**
- 85% of working parents overwhelmingly support public funding for afterschool programs. They support working families, keep youth safe and help youth learn and grow.**
- The waiting list is long. In Maryland, more than 150,000 youth are enrolled in afterschool programs, but another 280,000 are waiting for an available program.**
- Investing in afterschool is smart. For every public dollar invested in afterschool programs, Maryland sees an estimated return on investment of \$3.36.**

My administration will audit the use of 21st-century funds made available by the federal government to understand current expenditures and decision making with the goal of ensuring that the dollars are fully utilized and made available to OST providers in a streamlined and reasonable process. My administration will explore how we can augment federal funds for OST programming by reinstating state LEAP funds that were cut by the Hogan administration. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future includes additional funding for schools that serve a concentration of students who are economically disadvantaged, those dollars are intended to put in place the community school strategy and expand after-school programs, my administration will audit the implementation of the new programming and explore whether new seats were

added, what barriers exist to expand OST, and whether the funding is adequate and equitable to meet the demand

- 2. Current trends in labor and technology raise serious questions about Maryland's approach to workforce development and skills training. How would your administration support college and career readiness initiatives and prepare students for life after high school?**

Background Information:

- **The appropriate student to counselor ratio of 250 to 1 according to the American School Counselor Association. Maryland has a ratio of 369 to 1 statewide, while Baltimore City has a ratio is 900 to 1. This disparity continues to grow, leaving fewer students with the supports necessary to make informed career decisions.**
- **Afterschool and summer programs improve students' college and career readiness by offering college visits, teaching marketable skills, assisting them in the education process, and making them more attractive to university admissions offices.**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future lays a strong foundation for strengthening our workforce development including bringing together industry leaders, establishing stronger alignment between high school workforce programs and economic opportunity in Maryland, improving certification programming, and ensuring that every student is on a pathway to college and career by 10th grade. To achieve this vision we will need a leader in the governor's mansion. The governor has convening power, to ensure that silos and disparate bodies who are all essential to the improving workforce development come together around one strategic vision and plan.

Beyond spearheading Blueprint implementation, my administration will create jobs in Maryland by working harder, smarter and faster to cultivate the talents of Marylanders – no matter what zip code – so that our state's businesses have the people they need to succeed in a global market. I will supercharge EARN Maryland to coordinate efforts in labor, education, and commerce so that workforce programs produce people ready to work at in-demand jobs in the most vibrant parts of Maryland's economy. I will also ensure that those participating in apprenticeship programs have the resources they need to succeed, including opportunities to "earn and learn" and childcare and transportation subsidies.

- 3. STEM fields represent a significant proportion of the state's economic growth potential. How would your administration prioritize science and technology related education programs in Maryland?**

Background Information:

- **STEM fields have been an engine for economic growth in the state for decades. Today, jobs in engineering, computer science, IT, and medicine are set to grow dramatically across the mid- Atlantic region. These jobs typically require formal education and training but provide high salaries and benefits to those who obtain them.**
- **Equity problems persist in STEM disciplines. Women, as well as black and Hispanic graduates have historically been underrepresented in science and technology-related professions.**
- **Engaging these students through expanded learning opportunities at an early age is an effective way to bridge this gap.**
- **Maryland’s longstanding deficit in afterschool and summer programs has been a hinderance to STEM learning. While fundamental concepts in science and math are taught in Maryland public schools. Students learning more complex trades like coding and robotics benefit from the hands- on experiences and peer relationships that expanded learning programs provide.**

Maryland is blessed with incredibly diverse economic assets. The state is a rail, interstate, and port transportation hub. We have world class educational institutions, a highly educated workforce, and emerging and growing industries like cyber and biotech. But we need to make sure that all Marylanders can benefit from the economic opportunities in our state. This starts with investing in our state’s research universities, including Morgan State University, to create a pipeline of researchers to serve in our growing STEM industry. It also means facilitating extensive partnerships between regional business and local school systems to build career and technical (CTE) programs that can lead to well-paying jobs at local companies right out of high school.

We must work to make sure these programs and opportunities are available to Marylanders with diverse backgrounds. That’s why a Perez-Sneed Administration will target workforce and entrepreneurial training programs to meet the needs of both a modern economy and a modern job seeker, including women, communities of color, immigrants, and members of the disability community. These programs will be made more accessible to Marylanders with different backgrounds and different life experiences by including access to affordable and accessible childcare, transportation vouchers, and healthcare to those hoping to enter the workforce. I will also work to expand economic access specifically for women by investing in the expansion of employment pipelines, entrepreneurship opportunities, and apprenticeships for women in emerging and male-dominated industries, including in manufacturing, supply chain, athletics, STEM, and clean energy by utilizing institutions such as the Maryland Women’s Business Center.

- 4. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future was the state's most significant investment in education in over a decade, yet its full implementation has remained a contentious issue between the General Assembly and the Hogan administration. As governor, would you see the Blueprint fully implemented? How would you like to see the program expanded in your first term?**

Background Information:

- The Blueprint is designed to target students with the greatest need by using the number of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals at a given school as a metric for determining grant funding allocations. It also provides support for other worthwhile education initiatives including community schools, career and college readiness programs, expanded pre-K access, and the recruitment of high-quality teachers.**
- The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which passed the General Assembly through a veto override, was delayed in its implementation when the Hogan administration shortchanged the state's annual education budget 12 and rejected the initial list nominees for the Accountability and Implementation board appointed by the state legislature.**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is one of the most monumental education reform efforts taken on by a state, it calls for investment in children and families from birth and kindergarten, expansion of prekindergarten programming, investment in K-12 education, investment in teachers and creating a more professionalized work experience, strengthening Maryland college and career ready programming and support, along with a significant investment and expansion of the community school strategy and school based health services. During my first term all of these initiatives will be phasing in with significant investment in dollars and heightened expectations in each of these areas. To expand the programming my administration will monitor implementation, and partner with the coordinating bodies that oversee the various elements of the Blueprint implementation to understand the hurdles and unforeseen consequences, as well as the supports and legislative fixes necessary to ensure there are no more delays to the implementation of the Blueprint.

My administration will also address elements of education reform that have not been addressed by the Blueprint. We will explore opportunities to enhance behavioral and mental health services for students and staff, and explore the quicker implementation of strategies embedded within the Blueprint that would help to take pressure off of teachers such as teacher collaboration and planning time. I will also address the needs of education support professionals such as paraprofessionals, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and janitors. My administration will explore expanding the Blueprint to provide adequate pay and benefits to these unsung heroes of our public school systems.

5. How will you support the expansion of the Community School Strategy in the state of Maryland?

Background Information:

- **Community schools help alleviate the effects of concentrated poverty in the state’s communities by providing food and sanitation services to students, and by fostering partnerships with local organizations to establish free and low-cost afterschool and summer programs.**
- **Community schools are particularly effective in low-income neighborhoods in cities and rural where social services and basic amenities can be few and far between. 15 These institutions become community hubs that cater not only to the needs of students, but their families as well.**
- **The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future created pathways for schools across the state to access funding to implement the community school strategy. Nearly 300 community schools currently exist in Maryland, with dozens more poised to adopt the strategy over the next ten years.**

I am proud of the tremendous work that the Kirwan Commission has done to pilot and support the hundreds of successful community schools across our state. As governor, I will supplement the work of the Commission by investing in the resources necessary to provide implementation support for the rapidly expanding community school strategy. We will make the community schools strategy a hallmark of excellence and encourage all schools, and not only those serving children in high poverty communities, to adopt the strategy which promotes integrated student support, expanded learning time, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership.

My administration will examine the adequacy and equity of the current funding mechanism and decision making regarding which schools are eligible for state funding to implement the strategy. We will dig deep on every school’s needs assessments and use it to explore the unmet needs of students and their families across the state, looking for trends and opportunities for state agencies and programming to more strategically align to the needs identified. This will ensure all schools designated as community schools in Maryland receive an appropriate level of resources to implement the strategy including expanded learning.

- 6. Our partners have long advocated for the creation of a statewide office to coordinate and direct Expanded Learning initiatives in Maryland. Would your administration approve of an “Director (or assistant superintendent) of Expanded Learning” role and provide them with the resources necessary to promote and expand learning experiences outside of traditional school hours?**

Background Information:

- **Building strong partnerships between community organizations and school districts can be challenging, often due to weak lines of communication between the two parties and low levels of system-wide organization. A Director of Expanded Learning can alleviate this by promoting a comprehensive state-level strategy for OST programs, building personal relationships with relevant stakeholders, and guiding the utilization of federal funding.**
- **Expanded Learning coordinators have proven to be effective both at the local level and in other states in the US. In Maryland, the Director of Community Schools has been an effective model for the implementation of statewide education initiatives. Offices like these act as intermediaries between schools, education officials, and program providers to expand the quantity and quality of OST programming in communities across the country.**

Yes, my administration will prioritize expanded learning and create a position of authority to manage and support its expansion. After-school and expanded learning are no longer a luxury for a few, but a necessary component of adequately serving students and supporting their success. Afterschool programming can serve as a lifeline to a young person exploring their purpose, it can help students build relationships with adults. That has only become more critical amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that 1 out of 3 families in Maryland do not have enough food in their homes to meet their dietary needs. After school programs have become part of our social safety-net providing children dinner and providing families with access to resources and supplies in their time of need.

7. **Parents and educators are currently grappling with shifting cultural attitudes towards social justice and identity. In recent months, these debates have spilled into school board meetings across the country. What role, if any, would your administration play in shaping policy around discussions of race, gender, sexual orientation, and equity in the classroom?**

Background Information:

- **State governments in Florida, Texas, and elsewhere have imposed limitations on content related to race, gender, and sexual orientation in school curricula in recent months, sparking controversy over the role of government and families in moderating classroom discussions on these subjects. At times, these laws have seen specific books and authors banned from lesson plans altogether.**
- **There is strong evidence to suggest that a diverse teaching workforce improves student performance and satisfaction, particularly when students share aspects of their identity with their teachers.**

Ethnic and gender studies are an important part of education at every level but oftentimes our curriculum can overlook the history and contributions of the diverse communities that makeup the fabric of our state and our state. As Governor, I will encourage the State Board of Education to work in collaboration with local school systems to develop content standards to expand curriculum that includes ethnic and gender studies so that every student in Maryland understands the depth and breadth of American history.

8. What are your thoughts regarding the utilization of community and school-based mentoring programs to provide much-needed support to Maryland Public School students?

Background Information:

- **With a mentor, opportunity youth are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school, 55% more likely to be enrolled in college, 46% less likely than their peers to start using drugs and 78% more likely to volunteer regularly in their communities.**
- **Mentoring particularly skills-based mentoring and apprenticeship programs, prepares our future workforce by exposing young people the world and developing their life skills and vocational skills which are critical to success in today's economy.**

Mentors are crucial for the success of young people of all backgrounds. Mentoring, like many other education reforms, should no longer be seen as supplemental but rather a fundamental part of learning that is inclusive of every student having access to a Mentor during their high school career. Mentoring can help students connect their passion to action, encourage young people to stay engaged even when things are hard, and expose students to opportunities and careers they might otherwise never experience. My administration will partner with Maryland MENTOR to understand current mentoring opportunities for Maryland youth. We will also connect young professionals across the state with students in their own neighborhoods by partnering with community colleges, HBCUs, and University of Maryland system, and private institutions. In our goal to create 21st century schools and improve our college and career readiness standards, mentoring should be a key component of that initiative.