

# **MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS RETIREES ASSOCIATION**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE MARYLAND LEGISLATURE 2018**

**Please return by Wednesday, April 4, 2018.**

- 1. While educators' retirement benefits are guaranteed by the state, retirees' health benefits are a local matter. Would you support or sponsor legislation which would require local boards of education to maintain and/or improve retirees' health benefits? Why or why not?**

This would certainly be worth exploring. We should make sure the local school boards and governments are providing at least a minimum level of health benefits. If we mandate a significant increase, we may need to make resources available to the counties to implement what in some cases could be a significant increase in their costs. The place to start would be to gather information on what the health benefits currently are in each school district and determine what the shortfalls are.

Delegate Lisanti's HB 971 from the 2018 legislative session proposes a requirement that the locals governments provide a specific special disability retirement benefit. This was controversial in the committee because of the mandate on local governments. If we move forward with this issue, we should seek to learn lessons from Delegate Lisanti's bill.

- 2. How will you advocate for increased funding for school construction and modernization especially in fast growing school systems? How will you pay for it?**

First, we have already had some success at this. In 2015 we created a new program and funding mandate for high enrollment schools and Montgomery County obtained more than 25% of the \$20 million in the budget. In 2016 we doubled that program and Montgomery County continued to obtain about 25% of the \$40 million program. Finally, in 2017 we obtained a flat amount of additional funds beyond our typical allocation and the enrollment growth grant funds. Going forward, we need to continue to grow the overall school construction program—consistent with the Knott Commission's recommendation—and ensure that capacity issues are considered when funds are being allocated. Montgomery County should also consider using its Revenue Authority to leverage more school construction funds in a manner similar to what Baltimore City has done with the Maryland Stadium Authority.



**3. What is your position regarding the use of public funds for non-public (charter, parochial, private) schools? What about giving tax credits to business who help to financially support non-public schools?**

I am generally opposed to these programs and have fought against them in the Appropriations Committee. Unfortunately, this has become part of the broader budget and has been difficult to stop because of Senate support. We have continued to require non-discrimination in the programs along with other requirements related to reporting. I support maintaining and expanding these non-discrimination requirements.

*Note: This answer was edited for clarity after submission.*

**4. What is your position on the so-called "education lockbox"? Do you support changing the gaming formula or the way the state's share is allocated to ensure more funding for education capital and operating funds?**

I am a co-sponsor of the education lockbox constitutional amendment (HB 1697). I believe the voters thought the gambling revenue would supplement and not supplant existing investments in education and the lockbox amendment will ensure that happens. I would also support increasing how much funding flows into the lockbox by altering the formula. This can include less gambling money for other items such as horse racing or an increase in the state's share of certain gambling revenues.

**5. Should the manner in which Congressional and Legislative district lines are drawn be changed? If so, how?**

The best solution would be national reform, whether mandated by Congress or the courts. Failing that, Maryland can improve the Congressional lines process by requiring that they follow the same rules as our legislative districts: the districts must be compact, contiguous and respect political subdivisions. I am a co-sponsor of HB 1022 in the current session to implement those rules.

**6. What are your thoughts on MOCO's liquor monopoly?**

I would like to see the Department of Liquor Control reformed. This needs to be done carefully to address three issues: the effect on general fund revenues for the County; servicing of debt backed by alcohol revenue; and employees. Each of these issues can be addressed through a graceful transition that opens the Department to competition from the private sector. This also needs to be done in concert with County officials, even though it is written in state law.

**7. Should there be term limits for state office holders? If so, what should it be?**

I do not support term limits. I believe it creates at least two problems: First, it makes legislators dependent on staff and lobbyists who have much more knowledge and experience than them; Second, legislators will spend much more time maneuvering politically for the next job instead of focusing on their current job. Both of these problems emerged in California after they imposed term limits and, ultimately, those term limits were eased by extending them to try and mitigate the problems.